Turkey-China relations in the 21st century: from enhanced to strategic partnership
/Söylemez Mehmet.

Mehmet Söylemez

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/etd_oa

Recommended Citation
https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/etd_oa/362

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at HKBU Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of HKBU Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact repository@hkbu.edu.hk.
DATE: June 1, 2017

STUDENT'S NAME: SOYLEMEZ Mehmet

THESIS TITLE: Turkey-China Relations in the 21st Century: from Enhanced to Strategic Partnership

This is to certify that the above student's thesis has been examined by the following panel members and has received full approval for acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Chairman: Prof. Zhou Qiming
Professor, Department of Geography, HKBU
(Designated by Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences)

Internal Members: Prof. Ting Wai
Professor, Department of Government and International Studies, HKBU
(Designated by Head of Department of Government and International Studies)

Dr. Kang Yi
Assistant Professor, Department of Government and International Studies, HKBU

External Members: Prof. Zweig David
Chair Professor and Director
Center on China's Transnational Relations
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Dr. Ho Wai Yip
Associate Professor
Department of Social Sciences
The Education University of Hong Kong

Proxy: Dr. Tran Emilie
Assistant Professor, Department of Government and International Studies, HKBU

In-attendance: Prof. Cabestan Jean-Pierre
Professor, Department of Government and International Studies, HKBU

Issued by Graduate School, HKBU
Turkey-China Relations in the 21st Century:
From Enhanced to Strategic Partnership

SÖYLEMEZ Mehmet

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor:
Prof. Jean-Pierre Cabestan (Hong Kong Baptist University)

June 2017
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

I have read the University’s current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures in accordance with the University’s Committee on the Use of Human & Animal Subjects in Teaching and Research (HASC). I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, obtained the relevant ethical and/or safety approval (where applicable), and acknowledged my obligations and the rights of the participants.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: June 2017
Abstract

The beginning of the 21st century has born witness to the regional rise of Turkey and global rise of China. The two countries have not only boomed economically but also politically, from their burgeoning role in international politics. Over the course of the 20th century they had little diplomatic relations with each other, despite their centuries old associations. Nevertheless, their bilateral relations have begun to warm up again in the last decade. At the turn of the new century, Turkey readjusted their policy on the Uyghur issue, one of the major obstacles against Turkey and China reinitiating relations after the diplomatic recognition in 1971.

A policy orientation study, conducted from 1996 to 2000, resulted in a joint communiqué (signed in 2000) that envisioned an “enhanced partnership” between the two countries. From the year 2000, there was a boost in reciprocal visits and trade between Turkish and Chinese organizations. These relations grew rapidly, and in 2010 Turkish and Chinese prime ministers signed an agreement to upgrade their relationship status from “enhanced partnership” to “strategic partnership”. From 2010, Turkey and China started to make surprising moves in fostering political dialogue, cooperating in the space and technology industries, cooperating with each other’s militaries and mass investing in the other country’s projects. The most important of these relationship-building developments was Turkey’s dialogue partnership with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the country’s interest in buying military equipment from China. There are additionally many other Turkish developments that have started to become attractive for China in global politics; given Turkey is a longstanding US ally, NATO member, and EU candidate.

In light of these developments, while Turkish-Chinese relations have become more significant for international relations, there has been little work on the topic. This thesis, therefore, aims to address this problem. In order to do so, the study first attempts to identify where Turkey and China stand in terms of their international relations. Then, this thesis illustrates and analyzes the contexts that influence Turkey’s relationship with China. Finally, this thesis emphasizes the two countries’ bilateral relations.

In order to effectively research this topic, the student has employed a post-positivist stance for International Relations. Understood from its emphasis on identity and context, constructionist and analytical eclectic approaches will be used to understand the phenomena, Turkish-Chinese relations and its evolution, with the help of realist and constructivist theories, through applying discourse analysis, interviews, participant observations methods.

Keywords: Turkey, China, constructionism, bilateral relations, international relations
Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Jean-Pierre Cabestan. This thesis was only possible with his help as it transformed a lot since the beginning. I am very grateful to him as he always gave his feedbacks as soon as possible. I would also like to thank him for being very kind and generous during my studies in Hong Kong, where he introduced me to his academic networks whenever possible. I believe that this is an important asset for any PhD student.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, Dr. Krzysztof Sliwinski, for his comments and encouragement, Prof. Ting Wai for his informative classes and comments on my thesis prospectus, and Dr. Benson Wong and Prof. Minhaj ul Hassan Syed for their comments on my prospectus. I would also like to give my sincere appreciation to Prof. Chen Feng, who first introduced me to the department in which I now work and study. Here I would like to thank my panel members, especially Prof. David Zweig, who has guided my thesis to be enriched and strengthened in terms of data and theory.

Moreover, I would like to thank my colleagues for a very warm and friendly environment. Among them, special thanks goes to Trung and Shirly, since first starting my studies in Hong Kong they have become like family to me. I would also like to thank my friends, Tamer and Abdülkadir, for their support. In addition I want to thank Zara, Abdülmeclid and Shirly for helping me preparing my drafts.

Last but not least, I really appreciate the support of my lovely wife, Jilian, first for accompanying me to Hong Kong in the toughest year of my study. I also would like to thank her, for her physical and spiritual support throughout my research. Her editing and proofreading of my thesis have also been very valuable to me.
Contents

DECLARATION ........................................................................................................... i
Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. iii
Contents................................................................................................................. iv
List of Tables ......................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures ....................................................................................................... vii
List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................... viii

Introduction.......................................................................................................... 1
  Theoretical Framework ...................................................................................... 7
  Methods and Data ............................................................................................ 24
  Outline............................................................................................................... 33

PART I – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ................................................................ 38
  Chapter 1: Identity Building ........................................................................... 39
    Turkey’s Political History .............................................................................. 39
    Turkish Foreign Policy .................................................................................. 44
    China’s Political History .............................................................................. 54
    Chinese Foreign Policy .................................................................................. 61
    Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 67
  Chapter 2: History of Turkey and China’s Bilateral Relations ......................... 69
    Old Days and Historical Legacies ................................................................ 69
    Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 101

PART II – 21ST CENTURY CONTEXT ................................................................. 103
  Chapter 3: Turkey’s Political Context ............................................................... 104
    Domestic Politics ............................................................................................ 104
    Foreign Policy and International Relations .................................................. 124
    Turkey’s China Policy .................................................................................... 167
    Turkey’s Perceptions of China ....................................................................... 179
    Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 201
  Chapter 4: China’s Political Context ................................................................. 207
    Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy ............................................................ 207
List of Tables

Table 1: Turkey’s General Election Results (2002, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2015) ....121
Table 2: Turkey's Major Trade Partners .......................................................... 167
Table 3: Turkish Perceptions on EU and NATO .......................................... 197
Table 4: Reciprocal High Level Visits ............................................................... 260
Table 5: SCO Member, Observer, and Dialogue Partner States as of 2016 ....... 267
Table 7: Turkish-Chinese Bilateral Trade (Chinese Data) ............................. 280
Table 8: Difference between Chinese and Turkish Data on Bilateral Trade ...... 281
Table 9: Share of Turkish-Chinese Trade in Overall Turkish Foreign Trade Based
        on Turkish Statistics ................................................................................... 285
Table 10: Share of Turkish-Chinese Trade in Overall Chinese Foreign Trade
        Based on Chinese Statistics ......................................................................... 286
Table 11: Reciprocal High Level Military Visits ............................................ 299
Table 12: Sister Cities between Turkey and China ......................................... 311
Table 13: Turkish Perceptions of China .......................................................... 332
Table 14: Turkish Perceptions of Other Countries and Organizations ............ 332
List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of One Belt, One Road Plans ................................................................. 295
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIIB</td>
<td>Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Before Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BÇG</td>
<td>West Working Group (Bați Çalışma Grubu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRICS</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Communist Party of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHP</td>
<td>Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEİK</td>
<td>Foreign Economic Relations Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Democrat Party (Demokrat Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETIM</td>
<td>East Turkestan Islamic Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETIR</td>
<td>East Turkistan Islamic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETR</td>
<td>East Turkistan Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDP</td>
<td>People’s Democracy Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBC</td>
<td>Industrial and Commercial Bank of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations (the discipline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (DAESH, ISIL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or 中国国民党)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and Northern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHP</td>
<td>Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MÜSİAD  Independent Businessmen’s Associations
NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO    Non-governmental organization
NSC    National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu)
P5+1   5 UNSC permanent members plus Germany
PKK    Kurdistan Workers’ Party
PLA    People’s Liberation Army
PM     Prime Minister
PRC    People’s Republic of China
ROC    Republic of China
RIF    Request for Information
RP     Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)
SCO    Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TIKA   Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency
TOBB   Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TPP    Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP   Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
TUSKON The Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey
TÜBİTAK Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
TÜÇSİAD Turkish and Chinese Industrialists and Businessmen Association
TÜSİAD Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association
UN     United Nations
UNSC   United Nations Security Council
US     United States of America
USD    United States Dollar(s)
USSR   The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO    World Trade Organization
WW     World War
YÖK    Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurumu)
Introduction

In 2002, Turkey entered in a new political era under the government of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP). With their Islamic background, Turkey’s new rulers came closer and closer to the country’s successful bid for European Union (EU) membership by way of its reform packages. Nevertheless, during the AKP’s second term – and especially third term – in government, the party’s policies started to become distanced from democratization efforts, and even started to be called an authoritarian regime in its fourth term. Meanwhile, AKP ideologues started to use their own terminology to define state policies for domestic and foreign agreements.

In the past decade, Turkey’s foreign policy has drawn a great deal of attention from all over the world. Since 2002, political experts have characterized the country’s political maneuvers in a wide variety of ways, from axis shifting, to Eastern and even Islamic. Conversely, the country’s decision-makers for foreign policy have tended to describe their new approach as multi-dimensional and pro-active. Moreover, Turkey has started to become considered as a rising regional power in its geographic neighborhood. Turkey, under the government of the AKP, for some time, has established reasonable relations with its neighbors where they had once been very problematic.

At the same time, China has been experiencing an extraordinary rate of growth, resulting in the country becoming one of two economic giants in the world. China strengthened its integration into the world financial and trading systems at the beginning of the 21st century, especially through its World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. On the one hand, China has been a little shy in its foreign
relations; on the other hand, it has kept its growth stable during this era of global integration. As a result, China has started to become more assertive in its foreign policy-making and more central to debates on international relations. From the beginning of the 21st century, many academics have discussed China’s rise and the possible threats it could pose to the global status quo.

While Turkey and China continue to grow and enter into their own new political and economic eras, there has also been a visible transformation in regional and global settings. For example, the Soviet Union and effects of the Cold War have more or less disappeared from world political discussion in the new millennium. The end of the Cold War (1991) brought forth a number of implications for Turkey and China. Turkey lost its interest in the West and started to look toward establishing a new identity for itself. One immediate approach was to define itself as a regional powerhouse in Central Asia, where five newly founded Turkic republics were located. This was not realized as Turkey’s capacity did not allow and consequently Turkey again started in its search for power. For China, end of the Cold War meant that the country had to be more careful so that it would not follow the same destiny that of the Soviet Union. It also had to be more cautious in its foreign relations, as their status in the War and relationship with the United States of America (US) could be brought to the attention of the Chinese.

At the same time, when these transformations were taking place, the 9/11 attacks happened and the world started to focus on a new era: an era of war against terrorism, especially from the Middle East (ME). Under the AKP government, Turkey was considered part of the Middle East, and the region was also responsible for China’s energy supply. In this changing environment, Turkey found a new place for itself in the eyes of the West: a model for the Middle East
as a Muslim democracy. This new identity stalled, however, with the events now popularly known as the “Arab Spring/Uprisings”. These developments once again changed the stability and also the settings of the region, which had a knock-on effect for Turkey and China.

During these events, Turkey – under the AKP government – conducted some of its own identity searching and resultantly sought a more ambitious foreign policy than what had originally been planned. Turkey has since approached foreign policy-making in a different way: one of the most striking developments has undoubtedly been its attempt to establish a strategic relationship with China while maintaining its membership to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkey and China signed an “enhanced partnership” agreement in 2000 and a “strategic partnership” agreement in 2010.

Historically speaking, Turkey and China’s roles in the Cold War have increased unfavorable opinion between the two countries. This unpopularity became even more severe when Turkey sent military troops to Korea. Turkish forces were literally battling against the Chinese, under the banner of the United Nations (UN). Here, Turkey, a capitalist country, encountered “Red China”, an honorific that would shape China’s image in Turkey for many years. The Turks considered China an “ideological virus-spreading symbol” during the Cold War years. It is important to emphasize that Communism was seriously disapproved of in Turkey, as it was and still remains a Muslim country. Therefore, conservative and nationalist Turks severely disliked the idea of atheism brought about by communism, which was a state policy for communist countries. As for Chinese opinion, Mao Zedong described Turkey as a “pseudo-colony” and a part of the retrogressive imperialist world.
Since the Cold War and 9/11, Turkey and China have changed a great deal. China has become the world’s second largest economy (in some studies it is considered first) and remains the country with the fastest economic growth. Turkey has also experienced significant economic development in recent years and in this decade is the 16th largest economy in the world (17th in 2016) and 6th in Europe (7th in 2016). Likewise, in this decade Turkey is also considered one of the top three fastest developing countries in the world, and the fastest in Europe. In addition to these indicators, certain political events have led Turkey and China to voice their opinions more loudly and globally. For instance, China has made its security issues for the South China Sea known, and Turkey has voiced its opinion on Middle East processes within the Arab uprisings. These political events have introduced the two countries as regional, if not global, powers. It is certainly true that they are two emerging powers with global reach and regional impact. Hence, it has become essential to study these two emerging powers.

Turkey has been developing its relations with China since the year 2000. These relations are not only important for Turkey’s alignment to the West and both countries’ emergence in regional and global politics but also because of the history of their relationship with each other. Although they established official ties in 1971, their relations were far from their capacities. Geographical distance as well as their domestic developments and economic growths have played an important role in their bilateral relations in their recent past. From the early 1970s to the 1990s, their relationship could have been described as a low-level key diplomatic relations period: they recognized each other but had almost no direct relations until the 1990s.
A major factor that had for years driven a divide between the two countries building a relationship is the Uyghur issue. Uyghur is an ethnic Turkic group living in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Since the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Ottomans and Turkey have maintained links with their ethnic relatives in China. Further, after the Communist revolution, Uyghur leaders fled to Turkey, which naturally made Turkey the new main support base for Uyghur independence. Since that time, there have been a number of migrations to Turkey from Xinjiang, most notably after the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of Turkic republics, which was when Turkey started to vocalize the importance of Uyghur independence. As a consequence, the already lukewarm relationship between Turkey and China cooled off almost completely. Nevertheless, in the second half of the 1990s, Turkey realized its capabilities were not enough to play a “big brother” role for Central Asian states and also understood that China was not going anywhere in its decision about ethnic Turkish outfits. Hence, Turkey started to change its policy on the Uyghurs and made a rapprochement with China, which resulted in the 2000 “enhanced partnership”.

Once this partnership had been established, their relations started to normalize, even improve. If the “enhanced partnership” agreement symbolized the start of their relationship normalization and catching up on lost time, the “strategic partnership” symbolized the start of boosting bilateral relations between Turkey and China. The trade volume between the two countries almost hit the $30 billion mark in 2013, up from $1 billion in 2000. China has thus become the second largest trade partner or Turkey as of 2015. In 2010, the countries agreed to increase their trade levels to $50 billion in 2015 and $100 billion in 2020 (although this objective was not achieved in 2015). So one might say that
Turkey’s new approach to the Uyghur issue resulted in the establishment of a “trade zone” in Urumqi, Xinjiang. Furthermore, in its geographic location, Turkey is an important candidate for the “New Silk Road” projects of China. China has also seen Turkey’s endeavors to be a regional and eventually international force on certain global issues – as evidenced in the then Turkish president Abdullah Gül’s visit in 2009 to Beijing. Then Chinese president, Hu Jintao, has indicated that China is willing to work with Turkey for “maintaining multilateral cooperation to promote world harmony”. Moreover, he has said “China supports Turkey to play a bigger role in international and regional issues”.

Turkey and China have conducted joint military exercises in Turkey, and there seems to be an interest on the part of the Turks to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and become accepted as one of the organization’s “dialogue partners”. Some steps have already been taken in this area. For instance, the Turkish satellite Gökturk-2 launched from China’s Jiuquan Space Station in 2012. Turkey has also expressed a strong interest in buying and even co-producing the HQ-9 air defense missile system with China for years. China is also on the way to build Turkey’s third nuclear plant. With all these moves to further align themselves to China, it will be important to examine how Turkish foreign policy sees China’s position as a potential superpower. Hence, this research attempts to analyze a number of themes and their relationship to Turkey’s evolving relations with China in order to better analyze China’s roles and values against Turkey’s own foreign policy.

In this study, I will elaborate on the transformation of Turkish-Chinese relations in the early 21st century. I will analyze how this evolution has become possible and answer following questions: What kind of legacies have these countries’
histories and bilateral relations left for today’s relations? How can policy-makers influence the relations of these two countries today? Moreover, what are Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy changes and how do they affect its relations with China? How does China’s economic evolution bring something new to international relations? What is the nature of Turkey and China’s relationship today? What are Turkey and China’s ambitions for themselves in an international context, and how do their ambitions compare?

In any case, the evolving relationship between Turkey and China seems very attractive to researchers, given their historical relationship and recent perceptions of each other. Moreover, this relationship bears a lot of implications to global politics and International Relations (IR) as a discipline. Therefore, it will be useful to analyze how their relationship has developed from its negative foundations to becoming a one that is relatively close and congenial.

**Theoretical Framework**

*Methodology*

Before discussing the theoretical framework, I would like to say few words on the issues of the chosen methodology, in order to better present my approach. The methodology asserts one’s logical stance to a phenomenon he or she (he from here on) is studying. Moreover, methodologies are often not specific to the given topic and can sometimes not even be limited to one’s own discipline, in this case, International Relations. The methodology, then, represents the stance of a researcher by finding a relationship between the world of existence (ontology) and the world of knowledge (epistemology). The resulting product/analysis/data is thus shaped on these foundations, according to a researcher’s ontological
assumption and epistemological choice. This decision should not be arbitrary. Rather, it should be a natural outcome of the researcher’s already existing assumptions on social phenomena.

I should state here that basing human relations on objective foundations is not something that I am particularly fond of. I rather see the study as being largely subjective. In the field of Social Sciences, what we are studying are human beings who are subject to non-stop learning and changing; and/or a phenomenon that humans are involved. Acknowledging that there are characteristic similarities between humans, it is still difficult to formulize any general opinion about human beings and their interactions as a whole. I see human beings and their relationships with each other as inter-subjective elements rather than as separable objects. As a cause of this, I am also interested in human transactions and how they come to be made. The ontological stance of the researcher, then, can be described as “post-positivist”, or “poststructuralist”. At this point between ontology and epistemology, it is important to note that I, as the researcher, also acknowledge my biases within the field that I am studying.

The above type of ontology also relates to the epistemology with which I would like to consort. As the social world is inter-subjective, individuals and countries cannot be generalized as befitting one strict formula. Inter-subjectivity claims a more complex “truth” by its very nature. At this point it is important to realize, that 1) it is not possible to completely research “reality” given its complexity, and 2) as a consequence of this complexity, some details will have to be sacrificed for the sake of making sense of the issue at hand. My main epistemological stance is a discursive analytical type.
As a relatively new branch of social sciences, International Relations is still struggling to find its way in its methodologies and theoretical approaches. Having emerged in the 20th century, IR is both described as a philosophy for coping with developments in the Social Sciences (including positivism and behaviorism), and an attempt to adjust to global changes from World Wars I and II, the Cold War, the 9/11 attacks, human rights issues, and so on.\(^1\) All of these occurrences have forced IR scholars to formulate the best answer to the question of how the world operates. Over the course of these debates, three paradigms have become very popular – realism, liberalism and constructivism – and have shaped research in mainstream IR schools. Of course, IR scholars have attributed additional classifications to IR, such as realism/neo-realism, liberalism/globalism/pluralism and neo-Marxism/structuralism.\(^2\) Some have replaced these paradigms with structuralism,\(^3\) while others have added international society as the fourth paradigm.\(^4\) It is clear that there will be a lot of merging and grouping between these paradigms, and it is problematic to put schools of thought under such strict labels. A variety of theories, after all, have fallen under these schools of thought.

From the discussion of methodology above, it is not surprising to deduce that I do not adhere myself to a way of “theory formulation” to get the answers I am looking for. As all of these paradigms have enriched our understanding of global

---

\(^1\) Ken Booth, “75 Years on: Rewriting the Subject’s Past? Reinventing Its Future,” in


events they also have helped us to understand and analyze Turkey’s foreign policy in some aspects. Therefore, I do not reject those paradigms as a whole and will use them to understand Turkey’s foreign policy behaviors when applicable. Specifically, I am going to use an “analytical eclectic” approach to understand the phenomena that we are studying.

For the purpose of this study I will only discuss today’s three mainstream paradigms, namely realism/neo-realism (realism from here onwards), liberalism/neo-liberalism/institutionalism (liberalism from here onwards) and constructivism. And two of them, realism and constructivism, will be used in this thesis.

Although I know that the two practices have contributed a great deal to IR, and I appreciate their endeavors and find them important to furthering the field, I do not necessarily agree with realism and liberalism’s positivist stance. Thus methodologically speaking, constructionism (not IR constructivism), one variant of those approaches, tends to be closer to my stance. Nevertheless, for the sake of getting a comprehensive picture of the phenomena, as well as having difficulties in fitting it into one theory/approach I will “tend to (at least implicitly) set aside meta-theoretical debates in favor of a pragmatist view of social inquiry,” with using the eclectic approach. This however by no means implies that we should not discuss the epistemological or methodological sides of International Relations.

---


inquiry. On the contrary, those discussions are much needed and appreciated as the IR discipline is relatively new, and declaring one’s philosophical stance always contributes to readers’ better understanding of their work. It is the reason why we will have the discussion presented below, and I will point out the portions with which I disagree, although I will use some of them.

Positivist theories realism and liberalism both accept the world as relations of the static objects in the given structure of anarchic nature (international environment), which contradicts with post-positivist theories, constructivism in this case. Below, I will briefly discuss them individually in terms of IR theory, first by explaining whether they fit my general understanding of IR philosophically or not, and second by illustrating where they fit and where they do not in this research. Finally, I will prescribe and discuss my theoretical approach for this research.

Theories and Approaches

The realist paradigm of IR arguably has some problems to me. From ontological and epistemological perspectives, accepting international states and structures as given does not seem right to me. I cannot think of states and international structures as being free from their historical and developmental contexts. History and identity are certainly also intellectual/ideological constructions, however, blanket agreements only add complexity to understanding how the whole phenomena were constructed. Taking states for granted and international systems as “decentralized and anarchic” seems only problematic; I see states and international systems rather as contextual and inter-subjective, involving ongoing

---

7 Cornut, “Analytic Eclecticism in Practice,” 63.
International structure may be an anarchic situation but this does not mean the very nature of it is anarchic and will remain anarchic forever. As an example, according to the realist assumptions of “social contract” and “sovereign powers”, it would be possible for an anarchic society to emerge even though the “state of nature” did not initially provide them with it. Just because anarchy has existed once before does not guarantee that it will be the ultimate structure of the international structure. Alexander Wendt’s criticism is very helpful in understanding this point. Wendt does not take anarchy as granted and instead argues it is what we, as states, make of it. Finally, many realist scholars have advocated accepting the state’s ultimate goal as being survival; meaning relative power raises another problem. As Mearsheimer says, the state has other goals in addition to gaining (military) power. However, he also acknowledges that these are minor issues and all serve the same goal, or at least they would if only they did not conflict with the main goal. As the world develops, we are seeing new notions emerge and become crucial to discussing world politics, such as issues of soft power or human rights. They might become more crucial than realists think.

Other issues with realism are the balance of power and security alliances. According to Morgenthau, “the aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying to either maintain or overthrow the status-quo, leads to a configuration

---


that is called the balance of power.” However the balance of power is a dilemma in itself. The attempt to overthrow a previously established stability by one great power will be seen as a threat from another. Therefore, its end result will be war or at the very least a threat of war. However, this theory does not explain small/weak state behaviors in themselves. Even though a weak state may have several other options, such as bandwagoning, buck-passing and appeasement, it is hard to predict a weak state’s policy on developments made in international society. Since the rebalancing of power is seen as a “major cause for war”, the idea of collective security has emerged as an alternative. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War raised questions about the existence of collective security instruments, or “alliances”. Even though some realists have argued that alliances would dissolve after the Cold War, we have not yet seen any concrete dissolution take place. Instead, IR scholars have started to redefine these alliances as security institutions, and have reimagining their possible functions in attempts to explain the longevity of institutions such as NATO. As a whole, realism helps a great deal to see how power relations are and how they change the international environment. Main security alliances approach will be helpful to understand

12 Ibid., 472.
14 Luard, Basic Texts in International Relations, 469.
Turkish foreign policy in general since Turkey’s NATO membership is underlined as a reference for Turkey in this research.

There are conflicting and compatible points from a realist perspective in Turkey’s relations with China. After the establishment of its diplomatic relations with China, Turkey did not appear to want to improve its relations with China for a long time. It may have been due to NATO’s constraints, which is suggested in the “alliances” approach, and Turkey’s alliance with the US. In addition, after the Second World War (WWII) Turkey started to see China as a communist and atheist country that oppressed their ethnic relatives (the Uyghur people), which may further explain the communication standstill. Therefore, neglect of diplomatic relations can be explained by their disparate ideologies and Turkey’s sympathy to the Uyghur people, which are explanations close to constructivism with the emphasis on identity. Even though there were Western constraints for Turkey, it was not an excuse for Turkey to almost fully ignore such a big country as China for such a long time. This is a very good example of how a state may not only consider power issues and alliances, but also other ideological and/or subjective issues that grind international relations to a halt. Meanwhile, performing military exercises with China in the same year that Turkey was having good relations with the US does not fit with the ideology of realism. These inconsistencies can also be explained by the aforementioned changing nature of security alliances after the Cold War. Turkey still operates as an important NATO member due to certain security threats in the country’s neighborhood, such as

those coming from Syria. The Turkish-Chinese military cooperation clearly contradicts the balance of power and alliances theory, since Turkey has no reason to carry out any military cooperation with a potential antagonist for NATO, as Turkey has not received any threats from the US or NATO. Even more importantly, regardless of whether it will happen or not, being courageous enough to claim that Turkey is interested in buying Chinese defense missile systems in the same year when Turkey received six patriot missile batteries under NATO command must be confusing to realists.\(^\text{18}\)

However, looking at the Turkey-China relations in terms of economy, military, and politics, we could see that they have an asymmetrical nature, which makes it possible and necessary to employ the realist approach used in this study.

The second well-known paradigm of IR is liberalism. My basic criticisms are the same as with realism: their basic foundations are in line with each other. Accepting the anarchic system as it is given\(^\text{19}\) is problematic as has already been discussed. Furthermore, taking states and identities for granted remains an issue. Keohane, one of the pioneers of neo-liberal institutionalism, acknowledges that another criticism of liberalism is found in the weaknesses and democracy deficits of international organizations.\(^\text{20}\) He tries to give solutions for overcoming these weaknesses, such as greater transparency and collaborating with experts.


Nevertheless, the claim is that people can work together to overcome conflict, which contradicts its own premise: the system is anarchic and the organizations are only there to monitor and reduce uncertainty. If we were able to overcome this problem of institutionalism, in other words, if we were able to gather and solve these issues through discussion, then why can we not overcome the problems that caused anarchy in the first instance, and why can we not cooperate until we can found a system that can replace anarchy? Nevertheless, neo-liberal institutionalism variances help a great deal for states to cooperate in the trade and economic issues, especially in an increasingly globalized era.

In discussing Turkey’s relations with China from a liberal perspective, we can see that some parts do not quite comply with the theory of liberalism. Turkey, which has been an admirer of the EU for almost half a century, was announced to be a candidate state just before the turn of the 21st century. However, Turkish leader Erdoğan has recently not hesitated to say that Turkey is now seeking Shanghai Cooperation Organization membership instead of the EU.21 His remarks are questionable, as many analysts have shown that abandoning the EU does not seem a rational thing for Turkey to do, nonetheless, Turkey’s growing interest in being a partner of the SCO deserves due attention. Turkey’s SCO endeavor is the feature of its foreign relations that fits the most to liberal theories of IR and institutionalism. But given SCO’s vagueness it is not supporting liberal approach very much in the Turkey-China case.

Of course, a few years of interest in SCO is not equivalent to Turkey’s longstanding interest in EU membership. However, this shift in interest draws attention to the fact that there are still some irregularities in the liberalist perspective. The question is why imminent EU candidacy does not encourage Turkey to cooperate with Europe. Turkey could easily use such rhetoric to say that the country will give up in the whole process of obtaining EU membership. Does this not conflict with the neo-liberal notion of institutions whose members share common values and that similar political systems are likely to cooperate better? Turkey may not be authentically European, but it is far closer to European sentiment than it is with the SCO’s main members, Russia and China. Here, there is no need to mention political systems at all. Turkey’s commonalities with the EU are much more prevalent than its commonalities with SCO countries.

Perhaps the most important factor here is Turkey’s long-standing official association with Europe. Turkey has had an associate membership with the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1964, and Turkey’s 1995 Customs Union with the EU (European Community in 1964) are very important factors for tying Turkey to Europe. Thus Turkey politically and economically, if not culturally, has a well-established European identity, one that is arguably vital to the country.

At the same time, one may argue that the communal Turkic identity for some SCO members and the authoritarian nature of SCO member countries count as “common values” that pave the way for a more considerable Turkish interest in the organization. With that in mind, how can we explain the existence of different country values, such as democracy, and how can we align Turkic identity to Turkey’s relations with EU and SCO? Which country of the member states
decides on the nature and outcome of relations? Or are policy-makers simply using these different values of discourse to legitimize their own policies? In order to understand these questions, it is important to analyze Turkey’s behavior towards SCO and the EU. Therefore institutionalism does not work very well in Turkey’s relations with China. While using “identity” as a motive makes more sense in the constructivist theories.

Furthermore, another aspect of liberalism is interdependence, but when we analyze Turkish-Chinese relations it is very hard to confirm whether there is interdependence between the two. As claimed above, their relations are more compatible with the asymmetry theory.

Let’s move on to the theoretical approaches that will be used mainly for this research apart from realist approaches. As has already been described in the sections on methodology and theoretical framework, the ontological and epistemological stance of positivist approaches are not coherent with my own choices for methodology. IR schools debated methodologies and post-positivism in the 80s, which also became known as the third great debate. The central question had to do with methodology. This movement had its foundations even before IR emerged as a discipline, and Jackson has described it as constructionism. In this thesis sometimes constructivism is referred as constructionism.

23 Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, “Lecture 11: Realist Constructivism” (Lecture, SIS 301: Theories of International Relations, American University, Spring 2009), available at iTunesU.
Beginning with the ontological and epistemological part, constructionists as post-positivists, or “poststructuralists”, do not see world or international politics as originating from relationships between static objects that can be quantitatively measured. Therefore, making generalized laws is not necessarily useful. As constructionists generally consider that everything we have is socially and inter-subjectively constructed, IR constructivists give a lot of importance to cultural norms, values, identity and culture as forming the foundation of their theory. However, what is more is that values, cultures, and power are results of their context and should therefore be couched in the relevant history.

Yet this does not mean that they do not accept any concepts from realism or liberalism. They acknowledge that notions of power matter in realist schools, and values and culture matter in liberal schools. It could be said that the same approach also fits to Turkish foreign policy behaviors in the last few decades. Especially the AKP era is in question; there is wide literature to explain Turkish foreign policy changes. As prominent Turkish scholar Kemal Kirişçi summarized in his article, there are different explanations made by scholars in order to explain Turkish foreign policy. He has categorized these explanations as effects of the Europeanization, effects of the changes in domestic politics or Islamization, effects of the geopolitical factors, soft power theory and constructivism. He also introduced the economic approach as his own interpretation. Besides, there are more recent studies trying to explain the difficulties of theorizing Turkish foreign policy.

---


policy from any given paradigm due to the changes in the international system, domestic politics, and the decision making mechanisms. Some also tried to combine more than one approach to analyze Turkish foreign policy.

We can also find recent studies analyzing Turkey-China relations in an eclectic way as well, as well as a holistic way. A similar stance has been taken by my study. More than one explanation is used in this research where applicable. One of them, constructivism, will be a dominant approach for understanding the phenomena while realist paradigm will be employed as supplementary. In other words, security alliances, asymmetry, and identity politics will be used as reference theories for the analysis of Turkish foreign policy and Turkey-China relations, while constructionism will be used as a model to put the whole process of evolving China relations.

A criticism can here be made of conventional IR constructivism: constructivists seem to undermine their own subjectivity through the topic they are studying, during the interpretation of inter-subjective processes. Any interpretation will be non-objective as it has been interpreted by the scholar him or herself. That is why more work needs to be done that acknowledges this problem. That is the reason

27 Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 37.
why I opt to call my approach as constructionist rather than constructivist, as the term is usually given in IR, to underline the difference in my approach.

Some social constructivists such as Ruggie claim that constructivism is not a “theory” in the same sense as other theories in IR, rather, it is a “theoretically informed approach to the study of international relations”. This is the main reason why I prefer terming the approach constructionism – because when we say constructivism in IR, what we really mean is “a theory”, which has the same positivist assumptions of realism and liberalism. That is to say an endeavor to draw out a formulation that may help to analyze other cases as well as the case being studied. What I believe is that every case brings with it its own context that should be examined, and that conclusions from one case cannot simply be applied to other cases. Therefore, I choose to call constructionism an approach rather than a theory, with taking advantage of other theories in an eclectic way.

Each of the issues in this thesis will be tested and analyzed through their historical and geographical context as well as their stances on foreign policy. Given my origins, there will be a larger contextual analysis for Turkey than there will be for China. This will not give us a picture of right or wrong but rather a narrative or argumentation for why a particular action made by either Turkey or China. To give few examples: Turkey’s reestablishment of diplomatic relations with China can be understood in the context of following US foreign policy (Kissinger visit) and the application of it in 70s. Lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries before the turn of the 21st century can be understood by examining the

domestic instability in China and Turkey, particularly the outcomes of the Uygur issue.

In the late 90s, Turkey realized that its relative apathy towards building a relationship with a rising powerhouse such as China would cost Turkey financially. Obviously, what made a difference at this time were the major changes to the international system, starting with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, changing public opinion and state policy made it possible to improve relations in a pragmatic way, despite the Uygur issue. Considering SCO as a real alternative to the EU was not only about SCO itself but instead a reaction to the EU stalling in giving Turkey membership. Of course, SCO and the EU are not equivalent organizations and are not the only foreign policy options for Turkey. However, the ongoing problems with the EU membership process has been used as an excuse to publicly legitimate Turkey’s interest in SCO by Turkish foreign policy-makers.

Finally Turkey’s interest in military cooperation with China should not be distinctly understood. Instead, the cooperation should be read as part of Turkey’s growing ambitions to develop an independent military in addition to Turkey’s military cooperation with the US, Israel and Russia. However, Turkish interest in Chinese missiles has come as the same time that trust was broken between the country and their allies the US who did not cooperate in the Syria crisis. Further, this interest has grown from the unwillingness of the US and European military equipment suppliers to share technology with Turkey. These developments can be interpreted and analyzed in their contexts in more than one way, which makes a lot of sense when we are talking about a country that is home to so many different
Finally, I would like to emphasize the assumptions and choices I have made for my methodology and theoretical framework, in order to illustrate my stance and logical approach to this topic. Therefore some philosophical points made accordingly in this section. Again, my ontological and epistemological understanding is to see everything relevant to state identity and policy, as inter-subjective and socially constructed. Therefore, an analysis of their processes would be more useful than applying a general law for that matter.

The methodological choice and, as a result, the main theoretical approach, are in line with IR constructivism and realism. It is critical to underline here that I do not necessarily claim that I will simply apply and/or test realism or constructivism as a theory. The reason for this is, as Smith argues, that this kind of post-positivist approach does not make for a well-constructed theory in and of itself. Rather, I would happily accept the notion of using the sociological approach of constructionism to analyze the phenomena. This process mostly involves asking and trying to answer “how” ideologies and relationships are as they are, rather than “why” or “what”. And finally in the conclusion, I will draw attention to the points where they fit into realism and constructivism after discussing the phenomena throughout the thesis.

Prominent constructionist Ruggie has made a similar point to that which has already been stated above: constructivism is not a theory but an approach. The

---

answer of why the approach has not been tested is given by Lene, who arguably gave the best answer on how to conduct poststructuralist discourse analysis in IR: “...it is not a test, as the basic propositions of poststructuralist discourse analysis are constitutive rather than causal.”

Therefore, causality is explained case by case within each individual context, and transformations are separately analyzed rather than analyzed through a blanket formulation.

Just before finishing the section, I would like to highlight Rosenau’s advice to IR scholars on creative “theorizing”: “To think theoretically one must be constantly ready to be proven wrong”. On that note, I hereby declare that I am ready to be proven wrong.

Lastly I also would like to state that this thesis would also make use of all the three levels of analysis in International Relations as international system/global, domestic, and individual. In each section mostly either one of those levels are going to be used, and while doing it so there will be no specific mention to the level of analysis.

**Methods and Data**

Now that we have discussed this thesis’ research methodology and approach, we can define the relevant research methods and the kind of data types that will be used. The research is going to use what is known as mixed methods of qualitative research. Poststructuralist discourse analysis will be the main method to be applied to understand the phenomena generally. General themes are determined

---

through this method. In addition, interviews and participant observations will be also deployed as supplementary methods to provide more primary data for the direct analysis of Turkey and China relations and to strengthen the arguments as well.

The use of participant observation is not very common in research of International Relations. However, my background experience allows me to utilize it along with interviews so that my thesis could be better positioned, which will make it standout from others and shade more light of the facts and events that are going to be presented.

Having said that it should not be any great surprise that largely qualitative data will be used. However, I do not reject the use of quantitative data outright, for they will help to delineate the theme or rhetoric under study, especially when understanding the reflections and outcomes of the policy changes. Quantitative research methods will not be used, but quantitative data can be used alongside qualitative data and analysis processes.

Primary data have been collected through participant observation and interviews in the conventional way. Apart from that, classical secondary and tertiary data will be utilized to conduct the research. The details of the three levels of sources will be explained in the following part.

*Discourse Analysis*

As one of the research methods, (poststructuralist) discourse analysis will be applied to understand the phenomena and how political outcomes have become possible. The discourse analysis conceived by Foucault is the attempt to
understand how things can become feasible or possible by looking at rhetoric in context. In this context, the themes we are looking for are mostly about the self-identity discourses of Turkey, as the country’s national interest is constructed on those principles. It is important to note that the method of analysis will be focused on practices, rather than words or talks. Due to this practice-rhetoric interaction though often confused with content analysis, discourse analysis is a whole different method emphasized. To elaborate, the discourse “incorporates with the material as well as the ideational factors.” Therefore, the analysis of this research is not only going to be conducted on rhetoric or text, but also how the policies relate to the rhetoric in relevant (con)texts. In order to make sense of these social transactions, interpretative cycles will be deployed in the process of analysis. The reason for that is that ideas and identity are intertwined with policies, and they both are produced and reproduced over time.

It will be useful to understand how these actions have justified or been influenced by ideas, by applying Weber’s method of legitimization and ideal-types. These ideal-types acknowledge the futility of objectiveness on phenomena and how they are constructed. Put simply, this method will work as follows: by finding out the constructed rhetorical themes or symbols with basic assumptions and analyzing them, thus finding out what these themes actually mean in their historical and environmental contexts. Finally, it will be necessary to systematically bind them to the actual policy level, in order to see how they work together and make their outcomes possible. To give an example the discussion on trade relations will

[36] Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, “Lecture 4” (Lecture, SIS 680: Research Methods of International Affairs, American University, Summer 2009), available at iTunesU.


[38] Ruggie, Constructing the World Polity, 31–32.

mention the “New Silk Road” rhetoric as well as its policy dimensions both from government and civil societies perspective. Meanwhile a discussing the civil society level “killer China” will be another key word for us to look at this rhetoric-practice interaction.

There are important questions to be asked of this analytical approach. First, how do we decide what the themes will be? They are going to be based on assumptions in the significant points of the relations. This will require a cyclic process. Second, what resources will be used? The most vocal parties – both people and places – in the public arena will be targeted. It is important that these discourses should be open to the public and should be intentional rather than (personal) motives. The keyword here is ‘public’. Third, where are we going to look for resources? As has been indicated, the resources that will be used include interviews (done by others), press releases, articles, news stories and so on. After finding out the most important themes in the relevant rhetoric, additional details will probably intentionally fade away to oversimplify the whole two level structure of rhetoric-practice to find out the patterns.

In this study three written/spoken languages, Turkish, Chinese, and English, are used for research on the written material be it academic or a non academic text. The selection of the language of the source is made due to their relevance if it was a process of digging out of discourses. For example while researching on the perceptions of Turkish people on China, Turkish language texts made the major source to decide the discourse. The whole selection of which discourses really matter according to the above three criteria is chosen by the researcher based on his experience and understanding of the topic.
It is important to make clear that there are three levels of data or sources that will be deployed to understand identity and policy discourse. What I mean by ‘identity’ is identity that has been self-constructed, in other words, the way that the Turkish government positions or defines itself within the domestic and international developments of the 21st century. The first source to be used will be official foreign policy discourse. In order to analyze government treaties, the following will be examined: press releases and annual reports of foreign affairs; reports from the cultural, tourism and trade ministries; and statements, interviews, speeches, and articles from senior diplomats, politicians and high-ranking military officials. The second source that will be used is the wider foreign policy debate. Here, we can analyze discourse from opposition parties in parliamentary debates, opinion articles and field reports from the mainstream media, and public campaigns and events from corporate institutions such as bilateral trade associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The third resource to be used will be marginal political discourse. These discourses are given in the form of academic analyses, books, newspapers and handbooks by academics, social movements and NGOs.40

Nevertheless, the key figures are often intertwined with politics and their rhetoric articulates and rearticulates policy and political discourses. For example, former Turkish Premier Davutoğlu’s (former FM and advisor to Premier Erdoğan as well as a former academic) early academic writing has provided texture to foreign policy debates. Therefore, during this thesis’ discussion and analysis, no exclusive distinction will be made between these different sources.

40 Hansen, Security as Practice, 53–57.
Participant Observation

Participant observation is the kind of method mostly used by Social Science researchers to get better perspectives of the community being studied.\textsuperscript{41} Although this study is dealing with international relations, actors such as countries and international organizations, it is still important to have an understanding of human actors in the events as well as the events themselves.

During these events, observations could be made with different stances. Here, it is useful to elaborate these stances or roles, which have been taken in this study. They can be classified into four groups as suggested in some studies:\textsuperscript{42}

**Complete participant:** Here the researcher’s role is not open to the participants and the researcher is a natural part of the activities.

**Participant as observer:** Here the researcher is again a natural part of the activities, yet the other group members know the researcher’s identity.

**Observer as participant:** Here the researcher is the event mainly for data collecting and is not an active participant of the events. The other group members know about the researcher’s work.

**Complete observer:** Here the group is not aware of the researcher’s identity and the researcher is only at an observer position.


\textsuperscript{42} Barbara B. Kawulich, “Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (May 31, 2005).
Given my own background being quite embedded in Turkey-China relations in several aspects, it would be very useful to include participated events and groups in diplomatic, social and economic aspects during my study time in China from 2006 to 2015. Especially academically working on the Turkey-China relations from 2010, I had a scholarly interest to the area apart from my personal life being centered in the area.

The observations made from the occasions are listed below and will be used extensively, with the given positions and roles, if applicable.

- Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai, February 2010 to January 2011. Senior Staff and Operation Supervisor, complete participant.

- Ankara Culture Week in Shanghai, November 11-13, 2010. Host to the Turkish delegates for Foreign Affairs Bureau of Shanghai Government, complete participant.

- Turquoise Turkish Culture and Food Festival in Shanghai, October 10-13, 2013. Observer as participant.


- Xinjiang Field Trip, June 2012. Complete observer.

- Xinjiang Restaurants in overall China, mainly in Shanghai, from 2006 to 2015. Complete observer.
• Turkish Students Society in Shanghai, founding member and moderator from 2008 to 2012. Complete participant.

• Turkish businessmen’s business trips in China, 2007 to 2013. Translator, participant as observer.

The observations took place with active watching, taking memories, informal interviewing and writing field notes as suggested.43 During these events mainly opinions and behaviors of the participants were noted to support the research. Moreover other kinds of observations, like a general trend of a given issue, will be also mentioned when necessary.

When there is a significant personality from these events need to be referenced they will be called as “respondents” that are different from the “interviewees” in the next method of in-depth interviews. Some of these respondents will be given with their real names as the observation remarks were made from public events; yet occasionally some of them will be referred anonymously due to the sensitivity of the information they provided, or in order to protect the respondents because their remarks were made to the researchers in more private conditions during these events. When there is an observation refereed, it is cited in the footnotes with the title of “personal observations”.

These respondents include ministers, bureaucrats, diplomats, security officials, academics, journalists, artists, businessmen, students, as well as ordinary people from both Turkey and China.

Interviews are more common in IR studies than the participant observations. Although the observations mentioned above have offered us some perspectives on Turkey-China relations, they are not in depth qualitative research interviews.

The aim of in-depth interviews is to get more accurate opinions, knowledge as well as feelings and sense from the interviewees. The questions were open-ended and supported by follow up questions.

Interviews used for this research can be categorized into two types:

**Informal conversational unstructured interviews:** In these interviews no predetermined questions or themes are prepared. The communication is done through an informal conversation.

**General semi-structured interviews:** There are talking points or themes beforehand for this kind of interview. But they don’t have any specific detailed question, which gives interviewee the freedom to speak. The only questions made ready before the interviews are those general questions that is asked almost to each interviewee in their area.

All interviews in this study were made in three ways: face-to-face, via phone call, or via texting through Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Wechat etc. They

---

were conducted in written and spoken English, Turkish, and Chinese (Mandarin) in different cases. Each took 15 minutes to 90 minutes. Some of the interviewees were interviewed more than once. The latest interview date is cited in the references if the interview conducted more than once. The language is selected based on the language the interviewee is more comfortable to talk about the issue.

Approximately 50 people were interviewed from different aspects regarding the topics, and 37 of them were cited. They are referenced as “interviewee” when necessary. Some of them are cited anonymously due to the confidentiality of the person or to protect the interviewee. Similarly, it is not suitable to disclose the interview place, as it is easy to trace who is that person with a given specific time, place and position description. But their approximate positions or roles are described to give the idea of authority of what they say. Each anonymous interviewee is named with letters as AA, AB…AZ when they are cited.

These interviewees include politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats, security officers, NGO leaders and staff, journalists, businessmen, academics and students from both countries and they are all relevant to Turkey-China relations. Apart from them being active or relevant to Turkey-China relations, the reason of selecting them is mainly due to the availability of them. The researcher tried to find as much as relevant people to the area and the interviewed ones are the ones who accepted the interview. All of the the interviews are listed in the Appendix Three.

**Outline**

By 21st century, I mean between the years 2000 to 2016. There are particular reasons for this. The year 2000 could be counted as the second turning point in contemporary Turkish-Chinese relations after 1971, the year that diplomatic
relations were reestablished. The reason for is has been mentioned earlier and will be further elaborated in the forthcoming chapters. Turkey made significant changes to its Uyghur and China policy between the years 1996 and 2000, which had previously been the main obstacle for their bilateral relations. Turkish leaders also realized that their immediate post-Cold War expectations would neither be met by the Chinese in terms of their being Central Asia’s big brother, nor in terms of there being a new independent Uyghur state after an anticipated PRC dissolution. As a result, readjustments were made. At the beginning of the year 2000, Turkey and China both signed their Cooperation on Countering Transnational Crimes Agreement, which was a declaration of this policy change. In the same year, President Jiang Zemin visited Turkey and the two countries’ presidents signed a joint communiqué declaring that they would establish an “enhanced partnership” that was based on mutual respect, trust, benefit, equality and common development. In the following years, Turkish-Chinese relations indeed started to develop rapidly.

I will now give an overview of the study in order to make it understood in terms of the research’s design. As has already been emphasized, issues of identity and context are key to understanding our thesis’ concern. In our case, the center of our concern is Turkey’s relations with China. It should be also mentioned here either as the issues mentioned in the introduction and conclusion parts are mentioned in the text or they are analyses and comments, no distinct referencing used in these sections.

Part I mainly deals with background, or identity. Identity is something that is shaped over a period of time. Of course, one can go back to the beginning of history to dig up the roots of a particular identity, but that is not feasible for the
study. Hence, I have taken the most important events in recent history that have affected Turkey and China as a starting point: the decline of their once great empires. Accordingly, in Chapter 1, I provide an overview of Turkey and China in the 20th century history. I have focused on the debates and developments of which both countries still feel the affects today. Their foreign relations will be discussed as well as their domestic developments. In Chapter 2, I present the background of Turkish-Chinese relations. In other words, I address how these two distinct identities, discussed in the previous chapter, have interacted with each other over a period of time, and how they identify themselves vis-à-vis the other country. That is why, after reading Part I, the reader should have a clear understanding of Turkey and China’s separate and reciprocal identities, which will be helpful to understanding the dynamics shaping both countries today and their relationship to each other.

As we have tried to see how identity is constructed through history in the previous section, it is now time to focus on Turkey and China in their contemporary contexts. Part II deals with the time spanning from 2000 to 2016, which is the period on which this study focuses. Although the topic is on Turkish-Chinese relations, given that I am originally from Turkey, there will be more emphasis on and detail about the Turkish perspective. There are two chapters in Part II. The first, Chapter 3, focuses on Turkey. In this chapter, I analyze Turkey’s domestic and foreign policies, as well as the country’s foreign relations with regards to Turkish-Chinese relations. The countries, regions and organizations discussed in this chapter are the US, the EU, NATO, the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasia, Russia, Iran, Africa, and Asia. Then, I discuss Turkey’s policy toward China. After that, Turkey’s perceptions of China will be analyzed for a number of areas,
such as governing and opposition parties, the military, the media, civil society and business communities etc. Chapter 4 has China as its focus. It first describes today’s China, by explaining its domestic politics and foreign policy issues. After that, it deals with the global impact of China’s rise and China’s relations with major countries and organizations. During this discussion, the impact that these changes have on Turkish-Chinese relations will also be elaborated, excepting those that have already been discussed in previous chapters, namely, the debates on international relations that surround a rising China, the multi-polarity from the competition between the US and China, China’s relations with the EU, and China’s relations with Russia and Iran. Then, this chapter briefly deals with China’s policy on Turkey. Lastly it elaborates on China’s perceptions of Turkey. The discussion is not going to be as diverse as Turkey’s perceptions of China, because most of the Chinese actors’ perceptions are largely shaped by the official discourse. Still, on the basis of the interviews that I have conducted and my own observations, I will also present Chinese official, business, media and people’s perceptions in this chapter.

In other words, Part II draws the context of the two countries’ operations in the 21st century together with the developments taking place in Turkey and China.

Once the background/identity and context of each country have been individually discussed, Part III will address specifically Turkish-Chinese relations. In Chapter 5, I elaborate the features of the two countries’ relations. Other sections have discussed Turkey and China’s political and strategic dialogue, party-to-party dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, military and security cooperation, and cultural and educational cooperation. In Chapter 6, I focus on the conflicting areas in their bilateral relations. These issues are mainly down to historical legacies and
incorrect perceptions or general ignorance on the Uyghur issue, trade asymmetry and competition, as well as the stakes in international relations that affect Turkey and China.

I conclude by summarizing what I have been trying to do in this research with a brief overview of the philosophical points highlighted in each chapter. Moreover, select analyses to do with Turkish-Chinese relations and its transformation since 2000 will be addressed, along with the contributions this study stands to make to the methodological and theoretical discussions that surround the international relations of Turkey and China.

I would like to remind the reader that this work does not claim any absolute objectivity. Following the points made in designing my methodology, I do not believe that such objectivity is possible for this topic. Therefore, my endeavors to be objective are limited to my own understanding of objectivity. No matter how hard one tries, it is very hard for one to go entirely outside of his or her constructed cultural codes. Therefore, I accept my own inter-subjectivity with the topic that I am researching. This is not to say that I am just writing my own propaganda. Of course I would like to dig for the truth. Nevertheless, the truth is not one and absolute according to me. Therefore, this work should be read as my perception of what “the reality” is for Turkish-Chinese relations.
PART I – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Chapter 1: Identity Building

When we talk about the identity of a country, we mostly mean its discourses. Identification mostly comes down to the given country’s historical background. As we focus on issues to do with a country’s international relations, we must bear two factors in mind: their domestic politics, and their foreign policies/international relations. Sometimes, a country’s identity is shaped by outside narratives and other times, it is shaped by interior narrative. Thus, self-identification is this thesis’ focus as much as identification from external factors.

Turkey’s Political History

Though one of the major empires in human history, the Ottoman Empire failed to maintain its power in the sixth century of its life. Due to many types of corruption, the Ottomans started to decline in power over in the 19th and 20th centuries. After many years of decline, reform and modernization was on the agenda for Ottoman elites. The rising powers at the time were in Europe, hence modernization meant, “studying” Europe, leaving aside various interpretations of how they should to adopt such ways of modernization due to the discriminatory policies of the Ottomans on non-Muslim minorities, namely Christians. Nevertheless, foreign powers were pressuring Ottomans to reform.\(^46\)

The Ottomans made several attempts to reform its political structure, beginning with the Tanzimat (literally, “reorganizing”) or Gülhane Decree in 1839. The emergence of the Young Ottoman movement followed the Tanzimat Decree, which was constituted by young intellectuals who wanted further reforms on the

agenda. With the promulgation of the First Constitution in 1876 by Sultan Abdülhamid, the constitutional monarchy (I. Meşrutiyet) began. Yet it did not last long, and just few months after its installation, Sultan Abdülhamid dissolved the parliament.

None of those reforms succeeding in stopping the decline of the Empire. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) emerged from the Young Turks Movement (Jeunes Turcs) as a “Turkic nationalism” orientated movement. CUP announced the restoration of the constitutional monarchy in 1908 with a coup. CUP tried to renovate the country with the introduction of elections and a parliament. Nonetheless, during their term from 1908 to 1918, they saw the end, rather than the rebirth, of the Ottoman Empire. This was not only due to their losses in the First World War (WWI), but also to their repression of non-Muslim minorities. The demographic policy of CUP was focused on “expelling or massacring” Christians and “assimilating” non-Turkic Muslims. This period of the Empire is very important for understanding the mentality behind the foundation of the Turkish Republic, as same mentality also preserved the republic.

48 Ibid., 169.
CUP leaders fled from the capital after the Ottomans accepted The Armistice of Mudros – a port on the Aegean island of Limnos in today’s Greece – due to Ottomans’ defeat in 1918. The Armistice ended the war, but unlike other participants in the war it was not followed by a treaty until the Treaty of Sèvres was signed in 1920. The Armistice granted the rights of control and occupation of the straits in Istanbul and Canakkale to the Allies if necessary. In fact, with the Treaty of Sèvres, Allies was responsible for the occupation of more than half of the geographic area of today’s Turkey. However, immediately after that time, all the citizens who had started the national struggle (1919–1922) for the liberation of Turkey were from CUP,\(^52\) including one of the leaders of the national struggle, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)\(^53\) who later founded the republic.\(^54\) Nevertheless, the Treaty of Sèvres was never ratified by the Allies’ parliaments except for Greece, and so the Treaty remained ineffective. With its heavy conditions for Turkey, Ankara refused to accept the Treaty of Sèvres. As a result of the Turkish Independence War in 1923, Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne with the Allies to settle (most of) Turkey’s borders today.

Atatürk abolished the monarchy in 1922, founded the Turkish Republic in 1923, and abolished the caliphate system in 1924. As the president of the republic and the “eternal party chief” of the party state of Turkey, he successfully led Turkey towards secularization in terms of culture, religion and institutions, even though


\(^{54}\) Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 124.
his rule was very undemocratic in nature.\(^{55}\) His modernization, or secularization, meant ‘westernization’ to a large number of people. Furthermore, by westernization, Atatürk meant Turkey’s adoption not only of Western science and technology but also Western mentality and morality.\(^{56}\) That is why his secularization of religious institutions meant laicizing them, namely, taking active control of religion rather than being agnostic towards it.\(^{57}\)

With nationalism becoming the new “religion” of Turkey, a growing Atatürk cult was somehow necessary for Kemalism to achieve the republic’s goals of laicization against well-established traditions and religion.\(^{58}\) Hence his party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP), continued the one party rule during Atatürk’s life, with two failures of introducing opposition parties. After Atatürk’s death in 1938, the premier İsmet (İnönü) Paşa became the new leader of the republic and also the “national chief” of the party. He was another cultish authoritarian leader. However, with pressure from the West in the wake of WWII, Paşa allowed opposition parties to begin multiparty politics in the Turkish political arena.\(^{59}\) If the abolishment of sultanate and caliphate and the establishment of a new regime was the first milestone for a 20th century Turkey, then the establishment of the first opposition party, the Democrat Party (Demokrat Party, or DP) in 1946 and the first free public elections in 1950 were the second.

---

59 Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 293.
Although in its first few years the DP’s program did not differ much from the CHP until it won the elections in 1950,\textsuperscript{60} the DP had to change and become tougher against the CHP through pressure from other means.\textsuperscript{61} As a result, during their years of governance (1950–1960) they made few reforms to ease the authoritarian rule of the state that they had taken from their predecessors.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, Turkey began to ally itself with the West by joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 and applying for membership to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959.\textsuperscript{63} Turkey’s economic liberalization in these years quickly resulted in wide-scale growth and development for the country.\textsuperscript{64}

Beginning with a coup and eventually the hanging of the Prime Minister (PM) Adnan Menderes and two other politicians in 1960,\textsuperscript{65} Turkish politics entered into a new era of military interventions. Following the 1960 coup, the military intervened in Turkey’s politics three times: in 1971, 1980 and 1997.\textsuperscript{66} The coup in 1980 gave birth to a more authoritarian regime in Turkey,\textsuperscript{67} resulting in a constitution that is still being used today.\textsuperscript{68} Having said that, the first elected prime minister in the post-1980 coup elections, Turgut Özal, led the country

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{62} Mete Tunçay "Siyasal Tarih (1950-1960)" in Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{63} Findley, \textit{Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity}, 305.
\textsuperscript{64} Ödekan et al., \textit{Çağdaş türkiye}, 178.
\textsuperscript{65} Karpat, \textit{Studies on Turkish Politics}, 18.
\textsuperscript{66} Lewis, \textit{Emergence}, XI.
\textsuperscript{67} Karpat, \textit{Studies on Turkish Politics}, 22.
\textsuperscript{68} Ahmet İnsel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey,” \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly} 102, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003): 293.
towards liberalization – especially in economics – despite the military junta’s will.69

After the 1980 coup, “political” Islamism started to gain momentum.70 As a result, Necmettin Erbakan and his party, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, or RP) – founded in 1983 as a continuum of National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) that was founded in 1972 and closed in the 1980 coup – drew public attention with high support in municipal elections,71 and with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan becoming Istanbul’s mayor.72 Moreover the success in general elections of 1995, brought the premier chair to Erbakan, but then a military intervention in 1997 took it back from him.73 At the same time, Erdoğan was jailed for reciting a poem and thereafter banned from politics.74 Yet Erdoğan would be the central figure of Turkish politics in the new century after founding the AKP.

**Turkish Foreign Policy**

Although some believe that the controversial Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II – who enjoyed real authority as a sultan 1876–1909 – was relatively successful in his foreign policy-making, even he was critical of his own state and the rulers of the previous century because they did not appear to have a grand strategy.75 The 19th century was the time for the Ottomans to realize that they were no longer “the major power” in the Europe, but rather just one of the major powers. As a result,

---

69 Ibid., 295, 296.
72 İnsel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy,” 297.
73 Gülalp, “Political Islam in Turkey.”
74 İnsel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy,” 297.
the Ottomans gave a lot of concessions to other European countries over the course of the century, mainly to Austria, Russia, France and Great Britain, and the decline further accelerated the dissolution of the Empire.\textsuperscript{76} Meanwhile, with the rise of Germany in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Ottomans developed close relations with Germany in economic and military aspects.\textsuperscript{77}

At the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the citizens behind the Young Turks revolution prepared for the end for the Ottoman Empire, unable to stop the decline. The Young Turks, or CUP, turned the country into a constitutional monarchy, where they ruled the state from 1908–1918. Immediately after 1918, they took the power that the Ottomans lost to a number of countries,\textsuperscript{78} such as Bosnia to Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria becoming independent in 1908; Libya to Italy and the Dodecanese and Samos islands in the Aegean Sea to Greece in 1912; Macedonia, Albania and majority of Thrace to the Balkan League (Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro) in 1913; Cyprus to Britain; Egypt that had been controlled by the British since its occupation in 1882; and Sudan that had been controlled by the British since its occupation in 1889, becoming a Sultanate in 1914 under the British protectorate. The alliance with Germany in WWI also led to big defeat for the empire\textsuperscript{79} and resulted in the cataclysm with the signing of the 1918 Armistice of Mudros, which gave a great deal of freedom to the Allies on Ottoman soil.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 21–29.
\textsuperscript{78} Hale, \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000}, 32.
\textsuperscript{79} Findley, \textit{Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity}, 200.
\textsuperscript{80} Zürcher, \textit{The Young Turk Legacy}, 190, 191.
Hence, the years from 1918–1922 were the years of “national struggle”, or the Independence War for protecting Anatolian land and receiving recognition for borders. During this time, the Treaty of Sèvres (signed in 1920) also worsened conditions for the Ottomans. Therefore, Atatürk and his friends did not accept the treaty and fought instead for independence. Finally, with the Treaty of Lausanne, the Turkish state was recognized and most of its borders were settled. With the agreement, Ottoman territories outside of Turkey were given up in exchange for recognition of the Turkish state and its sovereignty within its new borders. The only change made after the Lausanne Treaty was the Montreux Convention regarding the regime of the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) in 1936 that gave Turkey control of the straits again under certain conditions, as well as control of the southern province of Hatay (also known as Antakya or Antioch) in 1939 after a referendum, as it had become independent after the French Mandate of Syria in 1938. Nonetheless, Hatay’s situation was not accepted by Syria until the turn of the 21st century. There was hope for an official solution before the Syrian Civil War, due to Syria and Turkey developing friendly bilateral relations at the time, however, with the war that became impossible.

From the foundation of the republic in 1923, Atatürk did not follow an expansionist or irredentist foreign policy.\(^{81}\) He managed to lead Turkey to forget about its past and try to preserve what the country had at the time. The famous slogan of Atatürk was “peace at home, peace abroad”. This slogan is self-explanatory and very much in the sense of the foreign policy of the time.\(^{82}\)

---

\(^{81}\) Tunçay, T.C. ‘nde tek parti yönetimini’nin kurulması (1923-1931) [Establishing the one party rule in Republic of Turkey (1923-1931)], 330, 331.

\(^{82}\) Bilge Criss and Pinar Bilgin, “Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Middle East,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1997): 1–11.
era’s foreign policy was seen as “active isolation”\textsuperscript{83} to some, and “relative autonomy”\textsuperscript{84} to others. The common point was that Turkey focused on its domestic development as a newborn state and did not take any radical steps to improving international relations. The main focus was to maintain a peaceful environment with Turkey’s neighbors by signing the Balkan Pact in 1934 with Balkan countries (this Pact lasted until 1938), and the Sadabad Pact in 1937 with Middle Eastern countries (this became ineffective after WWII).\textsuperscript{85} In the broader sense, Turkey had earlier joined League of Nations in 1932 and simply kept a low profile by preserving their distances to other major powers while WWII approached.\textsuperscript{86}

Under the steering of İnönü, Turkey kept a neutral position during the WWII years in order to remove itself from the war as much as possible.\textsuperscript{87} The declaration of war against Germany and Japan only came in February 1945, in an effort to become one of the founding members of the United Nations. However, Turkey’s neutrality had to shift due to the Soviet threat and fears of isolation.\textsuperscript{88} Turkey’s seek for an alliance from the West even made Turkey change its domestic

\textsuperscript{83} Kösebalaban, \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy}, 53.
\textsuperscript{84} Baskın Oran, ed., \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents}, trans. Mustafa Akşin, Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 141.
\textsuperscript{86} Mustafa Çufalı “Lozan Sonrası Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası” in Adem Çaylak et al., eds., \textit{Osmanli’dan ikibinli yıllara Türkiye’nin politik tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika}, 2nd ed. (Savaş Yayınevi, 2010), 250–253.
\textsuperscript{87} Kösebalaban, \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy}, 66; Süleyman Seydi, “1939-1945 Dönemi İç ve Dış Politika [Domestic and Foreign Policy During the 1939-1945 Era],” in \textit{Osmanli’dan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Foreign Politics]}, ed. Adem Çaylak et al., 2nd ed. (Savaş Yayınevi, 2010), 270.
\textsuperscript{88} Zürcher, \textit{The Young Turk Legacy}, 293.
political environment. In order to attract Western support, İnönü had to allow for democratization and multi-party politics.\textsuperscript{89}

The international post-war environment, which resulted in the emergence of the Cold War, led Turkey to become more Western-oriented, meaning further distancing of itself from the East and/or Islamic world.\textsuperscript{90} Turkey needed to feel safe against the threat from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which was already at Turkey’s doorstep. Therefore, immediately after its foundation in 1949, Turkey showed an interest in NATO and was officially applied to the organization in 1950. Yet Scandinavian countries were particularly opposed to Turkey’s membership, claiming that Turkey, like Greece, was neither Atlantic nor democratic.\textsuperscript{91} In order to prove its determination and commitment to the Western block, Turkey sent troops to the Korean War under the UN mandate.\textsuperscript{92} As a result, Turkey’s courtship with the West came into fruition as their NATO membership in 1952.

Between 1950 and 1960, the DP government further developed Turkey’s alliance with the West, in line with its liberalization in domestic politics.\textsuperscript{93} As with the pre-WWII era, there were two pacts in which Turkey took part: the first was the 1953 Balkan Pact with Greece and Yugoslavia (the Pact become ineffective after the Cyprus crisis in 1954 and was officially dissolved in 1960), and the 1955 Baghdad Pact with its Middle Eastern neighbors (later in 1959, it became the

\textsuperscript{89} Seydi, “1939-1945 Dönemi İc ve Dış Politika [Domestic and Foreign Policy During the 1939-1945 Era],” 297.
\textsuperscript{90} Karpat, Studies on Turkish Politics, 509.
\textsuperscript{92} Yasemin Çelik, Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1999), xii.
\textsuperscript{93} Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000, 111.
Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO, and was dissolved in 1979). Both of these pacts were made with the support of the US. Nonetheless, this time the nature of the organizations with whom Turkey allied differed a little from similar pacts from the Atatürk era. Preserving peace and constituting mutual dialogue channels were the aims of the former institutions. While creating regional blockades against the Soviets was on the agenda for the latter institutions.\(^{94}\) Another major issue that arose in those years was the Cyprus situation. Tensions resulted in an agreement between Turkey and Greece, and the Cyprus Republic was established in 1960.\(^{95}\)

With the request of the US, Turkey first deployed Jupiter missiles with nuclear warheads in 1959, removing them in 1963 in exchange for the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis.\(^{96}\) Overall, the Western alliance at the time had also meant some risks for Turkish interests, such as losing autonomy or national interests, or finding itself in the midst of a global war.\(^{97}\) Meanwhile, Turkey’s application to the EEC in 1959 and its membership in 1964 were other important developments in the country’s Western alignment.\(^{98}\)

Along with the latest developments to international relations, the military coup in 1960 prepared for a new political environment in Turkey. As a result of some

---

\(^{94}\) Cihat Göktepe, “Demokrat Parti Dönemi İç ve Dış Siyasi Gelişmeler [Important Domestic and External Political Developments During the Democrat Party Era],” in *Osmanlı’dan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Forreign Politics]*, ed. Adem Çaylak et al., 2nd ed. (Savaş Yayınevi, 2010), 375.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 376–386.

\(^{96}\) Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 75.

\(^{97}\) Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, 137, 138.

disappointments in the West, such as its stance on Cyprus, anti-West rhetoric gained some ground in Turkey.\textsuperscript{99} First in 1964, then again in 1974, the Cyprus issue became the main focus of Turkish foreign policy, and loosened Turkish ties with the West due to lack of support on the issue.\textsuperscript{100} At the same time, Turkey started to look towards Eastern and Muslim communities. In 1969, Turkey attended the Rabat conference with other Muslim nations to establish the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). These shifts in its relations were not only a response to its disappointment in the West, but were also the consequence of a new political environment after the coup that gave opportunity for neutral or leftist politicians such as Bülent Ecevit.\textsuperscript{101}

From 1971’s domestic military intervention to the 1980 coup, Turkey’s prime minister was changed ten times. All of these prime ministers led a coalition or minority government.\textsuperscript{102} Therefore, saying there were no new policy orientations would not be very inaccurate due to the weak governments and frequent change in power. The 1974 Cyprus intervention led to a series of events that made Turkey’s Western and US alignment drift apart.\textsuperscript{103} First, the US designed a military embargo against Turkey. As a response, US bases in Turkey closed down. The embargo ended not long after the Turkish PM Ecevit started to talk about the possibility of withdrawing from NATO in 1978. The years from 1960–1980 were relatively multi-dimensional in terms of Turkey’s foreign policy, where the country worked to establish and develop relations with the “Third World”, the “East” and the “Muslim World”. At this point, it is important to underline that the

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 461.  
\textsuperscript{100} Uzer, Identity and Turkish Foreign Policy, 69.  
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 70.  
\textsuperscript{102} Kösebalaban, Turkish Foreign Policy, 92.  
\textsuperscript{103} Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000, 161.
Cyprus issue became very complicated and resulted in stalemate in 1983 with the declaration of independence of the “Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic” (Northern Cyprus), which is only recognized by Turkey. Since then, the Cyprus issue has become one of the most important problems for Turkish foreign policy-makers.

Soviet’s invasion of Afghanistan and Iran’s Islamic revolution in 1979 vastly changed the environment in the Middle East just before the 1980s. We could say that is why NATO welcomed another coup in 1980, regarding Turkey’s growing geostrategic importance due to the potential risks that Afghanistan and Iran might pose.\textsuperscript{104} Once again, the military junta shifted the country towards the West during the years that they were in power.\textsuperscript{105} After the first free elections, Özal, who had previously worked in the World Bank, became the PM of the majority government cabinet.\textsuperscript{106} His background and work experience made him ideologically close to Western leaders.\textsuperscript{107} Moreover, under his premiership and presidency, Turkey aligned with the West to a great extent.\textsuperscript{108} In 1987, Turkey applied to the EEC for full membership. Özal’s intentional alignment with the West, particularly with the US, resulted in positive Western relations at the time, such as support to the US in the Gulf War.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{105} Uzer, Identity and Turkish Foreign Policy, 71.
\textsuperscript{106} Karpat, Studies on Turkish Politics, 23.
\textsuperscript{107} Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000, 164.
\textsuperscript{108} Uzer, Identity and Turkish Foreign Policy, 71.
\textsuperscript{109} Kösebalaban, Turkish Foreign Policy, 123; Findley, Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity, 369.
At the beginning of the 1990s, everything changed for Turkey in the global arena. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave birth to five Turkic states in Central Asia, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The emergence of the new environment during a relatively strong leadership under Özal encouraged immediate attempts to develop projects that would integrate this Central Asian “Turkic world” with Turkey. Özal made specific policies for the Balkans, Central Asia and the Middle East that were based on ethnic, cultural and religious commonalities – crucially, these were seen as neo-Ottomanism by the West.

The demise of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War, as well as the disappearance of the threat to Turkey. As a cause of this, the reliance on the West was also diminished. Under these circumstances, Turkey entered another decade that was similar to that after the 1971 intervention in terms of the nature of governments. There were ten minority and/or coalition governments in charge from 1991 to 2002. These years mainly lacked a strong government in domestic politics, and the decade spent with identity seeking in the new international settings in terms of foreign policy.

The first major topic of the time was Turkey’s Customs Union agreement with the EU in 1995 and the declaration of the country’s “candidate” status in 1999. Even

---

110 Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası [Turgut Özal Era Turkish Foreign Policy],” in Osmanlı’dan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Foreign Politics], ed. Adem Çaylak et al., 2nd ed. (Savaş Yayınevi, 2010), 626.
111 Ibid., 614, 627.
112 Hale, Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000, 191.
though these pro-Western developments happened during these years, Turkey also saw the rise of political Islamism under the Welfare Party of Erbakan, which led to an active diplomacy with other Muslim countries.\footnote{Kösebalaban, \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy}, 135, 136.}

Nevertheless, the military once again intervened in politics in 1997 by forcing the Erbakan government to resign. Those years were uncertain times for Turkish foreign policy as well as the country’s domestic politics. As a result, in 2002 the AKP came into power. This meant a new era for both Turkish political history and foreign policy.

Just before the AKP era had begun, Turkish foreign policy could be characterized as in the following paragraph despite all the ambiguities. The 1997 coup makers once again underlined Turkey’s alignment with the West. As a result, Turkey once again aligned itself with the West. We could say that the EU, NATO and the US were the main priorities for Turkey. Nevertheless, we should not forget Turkey’s developing relations with Muslim countries during Erbakan’s rule. Even after the 1997 coup, Turkey’s administrators developed relations with the Middle East region. What is more, 9/11 shifted global focus to the ME. Therefore, ME was coming into the eye of the world long before the AKP.

At that time, China was already giving signals of becoming a global power in the near future. Nonetheless, it was hard to find China in Turkey’s foreign policy priorities. Only six years before the AKP came into power in 2002, Turkey initiated a policy adjustment for China, and China entered into Turkey’s strategic planning in that year. Hence, we could argue that just before the AKP came into power, not only was the Middle East set to become a focus region for Turkey’s
foreign policy, but that China was also set to become a major partner for the medium term. The most important indicator of this was the “enhanced partnership” agreement that was signed in 2000 by China and Turkey.

**China’s Political History**

China’s part in Western imperialist expansionism in the 19th century was very unpleasant. Namely, the consequences from the Opium Wars’ were very tough for the Qing Empire. At the same time, the defeat to the Japanese at the end of the 19th century, along with China’s suppressed relationship with the West marked the “Humiliation Century” for China according to CCP propaganda.115 The empire also experienced a number of frustrating events, such as the Taiping Rebellion, the Nian Rebellion, numerous Muslim rebellions such as the Panthay (Yunnan) and New Sect (Northwest China) Rebellions, the Boxer Uprising and so on.116 In sum, the whole century was a nightmare for the Chinese empire. Obviously, developments in the century were big challenges to the Confucian state establishment that had been dominant for more than a thousand years. The reform endeavors were begun in the same manner as many other declining powers of the century.

Kang Youwei (康有为) and his Hundred Day Reform colleagues sought to combine Western techniques with the Chinese spirit at the end of the century. However, they did not have a strong political reform agenda. The Empress Dowager Ci Xi did not want to see them succeed, and so intervened in the

administration with a coup and terminated the reform process on its hundredth day of establishment. Nonetheless, the big event of the century, the Boxer Rebellion, and following events enforced the Manchu Empire to adjust some of its reforms.

The coming decade or so consisted a roughly three-phase transition to the warlord era of China. These were found in the direct/indirect foreign enforced reforms, a revolution that was partly fermented in the reform environment, and the unity of the country under a new dictatorial rule. The Boxer Protocol and later developments made reform necessary for Manchu administrators, in order to prevent any foreign intervention. These reforms empowered people to prepare the environment for Sun Yat-sen’s (Sun Zhongshan) Xinhai Revolution in 1911. After the official foundation of the Republic of China in 1912, Sun was made to give way to another monarchy philanthropist, Yuan Shikai, to become president, and Sun had to keep struggling in non-unified China after Yuan’s death in 1916.

The 1911 Xinhai Revolution marked the end of Imperial China. Even so, it was hardly the beginning of a “new China”. First of all, President Yuan wanted to establish his dictatorial rule over China (1911–1916). The death of Yuan in 1916 did not end chaos for the country; on the contrary, it only marked the beginning of yet another fragmented era. Chinese generals started to rule their own regions and

each tried to capture Beijing to claim presidency and unify the country. During this warlord era, there was not only military and political chaos, but also a lack of ideological grounds for driving the country. The May 4th movement (1919) consolidated most of the country’s nationalist intellectuals, who started to make their voices heard. In fact, the two mainstream parties, the Nationalist Party of Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CCP) emerged from and were shaped within this movement. Both parties were ideologically close to the Soviet Union, perhaps as a product of the May 4th movement, itself a reaction to the West and its Versailles agreement.

Under these uncertainties, there were a considerable number of changes: the CCP had been founded, the KMT had been reorganized, and warlords were still fighting with each other. The CCP and the KMT first formed the United Front and fought against the warlords; then they split up again and fought against each other. In 1926, Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) started his Northern Expedition and defeated most of the warlords. In 1928, Chiang Kai-shek seized the Beiyang capital Beijing and announced the reorganization of the government in Nanjing under KMT rule.

However, it was one year before Chiang Kai-shek’s official establishment of the Nanjing government that the CCP started to organize an army in response to the purge of some CCP members and other leftists from the Wuhan KMT government. The clashes between these two parties began as early as 1927. It remained so until 1937, when Japanese troops fought with Chinese troops and the Sino-Japanese

---

121 Ibid., 48, 49.
war officially started. During this period, the CCP thrived in the rural areas, and even founded a soviet government in Jiangxi in 1931, until it was finally forced to relocate through the Long March from 1934 to 1936. Just before the Japanese war broke out, Mao Zedong became the leader of the CCP and Yan’an became its central camp. Overall, this first civil war of China between the KMT and CCP was rather low profile, due to CCP’s weakness and Japanese aggression.

Although the Japanese had started to harass the Chinese as early as 1931, the Sino-Japanese War officially broke out in 1937 when the Japanese took control of Beiping, Tianjin, Shanghai and then eventually the capital Nanjing. The KMT and CCP armies constituted the second United Front. The war lasted eight years, until the US bombed Japan with nuclear weapons. Until that point, the Chinese had resisted the Japanese invasion on all fronts, but it had not been enough to entirely relinquish the Japanese. Eventually, the KMT moved the capital from Nanjing to Chongqing. The Nanjing Massacre occurred after Japanese occupation in Nanjing. At the end of the war, China was devastated. Japan had been defeated by the US. Perhaps the only winners of the war were Soviet Union and the CCP in East Asia. Mao’s main focus during the war was to expand China’s territories and human capacity. He used the Japanese War to enlarge the Army from some thirty thousand soldiers to nine hundred thousand. Furthermore, the weaponry that transferred from the Soviet Army to CCP in Manchuria due to the Soviet

125 Ibid., 80.
occupation in Manchuria in 1945 helped a lot to the Red Army later in the civil war.

When the Japanese War ended with the end of the WWII, the CCP and its army were much more stronger than before. With the US as mediators, the KMT made an effort to rehabilitate with the CCP. Despite this attempt, the rehabilitation process did not succeed and the two sides began another civil war that would last three years, from 1946 to the foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The KMT first had to retreat to Chongqing and then finally to Taiwan, giving birth to today’s de facto “two China” structure.

As the Chairman of the CCP, Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People’s Republic of China with its capital as Beijing on 1 October 1949. This was a remarkable day for China. It would not be the final important turning point for 20th century China, but it was probably the most important one at that time, as it marked the end of China’s long-running interior wars. However, this was not at all the end of the domestic chaos, and the following period saw many disastrous events during Mao’s rule.

Through the years he ruled China, Mao always used mass movements to mobilize both party members and society. People’s Republic of China has experienced Land Reform, the Rectification Movement, 3-Anti, and 5-Anti, de-Stalinization, Hundred Flowers Movement, Anti-rightist campaign and Great Leap Forward

The results of the latest campaign were total disaster for China: the economy was halted and society collapsed. Due to the famine occurring after the GLF, China lost around fifty million people.\(^\text{129}\)

1966 was the year for another catastrophic event: the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This was another mass movement, begun under Mao’s dictatorship; targeted and destroyed the party organization, and eventually the country fell into yet more chaos.\(^\text{130}\) Beside the causalities, the social trauma that China experienced at this time was very harmful.\(^\text{131}\) Even though the active phase of the campaign lasted two years, the aftermath and subsequent recovery could not happen until after Mao’s death in 1976.

Without any doubt, 1976 was one of the most important dates for China in the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. It could even be considered China’s “second birthday”, since China was reborn after Deng Xiaoping’s political triumph and the change he brought after Mao’s death. Deng, who had been previously removed from the government twice, had enough time to bring about change for the CCP and to the country in a post-Mao era.\(^\text{132}\) The country was already in a bad condition, so it was not very hard for Deng to establish his dominance in two years and apply a totally new


pragmatic reform agenda that gave room for economic liberalization. With the “reform and opening up”, the “socialism with Chinese characteristics” started to be built. That meant the creation of a Chinese style “free market” under state control.

There were signals for the country’s political liberalization from early 80s, with the influence of economic opening and closer engagement with the world economic system. Then, in 1989, the dramatic Tiananmen massacre took place. The reaction from Deng and his party signaled that liberalization only regarded the economy and the party’s rule. The party’s secretary at the time, Zhao Ziyang, and his reformist agenda were blamed for the massacre. Consequently, Deng replaced Zhao with Jiang Zemin and Zhao was later arrested. Economic liberalization, which stalled after 1989, was brought back rather quickly with the warning of the Soviet’s failing conservative coup. The 14th congress of the CCP under Deng’s lead in 1992 gave a very strong reform message. With Deng’s death in 1997, yet another chapter for Chinese politics was over.

The CCP institutionalized a power transition for the next leadership transitions. From 1989 to 1992, Jiang took important seats from his predecessors. Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang (2002–2004) and Xi Jinping succeeded Hu (2012–13). Jiang’s notion of “three representatives” (that is, the CCP’s representation of advanced productivity, advanced culture and the interest of the majority) was placed into the

134 Ibid., 73.
136 Ibid., 64–71.
party constitution, giving opportunity for “red capitalists” to find their place in the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{137}

From then on, China did not encounter any significant problems as they had experienced with the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen. The eras of Jiang and Hu were symbolized as the start to a rising China. The most important developments in the Jiang era were Hong Kong and Macao’s return to the mainland, as well as China’s accession to the World Trade Organization at the turn of the new century.

**Chinese Foreign Policy**

Historical and cultural emotions, such as the feeling of superiority,\textsuperscript{138} led the “Middle Kingdom” to undervalue foreign relations.\textsuperscript{139} For the Chinese, foreigners did not have anything worth introducing to China, and this was made clear when the country refused all embassy openings from other countries.\textsuperscript{140} However, regardless as to whether or not they wanted communication with the West, the West made Chinese want what they were offering in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century. As a result of a xenophobic environment, the events of the “humiliation century” led to the Boxer Revolution. The irony was that Sun Yat-sen and Chen Duxiu, who both studied abroad and were in favor of such foreign ideologies as democracy and


\textsuperscript{140} Wright, *The History of China*, 106.
socialism, later became initiators of various revolutions and leaders of the two main parties.

Chinese suffering from the outside world did not come to an end with the foundation of the Republic of China. Yuan Shikai gave a lot of concessions to the Japanese, and the Chinese also felt mistreated during the Versailles Treaty. China’s “humiliation”, then, continued until the very end of WWII.

As a whole, Chinese international relations went through two very unique periods of change: the first was from 1912 to 1928, namely Yuan Shikai and the Warlord era, when it was very hard to talk about a “unified nation”. Many regions were controlled by different generals, and there were a lot of concession areas with the presences of Russia, United States, Britain, Germany, France, Japan and so on. The second period began with Chiang Kai-shek’s unification of the country until the Communist revolution. A long war was fought against the Japanese, which brought China into World War II. An emerging Communist Party, openly directed by the Soviet Union, intertwined China’s relationship with USSR. American assistance during the war and interference in the civil war made American influence stronger than before in China. Those developments were all about China’s domestic politics, yet always with a foreign power involved in. It can thus be concluded that China’s once internal relations had become international relations.


When the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, China began to refresh its international relations policy. The communist block first recognized the country, followed by a few Western countries in the following year. Since that time, the non-recognition of the Republic of China/Taiwan and China’s reunification with this territory has become a major issue for Chinese Foreign Ministry.

The good international position of the first few years of Mao’s China was confirmed through friendship and alliance treaties signed between the Soviet Union and China, as well as China’s military support to North Korea during the Korean War.\(^{143}\) After Stalin’s death, China began to separate from the USSR, culminating in the early 60s. Soviets became adversaries in Mao’s foreign relations and, at the same time, the US caused a secondary threat according to him.\(^ {144}\) It gave an opportunity for the US to reduce antagonism in Sino-US relations. At the same time, Mao sought support from the “third world” which, according to him, was “suffering from the USSR and the US via the hands of the developed world”. China’s support from Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries were in line with the peaceful concept behind Zhou Enlai’s Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence policy at the Bandung Conference in 1955, until that all changed with Mao’s “three worlds” rhetoric in 60s.\(^ {145}\)


China’s split from Soviet Russia began in the early 60s and did not end until Gorbachev’s rise to power and his visit to Beijing in 1989.\textsuperscript{146} In fact, the crisis between China and Soviet Russia from the 60s to the 80s deepened in several ways, from border tensions and clashes, through issues with minorities, to Soviet invasion of socialist Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{147} The increasing animosity did not directly mean China’s closer relation with the “capitalist Western world”, but the Cold War did distance them from Soviet Russia and instead align them to the US and the West. Indeed, the Sino-Soviet split eventually gave rise to China and the West’s rapprochement, in the wake of China’s self-imposed isolation at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

US president Richard Nixon’s desire to normalize relationships with China and his special assistant Henry Kissinger’s diplomacy resulted in China being brought back into the global community. Nixon’s words in the 1971 Ping-Pong diplomacy, which emphasized the need not only to normalize relations but also to end China’s global isolation was the first move in China’s admittance to the UN later that year.\textsuperscript{148} The ROC’s replacement and name change to the PRC for the United Nations began a new chapter in China’s foreign relations. China also established diplomatic relations with Japan, historically their enemy, in 1972.

China’s rapprochement with the “capitalist world” was later intensified, especially after Mao’s death. After a decade of close diplomacy, the US and China officially announced their bilateral relations in 1979. The general trend for China’s foreign

\textsuperscript{146} Marc Lanteigne, \textit{Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction} (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 5.  
\textsuperscript{147} Mackerras, McMillen, and Watson, \textit{Ditctionary}, 45.  
policy was to accommodate to the international system in order to ensure domestic development, especially after Deng’s presidency. During this period of change, China engaged with the world system and grew economically and financially.

Nonetheless, Tiananmen incident in 1989 was a shock for the world as well as China. China returned to its hostile rhetoric against the West, blaming them for trying to eliminate Chinese socialism by conspiring or meddling.\textsuperscript{149} As a result, a number of countries halted their projects with China and stalled diplomatic relationships. During these lonely days for China, Japan was interestingly the country that was there as comfort in terms of international relations.\textsuperscript{150}

After the Tiananmen shock, a second shock came with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. China was skeptical and worried about the dissolution. Nevertheless, the healing relationship of the two did not sanctioned too much with Soviet’s giving a pass to the Tiananmen and finding solutions on the border issues. Russia quickly rethought its policy with China and their bilateral relations were elevated to “strategic partnership” just a few years after the Soviet Union’s dissolution.\textsuperscript{151}

In order to recover from its isolation, China focused on normalizing and improving relations with its neighbors as well as other global and regional powers. First, China tried to maintain its non-assertive style, which had become famous after Deng Xiaoping’s approach of “Tao Guang Yang Hui (韬光养晦)”. This

\textsuperscript{149} Fewsmith, \textit{China since Tiananmen}, 42.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 130, 131.
approach referred to his seven principles of preserving a low profile as much as possible. However, a few years later during the transition era to the post-Deng era (alternatively, the post-Tiananmen era), this type of passive diplomacy was abandoned in favor of a more active and “responsible” one by the Jiang Zemin administration. Therefore, signing international treaties and joining with international organizations became another tool for integrating China into the global system.

First, China established the Shanghai Five with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan in 1996, in order to solve border issues. After Uzbekistan’s membership to the organization in 2001, it became known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It continues to expand its reach, but the SCO’s destiny is still yet to be determined and it is far from forging a powerful alliance. Since then, China joined and/or co-founded some of its most important multilateral organizations, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). China’s entrance to the WTO was a remarkable event, and one that could be considered one of its most important turning points, with regards to the countries integration into the established global system. Regardless of their relative importance, those important engagements that began in the late 1990s and continue through the 2010s marked a new global era for China.

There were also unpleasant events taking place at this time. Just before the US mistakenly bombed the PRC’s Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1999, China and

---


153 Ibid.
the US had failed to reach an agreement about the WTO. Furthermore, the Chinese did not feel comfortable with their treatment by the US. Moreover the Chinese felt there was an “anti-Chinese” climate, with spying and human rights abuses allegations from the rest of the world. As a result of this, a new nationalism started to emerge for the Chinese people and their government.\footnote{Fewsmith, \textit{China since Tiananmen}, 211.}

Since then, this new nationalistic trend has continued and has even become exacerbated from other issues such as the debate of the “rising China threat” in the international community and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands crisis with Japan.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter, in order to better understand today’s Turkey and China, I have summarized the important factors that have affected the construction of Turkish and Chinese state identity over the last century.

For Turkey, we can say that Turkish identity revolves around debates to do with laicism-islamism-secularism. Laicism implies the state’s stance during and after the Kemalist revolution, and was a process of taking control of public religion. Another important factor was the influence, or intervention, of the Turkish army in politics. The republic was founded and governed by soldiers until the democratic elections were held. After the introduction of the elections in the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the army intervened four times in Turkish politics, sometimes by directly taking control of administration.

In matters of foreign policy, as Turkey’s Europeanization process continued, so did the debate about Turkey’s secularization. Debates about laicism-islamism-
secularism also resonated with Turkish foreign policy. The Kemalist revolution could be considered as a process of westernization, although Turkey kept a relative distance from the West during its early republic. Nevertheless, due to the rise of the Soviet threat to Turkey at the end of the WWII, Turkey realigned with the West. As a result, Turkey not only became a longstanding ally of the US but also became an early member of NATO, as well as an admirer of and applicant for the EU (then the EC). Nevertheless, Turkey has culturally and historically distinct features from the West, which have often been a topic of discussion in the continuing debate on Turkish accession to the EU.

China, founded by a communist party, has had a marginalized identity construction. Even before that, the tumultuous years China that experienced during the Qing Empire left a deep impact on the country, considered by the Communist Party as the “humiliation century”. In addition, the Japanese War and Chinese Civil War also left a lot of implications for China’s identification of itself and its foreign policy today. China has suffered a great deal during those “humiliation” years, as well as after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China from wars, droughts, hungers, famines and chaotic campaigns, among others. However, in the late 70s China started to become more pragmatic – thanks to Deng Xiaoping – and invested in a liberalization of economy. That brought a rising China to the global arena. In the Deng and post-Deng years, China started to quickly grow. Before the 21st century, China had been struggling to integrate itself into the world system.
Chapter 2: History of Turkey and China’s Bilateral Relations

The two countries established diplomatic relations with each other in 1971. Hence, 1971 was one of the most important turning points in modern Turkish-Chinese relations. Nevertheless, until the 21st century there would be no high-profile relations after the establishment of official relations among the modern states. As the period from 2000–2015 and Turkish-Chinese relations in that term will be the focus of what follows, I will only focus on pre-21st century developments in Turkish-Chinese relations here.

Old Days and Historical Legacies

Positioned at opposite edges of the biggest continent (Asia), Turkey and China were once imperial neighbors. It is known that the ancestors of today’s Turkey can be dated back to the Ottomans and the Seljuk. The ancestors of Seljuk and the Ottomans are known as the Oghuz tribes, which are today widely known as Turkmens or Turcoman. These Turkic tribes had migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia around thousands years ago. The Oghuz had relations and wars with other Turkic tribes, as well as independent regional states around the 7th century. Those states and tribes were called the Gök-Türk, the Uyghur, the Kyrgyz, and so on. These Turkic-language speaking groups were referred to as Tujue (突厥), as well as the Gök-Türk (Khanate) in Chinese records as early as 540 AD.156 However, there have been many theories regarding the origins of the word Tujue, which differ depending on whether Turkish or Chinese accounts are being read.

156 Xue Zongzheng (薛宗正), 突厥史 [History of Tujue] (中国社会科学出版社, 1992), 791.
Some argued that Turks were either descendants of the Huns (and Turkish accounts are arguing Huns were *Xiongnu*, 匈奴), or descendants of the Chinese, while others claimed that the Turks were the ancestors of the Chinese. Regardless of the truth behind the latter two extremes, the fact is that relations between the two countries extend well beyond the millennium. Due to some of the above theories, the Great Wall symbolizes the first Turkic group’s encounters with the Chinese, and the Wall was believed by many Turks to have been built against them. Nonetheless, it should be safe to say that the first recorded Turkish-Chinese contacts were in the 6th century by the Gök-Türk Khanate, located in inner Asia – today’s Xinjiang, Mongolia, Central Asia, between the Altai mountains and Qinghai Lake – and the Zhou Dynasty, approximately located in most of today’s Shaanxi, Sichuan, Guizhou provinces.

The Turks began to move towards Anatolia after establishing the Uyghur Khanate, located mostly in today’s Mongolia and Inner Mongolia (744–840 AD) and the Oghuz Yabgu State located in today’s Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (750–1055 AD), which had been established shortly after the Gök-Türk Khanate. It was in the 11th century, after migration and wars, when the Turks finally settled...
in Asia Minor as the Great Seljuk Empire.\textsuperscript{163} As the West was the migratory direction for the Turks, China had started to become irrelevant. Notwithstanding China’s increasing “remoteness” over the centuries, Turkey and China continued to have numerous cultural exchanges, such as artistic influences from China coming to several Turcic states.\textsuperscript{164}

Even after the foundation and development of the Ottoman Empire in the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the Turks did not have very close relations with China. Diplomatic contacts were only made possible through their respective embassies in European countries, as they did not have embassies in each other’s capitals.\textsuperscript{165} However, as a result of the Silk Road trade, Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace (now a museum) started to house a great collection of Chinese porcelains.\textsuperscript{166} Ottomans pottery also imitated more than a dozen figures based on Chinese works.\textsuperscript{167} Further, the Turkish word for the famous Turkish craft “tile” mistakenly started to become \textit{çini} (literally, Chinese), which was a clear reference to Chinese porcelains.\textsuperscript{168} Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that Chinese historical documents refer to

\textsuperscript{163} Şalbayev, “Oğuzların Göçleri ve Yayılmaları [Migration and Spread Out of Oghuz],” 184.
\textsuperscript{165} Selda Altan, “Sighting the Ottomans from the East: Chinese Intellectual Transition from Imperial to National Imagination through the Ottomans at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” (Master’s, Boğaziçi University, 2009), 5.
\textsuperscript{167} Ma Wenkuan (马文宽), “中国瓷器与土耳其陶器的相互影响 [The Influence of Chinese Porcelain in Turkey],” 故宫博物院院刊, no. 5 (2004): 82.
Ottoman Empire as Rûm (Lumeiguo 芦眉国 in Song Dynasty, Lumi 魑迷 or Lumiguo 魑迷国 in Ming Dynasty), which associates to the Roman.  

During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) nineteen Ottoman envoys were sent to China on several occasions from 1524 to the end of the Dynasty. The nature of the envoys could be understood when we think about Ottomans being listed as a part of the tributary system of China. These Ottoman envoys were bringing presents from their Sultans to the Ming Emperors. Among them there were even large delegations consisting of almost 100 people sent by Sultan Suleiman, or Suleiman the Magnificent. Sometimes, the Chinese statesmen thought of these envoys rather skeptically, claiming that the Ottomans had weak relations with China, and that therefore the envoys were rather in China for ulterior motives such as espionage and plans to harm China.

An important moment in Turkish-Chinese relations was the establishment of a direct link in today’s Xinjiang, between the short-lived Kashgar Khanate (1864–1877) – founded by Yaqub Beg – and the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph of the time,

171 Fidan, “Çin Kaynaklarına Göre 16. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Çin İlişkileri ve Çin’deki Osmanlı Ateşli Silahları [16th century Ottoman Chinese relations and Ottoman firearms in China according to Chinese historical texts],” 64.
Abdülayiz.\textsuperscript{174} The Ottoman Sultan helped Beg by sending weapons and military personnel to the khanate. This relationship led to the recognition of the Caliph in Istanbul as a religious leader.\textsuperscript{175} It would not be an exaggeration to say that there was a political, religious and military alliance between the Ottoman Empire and the Kashgar Khanate. The Sultan’s support of the rebellion and the establishment of official diplomatic relations with the khanate were very bold statements. It did not make the Chinese happy and China questioned the status of Muslims in China. General respect for the Ottomans declined in the Chinese press.\textsuperscript{176}

The reasons behind Ottoman interest in Xinjiang at the time had more to do with Russian rivalry than opposing China. Sultan Abdülayiz was trying to help the Turkic people in the region (as well as other tribes in Central Asia) to be able to retaliate against Russia in case of invasion. In any case, this was the first record of Ottoman (Turkish) involvement in the independence of East Turkestan.\textsuperscript{177} Nevertheless, interest soon changed after the deaths of Sultan Abdülayiz, and Yaqub Beg two years later. Next, in 1876 Abdülahmid II reigned over the Ottomans. Abdülahmid was interested into the plight of Turkic people in China, but he considered them more a part of a Muslim, rather than a specifically Turkic community.\textsuperscript{178} In other words, Abdülahmid’s policies were more pan-Islamist than they were pan-Turkist. What is noticeable is that Ottoman documents of the

\textsuperscript{174} Altan, “Sighting the Ottomans from the East,” 37–38.
\textsuperscript{175} Eyüp Ersoy, “An Analysis of Turkish-Chinese (Military) Relations” (Master’s, Bilkent University, 2008), 50.
\textsuperscript{176} Altan, “Sighting the Ottomans from the East,” 38–39.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 123, 126, 133.
time refer to the region as *Türkistan-ı Çini* (Chinese Turkestan) rather than *Şarkı Türkistan* (East Turkestan).¹⁷⁹

After the deadly events of the Boxer Rebellion, German Emperor Wilhelm II requested his ally Sultan Abdülhamid II to send a delegation to China for calming Chinese Muslims in northwest China down, as this group was also taking part in the rebellion. Sultan Abdülhamid sent a delegation in 1901 and contacts were made. Nevertheless, when the delegation arrived in Shanghai, there was almost no need for them, as most of the trouble had already dissipated.

Furthermore, there had been many controversies from British skeptics about the Ottoman delegation; that the Sultan was trying to exploit the mission by exerting his own influence on Chinese Muslims – this could have been dangerous as Muslim uprisings were already happening.¹⁸⁰ In reality, the Ottoman delegation distributed pamphlets to Chinese Muslims under the name of the “Caliph of the Muslims”, inviting a Chinese Hui Muslim scholar and Imam, Wang Haoran (王浩然), who was famous for his modernizing views of Islamic education in China.¹⁸¹

Following Wang’s visit to Istanbul in 1906, Sultan sent another delegation of Ottoman teachers to Beijing. There, with the help of Imam Wang they built a university in the backyard of the Beijing Niujie Mosque (牛街清真寺) in 1908.

---

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 116.
¹⁸⁰ Altan, “Sighting the Ottomans from the East,” 40–42.
Chinese Muslims paid homage to the Sultan by naming the school “Hamidiye University”.\(^{182}\)

Meanwhile, the Young Turks had started to be the main acting party for Turkey’s politics – and they had a rather different ideology than that of Sultan Abdülhamid. Pan-Islamist ideologies were changed in favor of pan-Turkish ideologies. That had certain implications for Xinjiang. Pan-Islamism claimed all Muslims around the world were linked to the Caliph (the Ottoman Sultan), including the Uyghur and Hui people. The pan-Turkism of the Young Turks and later Kemalist elites did not have such a claim over its people and, even more, the first ideologues of the pan-Turkism in Turkey envisioned policies limited to the Ottoman/Turkey territories.\(^{183}\) One could say that Turkey’s interest in Chinese Muslims was suddenly lost with the Young Turks becoming influential.

Those years were quite turbulent for both Turkey and China, and the two countries suffered the effect of many of the same events, particularly World War I and foreign expansionism of the West. This is why Chinese statesmen and thinkers started to show an interest in Turkey in the final years of the 19th century and beginning of the early 20th century. The Chinese wanted to observe how Turkey responded to similar crises and how they could adopt their ideas and changes in China.


\(^{183}\) Uluğ Kuzuoğlu, “Xinjiang Between the Globes: The Ottomans in the Making of Modern Xinjiang” (Master’s, Boğaziçi University, 2010), 161–62.
The famous Chinese statesman Kang Youwei had been watching the Ottomans and trying to draw lessons for the Emperor Guang Xu’s declining empire. He realized that there were certain similarities between the Ottomans and China, and treated these similarities as a good opportunity for observation. This is why he also visited Istanbul and remained there for some time during his later exile to Europe. Interestingly, Kang’s views on Turkey’s modernization and the Young Turks changed over the course of a few years, largely due to the pro-parliamentary nature of the revolution in Turkey. In any case, the two versions of Kang’s travel accounts and his essay about the decline of the Ottomans became important documents for Chinese intellectuals’ understanding of Turkey. As a last note about Kang, it is important to state that his choice of calling Turkey and the Ottomans Tujue is no coincidence. Apart from his view of seeing the Ottomans as a continuum of Tujue (Gök-Türk), additional versions of the name Ottoman had not existed in historical Chinese texts, instead, Chinese records had named the Anatolia region and the empire “Rûm”.

Kang was not the only official in China at the time that talked about Turkey. Another thinker, Liang Qichao (梁启超), phrased the Turkey-China comparison

---

184 Fidan, “Rethinking Sino-Turkish Relations in a Historical Perspective,” 309.
in a different way, stating that they were completely different cases. Even so, Liang, father of the Chinese revolution, said “East Asia’s sick man, Turkey, solved its problems with a revolution, why cannot China?” following the Young Turks Revolution in 1908. Comparisons were made between Atatürk’s and Sun Yat-sen’s reforms and ideas, given the similarity of the two countries and their experiences. Other politicians or intellectuals such as Liu Keshu (柳克述) and Dai Wangshu (戴望舒) were trying to emphasize the effects of nationalism on what Turkey was experiencing. Meanwhile, the relationship between Atatürk and Chiang Kai-shek did not seem too troubling, as we know that Chiang sent a photo of himself with his signature to Atatürk.

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey voluntarily wanted to establish relations with China. However due to a divergence on a detail of the agreement, the deal got delayed. At that time Xinjiang governor Yang Zengxin warned Nanjing about Turkey’s possible interest to influence Uyghurs and Chinese Muslims, and asked Nanjing not to sign any agreement with Ankara.

That warning halted the ongoing process and the two countries had to wait for a few more years to establish bilateral relations.

Turkey established its official contact with the Republic of China in 1925 and finally sent a diplomatic mission to Nanjing in 1929, but then had to call its diplomats back due to economic hardship two years later. After the Republic of China opened an embassy in Ankara in 1934, Turkey decided to send an ambassador to China again in 1937. It is also noteworthy that in 1935, with the aim of learning Turks’ past from Chinese sources, upon Atatürk’s request, Ankara University opened a Sinology Department.

Perhaps the most important Chinese nationalist figure who had relations to Turkey was the first head of the Legislative Yuan, Hu Hanmin (胡汉民). He is an important figure in this discussion as he personally visited Turkey with a delegation in 1928 and wrote a great deal about Turkey. Actually his interest in Turkey only began after Turkey’s Young Turk Revolution. In his writings, he pointed out that the Turkish army’s role was for choosing for the people instead of the Sultan, and Hu gave relevant comparative examples from ancient Chinese

---

197 AN, Interview (Officer at Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission in Ankara), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Phone Conversation, November 13, 2015.
The Young Turks Revolution made a deep effect on Hu that he decided to go Turkey in 1928 in order to gain more insights from them. After his visit, Hu concluded that Turkey was a country worth studying for China. He believed that under Atatürk’s rule, Turkey had become even more totalitarian and autocratic (集权专制) than the Soviet Union, and nobody would argue against this. He often thought of the Turkish model as positive for China, as he admired Turkey’s progress from its weak status in a post-war environment to a force to be reckoned with in a short time.

Apart from the imperial and nationalist figures mentioned above, there were also communist accounts watching the Turkish revolution. One of these was Cai Hesen (蔡和森), an early Communist leader and old friend of Mao Zedong. He said that Turkey and China experienced similar political struggles; therefore, the Chinese should watch Turkey’s reparation attempts carefully. He also said that Atatürk’s methods of reviving his country should be exemplary to China. He believed that Atatürk had saved his country with the collaboration and help of the Soviet Union, and he urged Sun Yat-sen to do the same.

---

202 Ma Jilian (马积廉), “到麦加去: 民国时期到中东去的旅行记述研究 (1911-1949) [Going to Mecca: Chinese Travel Accounts of the Middle East From the Republican Period (1911-1949)]” (Master’s, National University of Singapore, 2012), 64.
203 Ibid., 65.
204 Zan Tao, “Sino-Turkish Relationship: Centering on Turkey’s Perception About the Rise of China,” in Sino - Turkey Relations : Concept Policies and Prospects, ed. R. Kutay Karaca and Wang Li (İstanbul: İstanbul Gelişim University Press, 2015), 84.
205 Huang Zhigao (黄志高), “1921 - 1925 年中国共产党对土耳其凯末尔革命的观察与反应 [Observation and Reaction of Communist Party of China to Turkish Revolution During 1921-1925],” 北京科技大学学报 (社会科学版) [Journal of University of Science and Technology Beijing (Social Science Edition)] 26, no. 2 (June 2010): 119.
206 Ibid., 120–21.
Clearly, many figures from Chinese politics at the time saw Atatürk as an admirable leader.\textsuperscript{207} There were also a number of prominent people closely watching Turkey’s Kemalist revolution and Atatürk’s leadership apart from the communist and nationalist circles. The Chinese Youth Party leader, Zeng Qi (曾 琦), was also one of those who proposed an Atatürk-style revival and transformation.\textsuperscript{208} He further claimed that the Nationalistic Party could try to introduce “reasonable opposition”, in order to check and balance the government.\textsuperscript{209} He also said Turkey’s Young Turks Revolution was a “source of inspiration” for the Chinese Youth.\textsuperscript{210}

Although it is hard to find many interactions between Turkey and the ROC – mostly due to Turkey’s lack of interest in foreign policy and China’s domestic issues at the time – we could say that relations were rather friendly between Turkey and China. For example, Turkey did not upset the ROC on the Manchukuo issue and did not recognize the Japanese puppet state that had been founded in Northern China following the League of Nations’ report in 1933. Turkey also did not recognize the People’s Republic of China when it was founded in 1949, and Ankara maintained its relations with the Nationalist government even after their move to Taipei until 1971.

What is worthy of note here is that Japan has always been a good friend of Turkey in East Asia. After the sunken Ottoman frigate on the way back to Istanbul from a

\textsuperscript{207} Arıboğan, “Opening the Closed Window to the East;,” 410.
\textsuperscript{208} Kang Youwei (康有为), 曾琦国家主义思想研究 [Study of Zeng Qi’s Nationalism], 第 1 版, 博士文库 (北京: 知识产权出版社 [Zhishi Changquan Chubanshe], 2008), 171–81.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 266.
visit to the Meiji Emperor in 1890, relations stayed good throughout the 20th century. For example, Japan declared war on Turkey in WWI and Turkey declared war on Japan in WWII, but they were symbolic, rather than meaningful actions. As a result, diplomatic relations began immediately after the Turkish Republic’s foundation and reciprocal embassies opened in the two countries in 1925. Another remarkable point is the comparison between the Meiji Restoration and the Young Turk Revolution. Important figures in these movements, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Ziya Gökald, had a similar stance to distancing their own nation from the West and the East (Asia). Although that topic should be left for other studies, it is worth mentioning here that Turkey’s priority for Japan had declined in the late 20th century with China’s rise.

The Communist win in 1949 resulted in two Chinese states. Since then, the diplomatic battle was ongoing between Beijing and Taipei. The big battle in the UN General Assembly was won by Beijing, and the ROC was replaced by the PRC in 1971. Following their recognition of the PRC in 1971, Turkey’s recognition of Taipei was also replaced by their recognition of Beijing as China’s capital. That is why the 1949–1971 era will be given two subsections in this thesis. The first is for Turkey’s relations with the ROC, or the Nationalist government in Taipei, while the other will give due attention to the PRC or the Communist government in Beijing.

There is an important issue for contemporary Turkish-Chinese relations, and it has its roots in this period. As has been aforementioned, the late Ottoman Sultans had

---

had an interest in Chinese Muslims, even though the Young Turks had abandoned such policies. However, this time the Uyghur issue was going to come to Turkey’s front door. The Uyghur issue had entered into another period of strife in the 1930s. When the East Turkistan Islamic Republic (ETIR, 1933–1934) was founded, a version of the Turkish flag with blue instead of red was chosen as its flag, and continues to be used worldwide by Uyghur nationalists and defenders of Uyghur independence. The ETIR chose the flag to associate itself with the Turkish Republic, but Turkey’s reaction was quite passive due to Soviet pressure at the time.212

In 1944, the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) was founded in northern Xinjiang and lasted until communist victory in 1949. However, at this time the ETR was a Soviet puppet state, unlike the previous ETIR. When this new state started to be ruled by an “autonomous coalitional government” – a 1946 coalition of the Nationalist Party and some Soviet-backed independence groups – nobody would have guessed that it would bring long-term consequences to Turkey’s relations with the PRC. Although looking at the time there were not much direct link between the ETR and Turkey, developments after the dissolution of the ETR government resulted in long-lasting impacts, which will be addressed later that were still effective at the beginning of the 21st century.

One of the most prominent leaders of the ETR, İsa Yusuf Alptekin (1901–1995) also head of the National Assembly of the ETIR, worked for the KMT as the Secretary General of the coalitional government (ETR). Although he had been a

nationalistic figure, he also cooperated with the Nationalistic government instead of opposing it and seeking independence. Alptekin even tried to gather the support of Muslims in China’s fight against the Japanese. In 1938, Alptekin visited many Muslim countries, including Turkey, as the representative of the KMT government to drive propaganda from the Chinese side and entice citizens to join in the war against the Japanese.\(^{213}\) Even after the communist invasion, the ETR leaders maintained their relations with the KMT.

Due to the imminent communist invasion, two of the three masters (üç efendiler) and active political leaders of the ETR’s coalition government, Mehmet Emin Buğra (1901–1965) – who previously served as PM of the ETIR government and vice chairman of the coaltional government – and İsa Yusuf Alptekin fled to Turkey.\(^{214}\)

Relations with the Republic of China (1949–1971)

Turkey started to give signals that it intended to align itself with an anti-communist block that would later emerge. As early as the 1930s, Atatürk was drawing attention to possible Chinese support for Russia and the growing threat of communism.\(^{215}\) Similarly, as has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, Turkey participated in the Korean War for the sake of being a part of NATO, which itself was a response to the Soviet threat. At that point, Turkey’s choice of


\(^{214}\) Ömer Kul, “Osman Batur ve Doğu Türkistan Milli Mücadelesi (1941-1951) [Osman Batur and (His) East Turkestan National Struggle (1941-1951)]” (PhD, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2009), 206, 386.

\(^{215}\) Uygar Mustafa Sertel, “Türk Dış Politikasında Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti ile İşbirliği Olanaklarının Analizi [The Analysis of Cooperation Possibilities with the People’s Republic of China in Turkish Foreign Policy]” (Master’s, Atılım Üniversitesi, 2008), 28.
recognizing the ROC over the PRC as the official “China” was obviously motivated by this ideological war, as Turkey and Taiwan were both allies of the US.  

Four years after the ROC capital had moved to the Taiwan Island in 1949, Turkey opened an embassy in Taipei that would enable official relations with the ROC for almost another two decades. During this time, Turkey maintained a friendly relationship with the ROC government as they fought together against communism on different fronts.

Turkey-Taiwan relations have seen a number of official delegation visits, as well as some minister visits since the establishment of the Turkish embassy in Taipei in 1953. In 1956, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu visited Taiwan with a delegation to develop relations with Taipei on several issues, particularly their mutual fight against communism. In the following year, the ROC Minister of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representative to the UN George Yeh (Yeh Kung-chao) visited Turkey and signed a cultural exchange agreement with Ankara.

Meanwhile in 1958, the Turkish PM Menderes also visited Taiwan and discussed issues to do with military and economic collaboration with several important figures including the ROC leader Chiang Kai-shek. Menderes visited a military memorial, watched a military show that had been organized for him and attended a cocktail party for the Foreign Ministry. More importantly, Menderes also gave a

---

speech in Taiwan’s legislative Yuan. His speech was remarkable in terms of him being the first foreigner to give a speech in Taiwan parliament. His speech was often applauded, perhaps because he made anti-communist remarks during his speech.218 In 1959, the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Refik Koraltan visited Taipei, chairing a goodwill delegation. During his four-day visit he told journalists that “Nationalist China will crush Communist China at the end (of the war).”219

As can be seen from all of the Turkish-Taiwanese relations above, their communication was fully driven by anti-communist discourse. However, the changing dynamic in the US-Soviet-PRC triangle led the US to align itself more closely with the PRC. When Turkey also recognized the PRC over the ROC, it was at a time that an ex-CHP member was in governmental power, with members from different parties including CHP, as well as technocrats from outside parliament after military intervention in politics in 1971. What can be understood from this point is that the military and Kemalist elites were fond of this recognition. Yet some Turkish opposition members not only criticized the move to establish relations with a communist country but also questioned why Turkey was giving up a country that had been such a good friend and ally in their ideological fight against communism.220

Here, we should also note that the Uyghur leaders also connected Turkey with the ROC. At the same time, they tried to convince Taipei to drop its claims on

Xinjiang and recognize it, but they were not successful.\textsuperscript{221} Despite the rejection from Taipei, they did not have hostile relations with the country. In the years that followed, the collaboration between the ETR and the ROC remained long after İsa Yusuf Alptekin’s 1954 settling in Turkey, according to a senior ROC politician.\textsuperscript{222} In a sense, they stayed loyal to the KMT and became the KMT/ROC’s representatives in Turkey as they shared a common foe: the communists.

\textit{Relations with the People’s Republic of China Before 1971}

Although Turkey did not recognize the PRC government until 1971, there were still very important issues happening at the time, such as the Korean War, where the two sides interacted with each other directly. Even before the establishment of the PRC, additional topics needs to be mentioned as they become crucial to the future of Turkish-PRC relations – particularly the ongoing Uyghur issue.

As has already been stated, Turkey had as far back as the 1930s started to exhibit a certain level of unfriendliness toward “communism” and, consequently, to China. What is more, Mao Zedong had also started to criticize Turkey in the 1940s because of the country’s western alignment. Mao said that Turkey had “thrown herself into the arms of Anglo-French imperialism” and was becoming a “pseudo colony and a part of the reactionary imperialist world”.\textsuperscript{223}

As a result, not long after the PRC had been founded, Turkey and China faced off against each other in the Korean War – the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel became the battleground for the two countries. This war and its later implications left important scars for

\textsuperscript{221} Mohammed Sa’id Ismail and Mohammed Aziz Ismail., “Moslems in the Soviet Union and China,” Pamphlet, Privately Printed (Tehran, September 19, 1960), 52.
\textsuperscript{222} Frederick Chien, Interview (Senior Chinese Politician), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, February 5, 2015.
both sides. However, since Turkey’s participation had not been specifically emphasized in Chinese texts about the Korean War, it did not leave any negative impression that was truly long lasting. Nonetheless, Turkish perceptions of the Chinese worsened and the Turkish people became very unfavorable towards the idea of the “Red China” they had met in the battleground. Perhaps it was Turkey’s religious sentiments against communism that made this perception long lasting.

During the Bandung Conference, the Turkish foreign minister’s anti-communist remarks attracted the attentions of Zhou Enlai and others who are present in the conference. Mao Zedong’s previous criticisms had become elevated during these years, and in 1960 he called the Turkish PM Menderes a “running dog” of imperialism. Mao and Menderes’ ideological hostility was, however, untouched during the Cold War. Mao’s comments, though, played an important part in affecting Turkish perceptions of China.

The two countries’ ideological divergence was not the only source of the long lasting obstacle in front of Turkey and China developing bilateral relations. As has already been mentioned, the two Uyghur states founded in Xinjiang in the 1930s and 1940s, and their legacies, played an important negative role in Turkish-Chinese relations. Apart from some important previously mentioned Uyghur

---

226 Ibid., 414.
227 Arıboğan, “Opening the Closed Window to the East;” 410.
228 Zan Tao, “Sino-Turkish Relationship: Centering on Turkey’s Perception About the Rise of China,” 84.
229 Üngör, “Perceptions of China in the Turkish Korean War Narratives.”
leaders, tens of thousands of Uyghurs fled to Turkey over a period of time following the communist takeover.

In 1950, 1,853 Uyghurs settled in Turkey, followed by 500 more in 1952. These figures included political dissidents of the PRC. Nevertheless, we cannot claim that all immigration from Xinjiang to Turkey was politically motivated. There are quite number of different cases for this mass emigration from China. The reasons for moving from Xinjiang to Turkey changed over a period of time due to a number of events. For example, in 1961 the PRC government allowed for some Uyghur people with foreign origins to leave the country. As a result, some went to Afghanistan but they were not able to prove their origin. With the efforts of Alptekin, Turkey received the Uyghurs, and some 107 Uyghur families moved to Turkey among those who were in Afghanistan. Large numbers of Uyghurs also moved in Turkey in 1962 due to Sino-Soviet tensions.

These immigrants mostly settled down in Turkey’s Aksaray, Kayseri, Konya, Manisa and Niğde provinces, as well as Istanbul, especially the Zeytinburnu district. Beginning in the 1950s, there was a great deal of Turkish sympathy and open support for the Uyghurs and their independence. In a sense, the “Uyghur cause” moved from Xinjiang to Turkey with the Uyghur community and its leaders, such as Buğra and Alptekin. Buğra’s death in 1965 did not stop Alptekin’s pro-independence activities in Turkey, which resulted in a long-term

230 Mine Akman, “Uyghur Immigrants in Turkey: A Home Away from Home” (Master’s, Boğaziçi University, 2010), 52.
231 Ibid., 52, 53.
stalemate for Turkish-Chinese problems, right until the end of 1995, when Alptekin also died. This stalemate will be further discussed in detail, along with other issues regarding Uygur migration and diaspora, later on in this thesis.

Despite all these problems, Turkey and China started communicating in 1965 due to changes in Turkey’s domestic environment and China’s foreign relations. The split between China and the Soviet Union and Mao’s theory of intermediary zones, paved the way for this communication and even gave birth to a cooperation expectation between the US and its allies like Turkey; and China against the “Soviet threat” as Mao stated in his meeting with Kissinger in 1973. Direct trade between the two also started that year. In 1966, China offered some help to Turkey when Varto, Muş experienced an earthquake that took approximately 2,500 lives. In the same year, a delegate from the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) visited Turkey and even signed some trade agreements. Journalists from both countries also made reciprocal visits. Nevertheless, this trend toward positive

---

234 Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy.”
237 Ibid.
communication was stalled by China’s internal turmoil in its Cultural Revolution.238


After dealing with two different Chinas, we will now go back to our primary focus: Turkey’s relations with the PRC. Given the existing obstacles between the two countries as well as geographical distance, it was very hard for the two counties to develop diplomatic relations. As had been understood from the less than pleasant first encounters, the ideological divergence between the Turkish Republic and the PRC increased. Therefore, developing any kind of relations with China was not on Turkey’s agenda until a new approach from the US was made.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the years from the 1960s to 1980s saw several changes in the international environment, as well as the domestic environments in Turkey and China. Turkey had at the time a relatively liberal political sphere and independent foreign policy program following the 1960 coup, and problems with the West were emerging. The Sino-Soviet rift was becoming increasingly visible, eventually giving birth to an overhaul of China’s relations with the West, particularly with the US. All of these developments paved the way for Turkey’s eventual recognition of the PRC.239 In fact, direct trade relations had already started to bypass the Lebanese and Syrian channels that had been used two years before official recognition.240 As a result, on August 4 1971, Turkish

240 Altay Atlı, “12 Mart Muhtırası ve Türkiye’nin Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti’ni Tanıması [12 March (Military) Memorandum and Turkey’s (Diplomatic) Recognition of People’s
and Chinese ambassadors (Hasan Esat Işık and Huang Zhen (黄镇), respectively) signed an agreement in Paris that established official relations between Turkey and China.241

The timing of Turkey’s recognition of the PRC was a little bit surprising. Considering it came two months before the UN’s recognition, this change could be considered by some as rather early. Actually, Turkey was the second last country (before Iran) to recognize the PRC before it joined the UN among some sixty other countries. That is why it may not seem that early. However, most of these countries that recognized PRC at the time were either Socialist or African countries, which all had their own interests in recognizing the PRC. In terms of Western countries, after Socialist republics, Turkey was around 12th in recognizing the PRC. More amusingly, Turkey was the 7th country to recognize the PRC in NATO. Among NATO members, only Great Britain, Demark, Norway, France, Canada, Italy were faster to recognize China before Turkey.242 Therefore, it could be said that the timing was early, given Turkey’s interest in Western alignment.

Nonetheless, we should not forget the main factor for Turkey’s Western alignment: the US. UN recognition occurred after Kissinger’s secret visit to

---

Beijing. In fact, the visit came just a month before Turkey’s recognition of the PRC. It is highly possible that Turkey had been informed about the issue. Despite claims arguing that Turkey had a relatively independent foreign policy at the time, it would still be true to say that Turkey recognized China following the global, or more appropriately, the US trend.\textsuperscript{243} Even using Pakistan as a mediator during the recognition process was the same as with the approach from the US.\textsuperscript{244}

Therefore, to summarize the reasons for Turkey’s recognition of the PRC, we could link it first to Kissinger’s visit, and then to the other European and NATO countries’ recognition of the PRC. Of course, as has already been mentioned, a new government in Turkey – a product of domestic military intervention in politics – may have had a direct role in the fast recognition of the PRC.

At this point, it is interesting that the rhetoric from Turkish politicians about recognizing China changed greatly both before and after the 1971 military memorandum. Before the memorandum, most politicians treated recognition of the PRC as rational foreign policy behavior, whereas after the memorandum and change of government, even the initiators of the process started to criticize it in domestic political discussions.\textsuperscript{245} Unlike the rational discussions that had for some time been taking place among politicians in Turkey and China, there were many intellectuals writing about the possible negative effects of recognizing Mao’s China, focusing on problems with communism and East Turkestan.\textsuperscript{246} Indeed, it is

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 149, 150.
\textsuperscript{246} Karaca, “Establishment Process,” 138.
possible to trace the support of the Chinese regime\textsuperscript{247} to Turkish communist
groups. Not to mention, there were also new Maoist groups emerging in the
Turkish political sphere.\textsuperscript{248} However, it is fair to say that Turkish Maoists faded
away very quickly, as did global Maoism.\textsuperscript{249}

Although Turkey was rather quick to establish official relations with China, they
were still far from developing deeper and more meaningful relations. The first
recorded contact came after the Longling (Yunnan) Earthquake, where more than
2,000 people lost their lives in 1976. The PM Demirel sent his and his state’s
condolences to Beijing as a goodwill attempt.\textsuperscript{250} Yet for state-to-state visits, the
two countries had to wait for almost a decade.

The first high-level visit of this kind happened seven years after the establishment
of official relations, and occurred in 1978 when the PRC Minister of Foreign
Affairs Huang Hua visited Turkey. During his visit, Huang met with the Turkish
PM Ecevit and his counterpart Gündüz Ökçün. During these meetings, it was
stressed that “strengthening friendly cooperation and relations” was for both of
their interests.\textsuperscript{251} Moreover, following the 1980 coup in Turkey, the military

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{247} Zan Tao, “Sino-Turkish Relationship: Centering on Turkey’s Perception About the Rise of China,” 85.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., 197.
\textsuperscript{251} Dong Manyuan (董漫远), “中国与土耳其关系的历史与未来 [On Sino-Turkish Relations: Past and Future],” 阿拉伯世界研究 [Arab World Studies], no. 4 (July 2010): 54.
\end{flushright}
junta’s Foreign Minister İlter Türkmen visited Beijing in response to Huang’s visit in 1981.252

Turkish President Kenan Evren’s visit to Beijing in 1982 and Chinese President Li Xiannian’s visit to Ankara in 1984 were the first of their kind, as heads of state visiting their partner country. These visits could be counted as the start of a new era in their relations.253 Reciprocal visits continued with heads of state visiting the partner country, such as Turgut Özal’s visit to China in 1985 and Zhao Ziyang’s visit to Turkey in 1986. Although visits seldom happened after this period, the momentum of these kinds of visits only accelerated after Turkish President Süleyman Demirel’s visit in 1995 and Turkey’s rapprochement with China in the following year.254

In fact, there were only three bilateral agreements signed in the 70s, including the memorandum of the establishment of official relations, whereas there were six in the 80s and nineteen in the 90s.255 Meanwhile, bilateral trade volumes only reached $98 million in 1985. Following these contacts and agreements, there was a great increase in trade, reaching $648 million by 1994.256 Despite heated relations during these years, the annual bilateral trade volume remained under $1 billion before the new millennium.257 Looking at the numbers from the 90s, it

252 Ibid.
255 Ibid., 49, 50.
could be safe to say that the two countries had a large enough room to increase their trade.

In the meantime, the first Uyghur communities who migrated to Turkey began to look for ways to help out their relatives and friends in Xinjiang. They were able to issue official invitations for their relatives and friends if they, as settled migrants in Turkey, could be guarantors, based on their financial status. Many used this method for bringing over their friends and families to Turkey during the 70s and 80s. It is estimated that a few hundred Uyghurs migrated to Turkey in this way.\(^{258}\) Since then, 300 additional Uyghur students came to Turkey via governmental efforts as of 2005. Toward the end of the 20\(^{th}\) century, there were almost twenty thousand Uyghur migrants from Xinjiang to Turkey.\(^{259}\) Following this period, there were also important events taking place and affecting Turkish-Chinese relations with regards to the Uyghur issue.

The end of the Cold War and the Soviet split in 1991 gave birth to five Turkic-speaking republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The dissolution of the communist Soviet Union reminded Turkey of the problem for the Uyghurs in China. Immediate reactions were quite bold: the Turkish PM Demirel and other political leaders asserted that they would not allow China to “assimilate” the Uyghurs and that they would raise the issue with the UN and other international organizations following Uyghur leader Alptekin’s visit to Turkey.\(^{260}\) Furthermore, President Özal met Alptekin and the latter told the media that Özal had informed

\(^{258}\) Güldeş, “Doğu Türkistanlı Uygur Türklerinin Türkiye’de Kurdukları Dernekler ve Yayın Faaliyetleri [The Associations and Publication Activities of Uyghur Turks from East Turkestan in Turkey],” 10.

\(^{259}\) Ibid.

him that he had “taken delivery of the Eastern Turkestan cause”. According to Alptekin, Özal continued by saying “the Turkic republics formerly under Soviet rule have all declared independence. Now it is the turn of Eastern Turkestan. It is our desire to see the ancient homeland of the Turkic peoples as a free country”.261

In a way, one could argue that Turkey had started to believe that the PRC would be the next to dissolve following the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and that from that an independent Uyghur state would rise. Turkey’s new endeavors for self-identification were also related to the independence of other Turkic republics. Obviously in this ideal scenario, Turkey would become leader of each of these republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The idea fit very well with the famous Turkish rhetoric, “the Turkic world from the Adriatic to the Great Wall”.

Obviously, none of these developments pleased the Chinese. There were harsh responses from the Chinese media to Turkey’s interest in Xinjiang.262 On November 17, 1992, the CCP’s official organ daily Renmin Ribao, published an article criticizing Turkey’s stance on Xinjiang. After all, this was the first public criticism to come from the CCP. In the article, the author underlined the sudden enthusiastic change of the Turkish leaders’ stance to the Uyghur issue, as well as the rising interest in using rhetoric that spoke of a “Turkic world”. It also warned that these unpleasant developments might force China to take precautionary

measures against Turkey. Nevertheless, this would not stop Turkey’s support for the Uyghur diaspora for a few more years.

In the midst of an environment with increasing pan-Turkic expectations and negative Chinese responses to it, a park in Istanbul was named after Isa Yusuf Alptekin several months before his death in 1995. The then major of Istanbul, R.T. Erdoğan, praised Alptekin and his struggle for the Turkic world in a ceremony for the park. President Demirel, Premier Tansu Çiller and Speaker of the National Assembly Mustafa Kalemli sent congratulatory messages to the ceremony. A number of other Turkish provinces – Kayseri, Konya and Kahramanmaraş – followed Istanbul and gave Alptekin’s name to their own parks. The Chinese Ambassador protested and put pressure on Turkish officials to change the naming. Erdoğan’s response to the Chinese Foreign Ministry was very determined: “Had not only the Chinese but the entire world attempted to pressure us, we would not change the name of the park. We, the mayors of Istanbul, believe that to change the name of the park would insult not only Turkey, but all Turkic people of the world.” Turkey experienced three different coalitions and minority governments, which included Erdoğan’s Welfare Party in 1996. Yet despite Erdoğan’s stance in 1996, the name of the park in Istanbul would be revoked as a starter of a policy readjustment.

---

264 Fatma Özge Atay, “Impact of the Xinjiang Problem on the China’s External Relations: 1990-2010” (Master’s, Middle East Technical University, 2010), 115.
Meanwhile, as a result of these developments China began to take a stronger grip on the Xinjiang. Hence the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey was more motivated to explain their cause. Following the Yining Rebellion in 1997 and its deadly aftermath, there were new migrant groups coming to Turkey and other Central Asian Republics. During these years, some of the Uyghur diaspora also moved to Germany and the United States through several routes that gradually shifted the main support base for the independence groups from Turkey.

It did not take too long for Turkey to realize that it neither had the capacity for becoming a “big brother” for young Turkic states nor was it able to see China’s decline. Furthermore, the increasing demand to normalize and develop relations with a rising China forced Turkey to revise its Uyghur policy.267 Official rhetoric about helping the Uyghurs evolved to “Xinjiang” from “East Turkestan” would be a good summary of this process.

These changes occurred immediately after Alptekin’s death. As has already been mentioned, in 1996, Alptekin’s name was removed from the park and then thirteen asylum-seeking Uyghur intellectuals were asked to leave Turkey – their permits had not been extended.268 Moreover, investigations in the same year were made into Uyghur organizations planning anti-China protests.269 In 1998, after the Turkish Vice PM had been warned by Beijing about Ankara’s stance on the Uyghur issue, the Vice PM allegedly explained how it would be better for

269 Ibid.
everyone, including the Uyghurs themselves, not to act against Chinese will.270
Furthermore, at the end of 1998, Turkish PM Mesut Yılmaz sent a secret circular to all government departments to declare the policy change in Turkey’s stance toward the Uyghurs.271 The circular banned all ministers and high-level government officials from openly attending any Uyghur-leading events and also limited any pro-East Turkestan activities in Turkey.272 In 1999, the Turkish police detained a handful of Uyghurs who were alleged members of the East Turkestan Liberation Organization.273

This trend would continue into the beginning of the following century. The 9/11 events started the US’s war against terror, and China also took 9/11 as an opportunity to tell of the dangers of the ETIM in the UN. As a result, the UN the US, as well as Turkey, recognized the ETIM as a terrorist organization. Long after the post-Cold War era with fear of independence, and after 9/11’s terror claims, Chinese put pressure on Turkey. This pressure required that Turkey adopt its Uyghur policies.

Due to these changes in Turkey, the Uyghur diaspora had also started to shift its support base for independence groups. Until the late 90s, Turkey had been the most important base for the Uyghur diaspora, however, since then the base has

mostly been Germany and the US. For example, in 1992, Brigadier General M. Rıza Bekin (Mehmet Emin Buğra’s nephew) retired from the Turkish army and established the East Turkestan National Congress in Istanbul. Nevertheless, following Turkey’s changes in 2004, the Congress has merged with the World Uyghur Youth Congress to become the World Uyghur Congress (WUC). The WUC, based in Munich under the leadership of İsa Yusuf Alptekin’s son Erkin Alptekin, is seen as a terrorist organization by the Chinese government. Having said that, there has as yet been no satisfactory proof that the WUC is linked to the ETIM or any other terrorist organizations.

Overall, Sino-Turkish relations are set to go beyond their conventional relations, with the change in Turkish stance on the Uyghurs. For example, military visits began in 1996 and secret agreements were signed, which enabled the first Turkish purchase of Chinese military equipment based on coproduction in 1997.\(^{274}\) Although it was not a huge transaction, it was important as the first of its kind. The purchases from China cost $43 million in total and $300 million to Turkey, which was less than 1 percent of Turkey’s total arms deals during those transaction years.\(^{275}\) With the deal, Turkey become able to produce TR-300 Kasırğa (Hurricane) rockets based on 80 km range Chinese WS-1 302mm (Weishi, Guardian) and B-611 short-range surface-to-surface missiles.\(^{276}\)


In summary, one could say that Turkey’s realization of the role of Central Asia in its relations with China triggered a pragmatic change in mentality. Turkey started to adjust its China policy, which had previously been based on expectations that the PRC would dissolve like USSR and the imperative to ensure the independence of Turkey’s “Uyghur brothers”.

In order to facilitate rapprochement with China, Turkey finally made necessary changes to its domestic political sphere and was ready to sit down with Beijing to figure out how to build closer relations. As a consequence, the whole attitude from Turkey changed with new policies. This signaled a rapprochement at the beginning of the new century.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, the evolution of Turkish-Chinese relations from the last century to the present has been illustrated. Evolution in its historical context has been important, as major concepts and reciprocal perceptions have always been rooted in history. Turkish people are considered descendants of the Göktürk or Tujue tribes that were khanates, neighbors to China, and thus had a lot of interactions with China. According to those claims, the Turks then moved away to Anatolia and founded one of the biggest empires in recent history, the Ottoman Empire. Surprisingly, interactions between the Ottoman and Chinese dynasties (for example, Ming and Qing) were relatively weak, given that they were both rather large at the time. At the beginning of the 20th century, nothing had changed, as they were both busy with revolutions and constructing their own states.

Turkey recognized the PRC as early as 1971, despite their ideological divergences. This, however, did not change the negative trend. Turkish-Chinese relations
continued to keep a low profile during the 70s and 80s. In the early 90s, however, Turkey started to imagine itself as having a leading role in the newly-founded Turkic republics in Central Asia. This worried China, as the Uyghurs were also Turkic and Turkey was still playing host to the last of the Uyghur state’s leaders. Therefore, based on these premises, relations could not improve. Not long after that time, Turkey realized its own capabilities and China’s rise, and decided on a rapprochement in the late 90s. Here we can see a change from identity politics (constructivism) to the realist politics (realism). The end of the cold war and Turkey’s new identity search have also facilitated this change. From 1996 to 2000, Turkey showed that its official stance about the Uyghurs in China had changed on several accounts. In other words, the Turkish government had stopped supporting Uyghur independence, and so a number of changes were ready to be made for Turkish-Chinese relations for the first time in one and a half decades.
PART II – 21\textsuperscript{ST} CENTURY CONTEXT
Chapter 3: Turkey’s Political Context

In this chapter, I will analyze the period of 2000–2015 from Turkey’s perspective. In order to draw a clear picture of Turkish-Chinese relations in this part of the 21st century, I will first describe Turkey’s domestic politics, foreign policies of the time and its China relations as well as perceptions of China.

Domestic Politics

As has already been explained in the previous part, the Turkish republic was founded after the Kemalist Revolution. One of the most important features of this republic was that it had been secularized right after its foundation. Not only was the caliphate system abolished but also all the other government institutions were based on laicite principles. By the 21st century, Turkey already had a secular army, government, and political structure. A great portion of Turkish society had even been transformed into laicist. Laicism, or Kemalist secularism, aimed to take control of religion and nationalize it at the expense of religious rights, by banning the call for prayer in its original Arabic form, banning religious clothing and so on. There was no doubt that in a Muslim majority country, this stringency created fear in and turned the most religious parts of society against to the secularist state establishment.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Turkey had witnessed the rise of Islamism in the political sphere with the emergence of Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, or

278 Eyüp Sabri Çarmıklı, “Caught between Islam and the West: Secularism in the Kemalist Discourse” (PhD, University of Westminster, 2011), 57.
Erdoğan, who would later become very popular, began to participate in politics under the RP and became major of the Istanbul municipality in 1994. Many other co-founders of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP), such as the prior president of the republic, Abdullah Gül, had been Erdoğan’s friends from the RP. It is important to remember, that citing an “Islamic threat”, the RP was banned from politics by the constitutional court following a military intervention. The same people then founded the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi). This party was similarly banned not long after it had been established, resulting in the founding of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi). Meanwhile, Gül, Erdoğan and a few others from the Felicity Party left and established the AKP with the involvement of some middle-right wing and democrat involvement.

As a consequence of the AKP coming into power with a majority government a year after its foundation in 2002, the “Islamism” debate centered into Turkish domestic politics. The PM at the time, Abdullah Gül, lifted the previous coup’s ban that limited Erdoğan from participating in politics so that he could be elected a year later and become the PM of Turkey. The AKP won three consecutive elections to remain in majority power and Erdoğan’s leadership for Turkey started through these developments. This had been one of the most important turning points for contemporary Turkish politics. Under this new leadership at the

beginning of the century, many wondered if the AKP’s agenda would be an Islamist one.  

However, in its first term from 2002 to 2007, the AKP was quick to adopt a reform agenda, contrary to earlier expectation. The AKP’s policies were very pro-European and democratic in nature, which accelerated the process for Turkey’s accession to the EU. During this era, the AKP’s foreign policy was very pro-Western, particularly pro the EU, due to fears from the secularist establishment that had been waiting to label and punish the AKP for Islamizing Turkey. This, however, did not happen. Early perceptions about Erdoğan and his party started to dramatically change. During this time, the AKP gained support from democrat, liberal and even secular circles.

The presidential elections in 2007 triggered an important change in the AKP’s destiny for the following reasons: despite the liberal reformist policies of the AKP, the “Kemalist” or “secular” state apparatus was not happy with Gül’s candidacy to become the 11th president of Turkey because his wife wore a headscarf. Therefore, excepting the AKP’s deputies, the first members of parliament did not show up in the election to halt the process. Then the Constitutional Court twisted the procedure of the election, due to the application of the opposition party Republican People’s Party (CHP). Finally, the General Staff released a statement


in the form of an e-memorandum on its website stressing the army’s firm position and warning against the AKP government. It stated that the army was concerned about the situation regarding secularism in the presidential elections, listing and somehow linking select events that they argued had an “anti-Republican and Islamic reactionary (irtica) mindset”.\textsuperscript{286} It was asserted that the army was the defender of secularism and would take action if necessary.\textsuperscript{287} As a result, the whole process was stalled and the Turkish parliament was not able to elect a president. The government countered by calling for early elections and the AKP won another majority, winning almost half of the votes that were casted. The presidential elections were renewed in the new parliament and Gül became president. Afterwards, the AKP brought the presidential election system issue to a public referendum, which proposed to elect the president through universal suffrage instead of indirectly via parliament. The referendum was approved and was applied for the first time in the 2014 presidential elections.

This was not the last case that secularist state institutions were to interfere in the AKP’s rule. In 2008, a closure trial was held against the AKP, with the accusation that the AKP was becoming a “focal point of the anti-secular activities”. Although the Constitutional Court did not close the party like its predecessors the RP and the Virtue Party, the court still approved of the accusation by cutting some of the state’s funds to the party.\textsuperscript{288}

\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 730.
The AKP’s stance against the army and the secularist establishment had the support and even pressure from democrat and liberal intellectuals, as well as the EU. This gave the AKP an opportunity to weaken secularist tutelage in Turkey. In the following years, the power of Turkish secularist institutions began to decline.

In 2007, it is reported that the police discovered weapons and explosives in a house in Istanbul. During the investigations, prosecutors discovered coup plans behind the network that had been in possession of the equipment. Therefore a famous trial, the Ergenekon trial, was initiated in 2008. Ergenekon, a secret organization, is the symbol for undemocratic plots against the government, as well as for the undemocratic use of power by the government. Several hundreds of people – including high-level military officials, journalists, academics and politicians – were accused of forming this secret organization, which was accused of being a part of the so-called “deep state” that had a central aim to overthrow the Turkish government.289 Accusations included terrorist attacks and the e-memorandum issue. In 2013, many high-ranking officials were sentenced to life imprisonment along with other penalties. Yet they were released from prison the following year and eventually in 2016 court of appeals overturned their convictions because evidence had been “illegally collected” and the claimed “terrorist organization” had never existed.290

The former Turkish PM, Bülent Ecevit, acknowledged the existence of a “stay-behind” military network in order to counter Soviet expansionism (communism)

---

during the Cold War, but according to Ecevit, Ergenekon started to “become a violent and unaccountable actor in its own right.” 291 In fact earlier the clandestine NATO stay-behind armies revealed in many European countries with or without the knowledge of the government there, and this modus operandi simply acknowledged by ex CIA officials as being the “pretty sensible business”. 292 The most famous case was that of the Italian Gladio (literally means sword) as revealed by some documents. 293 With the end of the Cold War, some of these organizations also dissolved, but others continued to exist by changing their actions. The latter is what happened in Turkey, according to Ergenekon believers.

Meanwhile in 2010, another famous trial was being held against several hundred army officials, with accusations of making a coup plan called the “Sledgehammer” (Balyoz) in 2003 and, in 2012, the Turkish court decided to sentence more than 300 people to imprisonment and other such punishments. 294 Due to allegations from the prosecution about the police fabricating evidence, many criticized the case. 295 In addition to bearing the unfortunate mark of past military coups and memorandums in mind, the AKP was also accused of abusing these trials in order to suppress its opposition. 296 The convicted suspects were released again just like in the Ergenekon case in the following years and the Sledgehammer trials restarted in 2014 after the Constitutional Court decided that the convicted suspects’

294 “Timeline: Turkey’s ‘Ergenekon’ Trial.”
296 Dombey, “Turkey’s Ergenekon Trial.”
rights had been violated in the process of collecting digital evidence and testimonials.\(^{297}\)

I will return to the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer stories later; I continue instead with the AKP’s imprisonment of many high-ranking military and bureaucratic officials, so weakening the status quo in the state. It was from this time that the AKP’s own power over the state’s institutions started to grow, while that of the secularist establishment started to decline.\(^{298}\)

In its second term of office (2007–2011), the AKP slowed down the EU reforms.\(^{299}\) However, the AKP continued to be viewed as a pro-democracy conservative party, which was very much in line with their description of themselves. Turkish citizens expected that the AKP would draft a new civil democratic constitution in exchange for the constitution that had been prepared by the military junta. Hence, this constitution was set as the goal for the 2011 elections.\(^{300}\) The approval of the 2010 constitutional referendum seemingly was the latest major endeavor to democratize Turkey. This approval proposed twenty-six amendments to the constitution, each of which were intended to further weaken aforementioned tutelage.

However, despite winning the majority rule for their third term of office in 2011, the AKP seemed rather reluctant to draft a new civic constitution and reposition


\(^{300}\) Paul Kubicek, “Democratization and Relations with the EU in the AK Party Period: Is Turkey Really Making Progress? - Articles,” *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 42.
the Turkish state as more democratic. At the time, the AKP was accused of taking advantage of the system to do quite the opposite, and the party began to face a great deal of criticism from its former allies, such as the liberals. A weakened military, secular state tutelage and the party’s growing self-confidence from winning all three elections contributed to the AKP’s confidence in its position. It also used the amendments of 2010 referendum to curb the power for itself.

Erdoğan’s rhetoric had also begun to sound more authoritarian and Islamist. For example, Erdoğan did not shy from publicly stating that he wanted to foster generations of Turks that held strong religious values. Additionally, there was no great pressure for accession to the EU from any greater power in the state, because the AKP had itself become the “state”. During this term, Erdoğan’s government had started to ignore the EU and even provoked it by threatening to join the SCO instead. At the same time, the rift between the US and Turkey widened and became politically visible, even despite good relations between the two countries once Obama had been elected into office.

The debate between Kemalism (Laicite) and Islamism from the first time the AKP had come into power has in recent years evolved into a debate between Islamism and Secularism. As has already been explained, Kemalism, or Laicism, was the ideology of the past state elites, who were also authoritarian. Thus, it is important to understand that prior debate is very different from the notion of

secularism in western democracies today. From 2002, many in Turkey challenged the Kemalist state apparatus, which had been a legacy of the 1982 military constitution.\textsuperscript{304} Some had hoped that the AKP government would change that legacy for good.\textsuperscript{305} However, Erdoğan did not use liberal support to make a new civil constitution for “normalizing” Turkey.\textsuperscript{306} On the contrary, Erdoğan’s regime turned into another authoritarian one, simply with a different ideology.

With the changing nature of the AKP’s rhetoric and actions, the debate of Islamism once more came into the political scene. This time, Islamism was a part of state dress and the establishment – undemocratic but nonetheless very much a part the AKP’s philosophy. Consequently, a new term emerged in Turkish politics: “Kemalo-Islamism”, or “Islamo-Kemalism”\textsuperscript{307}. The AKP was accused of taking advantage of the old system, particularly the totalitarian nature of the establishment, to create its own ideal of society. At this time, the oppressors and the oppressed had changed their positions, but the nature of the oppression had not. For example, the Kemalist state had previously founded the Directorate of Religious Affairs to manage the religious sphere, but it was later the AKP who made use of it.\textsuperscript{308} In the past, Kemalist state presidents would not appoint

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{305} İnsel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy,” 306.
\textsuperscript{308} Baran, Torn Country, 24.
candidates who had secured the most votes in a university presidential election because of their ideology – the AKP’s president was now doing just the same.\textsuperscript{309}

At the end of 2013, a major corruption scandal broke out. Police officers detained nearly fifty people with accusations of “corruption and bribing”, which included three ministers’ sons, a general manager of a state bank and several very important businessmen – including an Iranian Turkish citizen Reza Zarrab who later was detained in the United States for money laundering to get around US sanctions to Iran. A week after the first wave of these investigations, information was leaked to the press that a second wave of investigations were targeting the PM Erdoğan’s son and some others with the same accusation. However, after a series of events, all the settings of the judicial system were changed due to political interference: the detainees were released and cases were taken from the prosecutors, who were then dismissed.\textsuperscript{310}

Furthermore, at the beginning of 2014 a few prosecutors who had not lost their jobs yet found three trucks loaded with arms that were on their way to Syria – of course, in 2014 Erdoğan was firmly against Assad and supported the rebellion. The accusation was that these arms were going to terrorist organizations.\textsuperscript{311} This echoed previous reports on the AKP government’s alleged help to ISIS and Al-Qaeda in Syria. The AKP claimed, however, that the three trucks belonged to the National Intelligence Agency (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı, or MIT) and were on

\textsuperscript{309} Yılmaz, Kemalizm ve Erdoğanizm.
their way to help the Syrian Turkmens, a Turkic minority with a population of around a million who were mostly living in Northwest Syria. The same happened to this case as the earlier cases of corruption: the case was dropped. Still, damage had been done and the government considered both cases a part of a plot against itself.

Many accused the government of destroying judicial independence that was relevant to these cases. Beginning with these events, there had been a number of changes in Turkish politics. The AKP changed the entire judicial structure and thousands of police officers, prosecutors and judges were dismissed, relocated or downgraded through claims that they belonged to a “parallel state”, namely, the Gülen movement. Moreover, the government seized some important business groups that were either close to or affiliated with the movement until the end of 2015. Among them, the firm İpek Holding is significant as it controls a media group that was a critical part of Turkish media organizations.

The Gülen movement, or Hizmet (literally, service) movement as its followers describe it, is one of the most important movements for contemporary Turkey. The movement took its roots in the Said Nursi’s Nur (literally, light) movement. The leader of the movement, Fethullah Gülen, is a retired preacher and intellectual who undertook a self-imposed exile in the United States (US).

---

following the 1997 “post modern coup” in Turkey. Gülen and his movement appeared to offer a kind of Islamic modernity that was different to political Islam. The Gülen movement became very influential, having “more than 1,000 modern secular schools, tutoring centers, colleges, hospitals and relief organizations” operating in Turkey and 150 other countries in 2015.

In recent years, the Erdoğan government targeted the Gülen movement for acting as a “parallel state” and trying to topple the government. Meanwhile, Gülen’s movement became more critical and outspoken against Erdoğan’s government. On several occasions, Erdoğan suggested that these “plots”, such as the corruption and truck cases, were also supported by the US and Israel. As a cause of these allegations, Erdoğan purged many police officers, judges and prosecutors from the system. However, the EU and the US saw this as Erdoğan’s attempt to cover up allegations of corruption for his government.

Finally during the night of July 15, 2016, a part of the military named “Peace at Home Council” tried to overthrow the government in flying F-16 over the capital and bombing the parliament. However upon President Erdoğan’s call many

314 Findley, Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity, 387.
318 Oruçoğlu, “Why Turkey’s Mother of All Corruption Scandals Refuses to Go Away.”
citizens went onto streets to defend democracy. Over 200 hundred people lost their lives but eventually the demonstrators were successful against the putschists. As early as in the first hour of the coup attempt the government identified the putschists as the Gülen faction in the army. Following the coup attempt Turkey was quick to announce a state of emergency law and fight against the Gülen group or the “Fethullahist Terrorist Organization” (FETO). Tens of thousands of civil servants were purged and thousands of them were detained because of their membership to the FETO. These purges included 149 generals and admirals at some point, which constituted almost 42% of the Turkish generals, and admirals at the time.\textsuperscript{320} Meanwhile many cases earlier attached to the Ergenekon investigation were tied to FETO investigation. Government seized all the properties that the movement had owned in Turkey.

AKP politicians and pro-AKP intellectuals justified the actions by stating that they “clos[ed] a parenthesis of a hundred years”. This explanation suggested that the Ottoman Empire and its ideology were taken from Anatolia with the foundation of Turkish Republic, and that it was now high time to bring them back. In other words, according to AKP sympathizers, the Kemalist Turkish Republic was only a parenthetical part of Turkish history that simply now needed to be closed. Therein came the use of the term “New Turkey”: the AKP aimed to reestablish the Turkish Republic by using this rhetoric of “parentheses”.\textsuperscript{321} That is why Erdoğan did not hesitate to claim that he was leading a new national struggle,


referencing specifically to Mustafa Kemal’s earlier fight for establishing a “new Turkey”. In the last few years, the term “New Turkey” was used a great deal by AKP officials and intellectuals who wanted to name the AKP’s endeavors to establish a new system and further systematic changes to the country. In the midst of these debates, it is ironic that Erdoğan and the AKP came into power as a reaction to the Kemalist state and its cleansing of other ideologies, considering they had similar motivations themselves. Further, after the corruption and truck cases, the new judiciary organs started, under government direction, to release people who had been imprisoned over the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases. The organizations that had once been seen as secret illegal organizations intent on bringing down the AKP government now became the AKP government’s new allies in the fight against the “parallel state”. These actions were seen old tricks from the secularist establishment in a new guise under the AKP.

The emergence of “Neo Ottomanism” in Turkish domestic and foreign policy could be further illustrated by the AKP’s rhetoric of “New Turkey” and historical “parentheses”. Increasingly, in recent years the AKP’s foreign policy has made attributions to the Ottoman’s “historical and geographical legacies”. The AKP envisioned deepening relations with these countries that lay in Ottoman

---

325 Yılmaz, Kemalizm ve Erdoğanizm.
Some observers considered that the AKP’s approach to foreign policy and interest in increasing authoritarianism would make Erdoğan appear as the new Sultan of Turkey. Undoubtedly, Erdoğan’s enthusiasm to introduce a powerful presidential system to Turkey considerably contributed to these arguments. This characteristic had popularly been described as the “Putinization” of Erdoğan. These arguments were also used in the “authoritarianism” vs. “democratization” debates.

The authoritarian tendencies of the AKP’s third term also resonated with Turkey’s increasing friendship with Russia, China and Iran. Many commentators defined Turkey’s interest in the SCO as the country’s desire to align with authoritarian, rather than democratic, countries. The SCO was fine with authoritarian ruling, while the EU concerned itself largely with necessitating the democratization process. This was the main argument for such claims that Turkey wanted to become a member of the SCO instead of the EU.

Taking its roots from Islamist RP, the AKP was perceived as politically shifting to the center in its first and second term with democratic pro-EU reforms, liberal

---

economic policies and sustained overall growth.\textsuperscript{330} Being elected for the third time in 2011 showed that the AKP and its leader Erdoğan were still winning elections, even despite serious corruption allegations, and tendencies toward authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{331} However, it is important to state that his party lost the majority rule in the latest general elections in June 2015. The main reason for the AKP’s loss was Kurdish party HDP’s win of 13\% of the votes and 80 seats in parliament. Largely because of this win, the AKP could not win a majority rule that would enable them to draft their desired new constitution for a presidential system.

Despite the fact that Kurds make up approximately a quarter of the total of Turkey’s population, the state has completely denied the existence of this group of people until the 1980s.\textsuperscript{332} Starting from 1984, the armed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) – declared a terrorist organization by the state – has been engaged in guerilla warfare with the Turkish military and was responsible for taking tens of thousands of lives in the years following its establishment.\textsuperscript{333} After Özal’s positive stance to resolving the “Kurdish issue”, Erdoğan’s government showed determination to end the problem.\textsuperscript{334} However, for the first time in the history of Turkish politics the People’s Democracy Party (Halklarm Demokratik Partisi, or


\textsuperscript{331} Paul and Seyrek, “Turkey Votes.”


HDP) – a pro-Kurdish party – had won enough seats to be in parliament as a legitimate party after the June 2015 elections. Shortly after this time, the war between the Turkish army and the PKK was reinstated after few years of ceasefire. Therefore the government terminated the peace talks between the Turks and the Kurds.

Right after the June 2015 elections, the war had deadly ramifications for the two sides, and everybody wondered what the motivation to end the ceasefire after the elections was. Some blamed the AKP for escalating nationalist sentiments in order to gain a better result in the November elections, as no government coalition had been established. Eventually, the AKP increased its votes. Some blamed the PKK for the war and said that it did nothing for HDP politics from the civilian standpoint, as they had won the support of Turkish voters and succeeded in an election for the first time in Turkish history.

There are 550 MPs in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly. In order for there to be a majority rule, a party needs at least 276 MPs. The election system is based on a closed list proportional representation of the D’Hondt method. A party must get at least 10% of the votes in order to be represented in parliament. This threshold was a legacy of the 1982 constitution after the military junta, and was not changed by any of the civil governments. Since 2007, every term of political office is four years, a decrease from five years prior to 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>Vote (%)</td>
<td>34.29</td>
<td>46.52</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>40.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs (#)</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHP</td>
<td>Vote (%)</td>
<td>19.38</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>25.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs (#)</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHP</td>
<td>Vote (%)</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td>13.02</td>
<td>16.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs (#)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDP</td>
<td>Vote (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs (#)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>Vote (%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MPs (#)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 1, since 2002 the AKP has been tremendously successful in the elections. In addition to data in this table, the party has also won three local elections, two referendums and one presidential election. In order to better understand Table 1, the following points should be borne in mind. Prior to the 2015 elections, the HDP (or at least its precedent parties, as the HDP was founded in 2013) were not a part of the 2007 and 2011 elections because of this 10% threshold. Instead, the AKP joined in the elections with independent candidates. Also in the aftermath of the June 2015 elections, elections were organized again in November 2015 due to the divergences between the parties elected, or rather the AKP’s unwillingness to form a coalition with anyone else.

---

335 “Milletvekili Genel Seçim Arşivi [MP General Election Archive],” Official, T. C. Yüksek Seçim Kurulu [The Supreme Electoral Council], (November 2015), http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/GenelSecimler?_afrLoop=1242856367150438&_afrWindowMode=0&_afrWindowId=18zir8i3ru_55%26%26%40%3F_afrWindowId%3D18zir8i3ru_55%26_afrLoop%3D1242856367150438%26_afrWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Dbfcbge9y_4.
after a three-time majority ruling. Despite results from opinion polls before the elections, the AKP won another majority rule in this election.

Regardless of the election results, we can safely say that a new phase has started in Turkish politics as of 2016. The AKP, Kurdish issues, the Gülen group and the army could all be counted among the most important dynamics for understanding this new era for Turkey. Of these, the most important acting party will arguably be the AKP.

Another important issue that needs mentioning is the state of freedom for the press in Turkey. According to Freedom House, in the last five years (2010–2015) Turkey has been in decline in terms of freedom of the press. Since 2013, Freedom House has categorized Turkey as “not free”.336 There have been many incidents in Turkey that justify this report from Freedom House, such as the beating or killing of journalists, detaining both national and foreign journalists, deporting foreign journalists, censoring news, forcing select journalists to resign or forcing media bosses to fire certain employees, destroying media buildings, and so on. To give an indication of the significance of this problem, a total of 339 journalists, columnists and media workers were laid off or forced to quit in 2014.337

After the 2016-coup attempt, repression has deepened. Turkey shut down more than 100 media organizations because of their links to the alleged FETO.338 The number of imprisoned journalists–most of them are waiting for their trial–in

337 Ibid.
Turkey has reached 120 by mid September, and 2308 of them were fired from their organizations. More than half of the 120 were arrested under the coup probe.

As freedom of speech declines, academic freedom has also become negatively influenced by this trend. For example, the Higher Education Board (YÖK), which is responsible for controlling the universities, instigated a few new disciplinary regulations for higher education employees, stating rather ominously “those who provide statements on political issues to members of the press will be reprimanded”.

According to the Academic Freedom Monitor, there have been four cases in 2014 and 2015 where academics have lost their jobs because of their political views. Moreover following the failed putsch, Turkey closed 15 universities and purged dozens academics from other universities due to the alleged ties with the FETO.

Erdoğan’s response to critics of Turkey’s freedom of speech and freedom of press issues is very important for this thesis in order to give us an understanding of the country’s political reach. For instance, Erdoğan asked critics from the EU to

“keep their wisdom to themselves” in one particular case. The situation shows us that Turkey is overall a democracy but with certain special characteristics, namely authoritarian. Arguably, democracy would be better than authoritarianism, as under a democracy, Turkish citizens are able to choose their own representatives and leaders. Nonetheless, no matter which party is chosen, state establishment in Turkey had always been authoritarian since the foundation of its republic. Turkey kept it that way during the military’s years in politics, and it did not change for the better in some cases during the AKP’s terms in office, especially after the AKP weakened military tutelage.

**Foreign Policy and International Relations**

As has already been explained in Part I, when the AKP came into power, foreign policies to do with the EU, NATO and the US were prioritized. In other words, Turkey’s foreign policy had a specifically Western orientation. Nevertheless, attempts were also being made to develop relations with additional regions – the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and even Africa. They signify Turkey’s attempt for a diversified foreign policy, yet they were in no way robust attempts. In this apathetic environment for foreign policy, the AKP seized the opportunity that other statesmen had attempted to grab before, and started a pro-active diplomacy for these latter areas. Turkey became particularly interested in adopting a new approach with its neighboring countries, countries with which Turkey had had many problematic relationships. The “zero problems with our neighbors” motto of FM Davutoğlu envisioned a better diplomatic neighborhood.

---

for Turkey. It was a priority for Turkey to normalize relations with all the countries that surrounded it. In addition to those neighboring countries, the AKP government tried to expand its influence in the neighboring regions given above. This approach enabled the AKP to develop relations with the countries that Turkey had neglected for a long time.

Despite some problems that will be detailed later, relations with the West had also been emphasized and there had been great progress. Nevertheless, in the following years the AKP’s foreign policy started to emphasize its regional ambitions more. There was also great progress in Turkey’s developing relations with Russia, China and Iran. Overall, Turkish tried to make its own foreign policy independently, meaning that it was less Western–driven. Turkey’s central position between Europe, Asia and Africa was used in order to actualize its independent, or multi-dimensional foreign policy-making. Turkey also tried to deploy its historical legacies, remnants from the Ottoman Empire, during this process. Thus, it could be said that Turkey was in favor of a multipolar world system.

In the first few years of AKP government, foreign policy was very pro-West and EU enthusiastic. Although there had been some tensions in US-Turkey relations due to Turkish refusal to send troops to Iraq in 2003, relations were soon rebuilt. Overall, the AKP’s foreign policy in its first term was seen as somehow similar to Özlal’s foreign policy – one that could be described as liberal, pro-Western and even multi-dimensional in spirit.344

344 B. Berat Özipek, “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi Dönemi İç ve Dış Politika [AKP Era Domestic and Foreign Policy],” in Osmanlı’dan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Foreign Politics], ed. Adem Çaylak et al., 2nd ed. (Savaş Yayınevi, 2010), 666, 667.
The architect of the AKP’s foreign policy in its first term was Ahmet Davutoğlu, initially chief advisor to PM Erdoğan, thereafter Minister of Foreign Affairs, and finally Erdoğan’s successor as the AKP chairman and Premier until he was purged in 2016. Davutoğlu penned his opinions on Turkish foreign policy as an IR scholar in the book *Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position*. In this monograph, he emphasizes Turkey’s historical and geostrategic legacies through the lens of Turkey’s position in contemporary international relations. The implied multi-dimensional policy approach places as much importance on other forces as it does the West. Furthermore, with the changing nature of its relations, especially with its neighbors, the AKP’s foreign policy was largely seen as neo-Ottomanist. In Davutoğlu’s view, the “central country” (both in geostrategic and cultural terms) argument was a strong factor in Turkey’s inspiration for multi-dimensional foreign policy.

In the AKP’s second term, and even more explicitly in the AKP’s third term, balancing former pro-Western approaches had started to take new shape. In the light of recent developments, some topics, such as developing Turkish-Chinese military relations, the Turkish stance on Iran’s nuclear program, and Turkey’s policy against Israel resulted in more foreign policy discourse that was independent of its allies. At the same time, the increasing importance of the East and the Islamic world for Turkey, along with tensions with the West, brought

---

accusations of Turkey’s shifting foreign interests. Moreover, some of the previously successful policies, such as the “zero problems with neighbors” policy, had turned into “zero neighbors without problems”.

When addressing Turkey’s “shift” with regards to China, we should mention Turkey’s use of SCO as a counterpoint to the EU and NATO. Here, we should be careful not to equate the function the EU with the function of the SCO, as they are not direct opponents. In fact, Erdoğan considers them similar. Nevertheless, in Turkey’s political rhetoric it has been proven that signals for aligning with the East are more popular than signals aligning with the West. Apart from that, SCO membership is technically speaking not directly relevant to the EU. It does, however, bear implications for Turkey’s NATO membership. Besides, “Turkey’s NATO membership has certain implications for Turkey in the US-China competition, that it is already in the US camp [the West].” We still have to wait and see whether or not SCO will become a NATO-like security alliance. The US reacted to Erdoğan’s comments of favoring the SCO by saying that they would find it “interesting” in terms of Turkey’s NATO membership. In fact at the same time that is the very reason why China finds Turkey “interesting” as well.

349 Pantucci and Petersen, “Turkey: Abandoning the EU for the SCO?”
350 Charlie Chau, Interview (Chinese Journalist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Whatsapp, August 26, 2016.
according to a young Chinese scholar: “NATO membership is the charming force of Turkey for China.”

There is no need to further explain how China’s AIIB initiative made the US upset. As it would for other US allies, Turkey’s involvement in this initiative is bad news for the US. These involvements contribute to discourse on the country’s “axis shift” or “multi-dimensional” Turkish foreign policy. So far, it is not possible to speculate about an absolute shift away from the West. If Turkey were to join the SCO as a full member, then it would be necessary to carefully observe the US and Turkey’s reactions toward each other. For only then would we be able to identify certain rhetoric as being more or less appropriate for the latest developments in Turkish foreign policy.

At this point, it is important to mention Euroasianism. Although its origins are in Russia, the ideology has recently become more popular in Turkey’s ultranationalist circles. The original idea behind Euroasianism can be simplified as a reaction to the Atlantic unity, or what has come with it. Euroasianist sympathizers in Turkey also position Turkey with Russia, China and Iran, rather than with the US and the EU. This is why the aforementioned changes to Turkish foreign policy, or the new understanding of the policy-makers, can also be read as “Eurasian”.

We cannot say that the Turkish government has an entirely Eurasian stance on foreign policy issues, yet it is not fully European either. And major country alternatives for Turkish foreign interest, namely Russia, Iran and China, intersect

---

352 Jilian F. Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, August 10, 2015.
with the ideology of Euroasianism. This point will become useful in the course of this thesis.

If we have to summarize the AKP’s attitude to Turkish foreign policy in a few words, we could say that it is rather unconventional, somewhat independent, and highly controversial. I will discuss Turkish foreign policy from the year 2000 in more detail and in the context of Turkey’s foreign relations by mentioning the most relevant discourses, but for now it is important to look at Turkey’s relations and major developments with select countries, regions, and international organizations.

The United States

As has already been mentioned, Turkish history in the 20th century is full of “westernization” debates. The first country that should be discussed in terms of Turkey’s foreign policy is the US. The US and Turkey have long been allies. Nonetheless, if one were to describe Turkish-US relations since 2000 as “fluctuating” it could not be considered incorrect. It would even be fair to use it in summarizing Turkish foreign policy in the 21st century overall, but for now we will focus on Turkish-US relations. This claim does not suggest that Turkey and the US are at odds for the first time in the countries’ more than 60-year alliance, but what follows will focus on the period demanded for the thesis.

To explain these ups and downs in brief, the most important events that took place during these years will be highlighted. The beginning of the 21st century began with the American “war on terror” in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. At that time, Turkey opened its İncirlik Airbase to the US and NATO forces, and
supported their mission in Afghanistan. However, Turkish parliament later refused a bill that allowed the US to use its soil and invade Iraq. Right after the US’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, the “hood incident” happened: the US troops arrested eleven Turkish soldiers with hoods over their head. Turkish soldiers, accompanied by an Iraqi Turkmen commander, were alleged to be plotting against the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk city there. The videos and pictures of Turkish soldiers arrested by US soldiers had a huge impact on Turkish citizens. These kinds of events before and after the Iraq invasion instigated a crisis in Turkish-US relations at the time.

However, Erdoğan government still continued to support the Greater Middle East Project of the US. In order to resolve remnant problems left by the Bush administration and growing anti-Americanism in Turkey, Obama brought forth a new approach to Turkey as well as to the Middle East. Politicians, academics and observers quickly started to describe Turkish-US relations as a “model partnership” following the Obama administration; even “strategic partnership” had started to become used by officials. However, Turkey’s honeymoon with the Obama administration did not last long. This time, the flotilla incident with

356 Kanat, “Theorizing the Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 70.
357 Oran, “2001-2006 Turkey in the Chaotic Aftermath of 9/11,” 921.
358 Ibid., 922–23.
Israel constrained Turkish relations with the US. In 2010, Israel’s raid on the humanitarian aid-loaded flotilla, Mavi Marmara, on its way to Gaza – organized by Free Gaza Movement and Turkey’s Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsani Yardım Vakfı, or İHH) – killed nine activists onboard and created a long-lasting diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel. As a result, Turkish-US relations were also affected.

Turkey’s “alternative approach” to Iran’s nuclear program in 2010 was another important factor that further deteriorated relations between Turkey and the US, and fueled “axis shift” claims, particularly from the EU, NATO and the US. Nevertheless, the US helped to convince Israel to apologize to Turkey over the flotilla issue. This signaled another warming up of relations, as after 2013 the two countries needed each other even more with the worsening Syrian situation.

Initially, Turkey opposed Assad supported ground rebels. The US did not reject this at first, but the situation changed when Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged. The US’ position shifted towards combating ISIS as a priority, whereas Turkey still saw Assad as the first enemy to be forced out of power until very recently. Further, Turkey allegedly continued to help a number of extremist groups in Syria. Eventually, it was the US and Turkeys’ different priorities in fighting against ISIS/the Syrian regime that made the two countries lock horns.

---

360 Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, xiii.
363 Pamuk and Tattersall, “Exclusive: Turkish Intelligence Helped Ship Arms to Syrian Islamist Rebel Areas”; “Prosecutor Says Weapon-Laden MIT Trucks Made 2,000 Trips to Syria.”
once more. The opening of İncirlik and other Turkish bases to the US and Turkish coalition forces against ISIS in 2015 have signaled that new positive developments may happen in the near future regarding US-Turkish relations.

Nevertheless worrying developments came the following year. The arrest of the Iranian businessman who was the central figure of Turkey’s corruption scandal by the US in March 2016 is set to make trouble for Turkey. Although the trial has not reached to a point that would become an obstacle for the relations, it has the potential to make Turkey’s corruption scandal an international case, in other words, a big blow for US-Turkey relations. Conspiracy theories about the West started to increase in Turkey after several deadly terrorist attacks in Turkish metropolitans. They even went further enough to blame US Central Intelligence Agency for being behind these attacks. Turkey’s failed coup attempt also produced some alarming issues as well. Not only pro government Turkish media accused the US of being behind the coup, but also even ministers spoke up

---


about those accusations.\textsuperscript{369} Turkey also accused the US of being not helpful to extradite Gülen to Turkey.\textsuperscript{370} All of these developments created an anti-American sentiment in Turkey, which would likely to affect the relations in the coming term.\textsuperscript{371}

In the meantime, the US support for Turkey for not being excluded from the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)\textsuperscript{372} was also vital in keeping relations from further drifting, if not to rehabilitate in the years that some experts already started to describe it as nothing more than a “relationship of necessity,”\textsuperscript{373} even before the post-failed coup tensions.

Looking back on these developments, it could be said that Turkey had sought independence in its own foreign policy-making. This is well reflected in its attitudes towards the Middle East, which have often been surprisingly different from the US. It seems as though Washington sometimes tolerated these different approaches. However, when it came to issues regarding NATO and Israel, the US was not greatly flexible.\textsuperscript{374} In retrospect, the US sidelining Turkey in the region – somewhat close to what Turkey had already experienced in the post-Cold War

\textsuperscript{373} Sly, “For Turkey and U.S., at Odds over Syria, a 60-Year Alliance Shows Signs of Crumbling.”
\textsuperscript{374} Falk, “Can the U.S. Government Accept an Independent Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East?,” 18.
environment – appeared to give the government more self-confidence in seeking foreign policy independence.

Not only the above reason but also a growing Turkish economy and accordingly increasing expectations from Turkish society urged leaders to look for advantages that might come from alternative countries, even considering the rift that may be brought about between Turkey and its present allies. For example, in 2010, Turkey invited China for annual military training – the first time the US and Israel did not join – a first for China with a NATO country. Although Turkey and Russia had also conducted joint exercises given the existence of NATO-Russian Cooperative Airspace Initiative that was not surprising for the observers. Yet China’s involvement in Turkey was a surprise for many. In a sense, the US and Israel had left the room for Turkey to invite China, which would otherwise not have been possible. In the same sense, Turkey fostered closer relations with Russia and made gas supply deals after the EU’s cancelation of Russia’s South Stream project. Moreover, Turkey had been looking for partnership with China

---

for its military projects at a time when the US and the EU refused to share technology with Turkey.\textsuperscript{379}

This Turkish-US-Chinese military triangle is quite important in terms of US-Turkish relations. By proving itself as being accepted by a NATO country, Turkey gave the Chinese leverage to be more confident with the US. In fact, although the Turkish-Chinese missile deal did not favor China in the end, the talk about the possibility was enough for China to claim some form of success in its competitiveness against Western technology developments.\textsuperscript{380} In turn, Turkish-US relations were also affected by Turkish-Chinese military contacts. In fact, US military officials and politicians showed immediate concern for the possibility of Chinese missiles being integrated into the NATO system.\textsuperscript{381} Although Turkey later announced that the missiles were going to be operated under an independent national system, the announcement did not completely solve the US’ unease about the deal.

A final important factor affecting relations is the state of democracy in Turkey. This is a serious issue for Turkey’s relations with the EU and the US. For example, in 2015 Turkey faced mass criticism from the US and the EU. At this time, seventy-four US senators sent a joint letter to the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, urging him to speak up against the worsening freedom for the press in


The European Union

Another important actor in Turkish foreign policy is the European Union, as in 2016 Turkey will have been a candidate state for more than a decade. The influence of the EU on Turkish domestic politics and democratization has already been elaborated in the previous chapter. Here, I will discuss EU-Turkish relations. EU countries will not be considered one by one, as their influence on Turkish foreign policy as a unit is much more important than their influence as individuals.

After becoming a EU Customs Union member in 1995, Turkey was offered to be an official candidate state for full membership at the 1999 Helsinki summit. For the first five years after the announcement of candidature, developments were quite promising. In 2002, it was announced that negotiations would start if Copenhagen’s criteria for Turkey had been met. Meanwhile, Turkey and Turkish Cyprus backed the Annan plan in 2004 for a solution, which had been a substantial obstacle for Turkey.\footnote{Oran, “2001-2006 Turkey in the Chaotic Aftermath of 9/11,” 923–24.} Not only did Greek Cypriots refuse the Annan plan but Cyprus also joined the EU later that year, which made EU accession even more complicated for Turkey. Accession negotiations were officially started up in 2005. However, the next five years had been a period in which Turkey’s accession became less and less likely. In 2006, the EU froze eight chapters due to the non-
solved Cyprus issues. Additionally, European politicians did not hesitate to declare that Turkey’s accession would not happen even if Turkey were to meet the criteria.

In 2009, EU member Cyprus blocked six chapters. In the second half year of 2012, during the presidency of Cyprus, Turkey froze relations with the EU. The TTIP was another topic that made Turkey uncomfortable. However with the renewed Customs Union agreement in 2015, that problem has almost been resolved.

Moreover, in 2015 there were talks for unification under a federal state for Turkish Cyprus and Greek Cyprus; if that were realized, the unification would offer a great deal to future Turkish-EU encounters, as the Cyprus issue had been the biggest obstacle in Turkey’s EU bid.

Meanwhile the Syrian crisis has produced a lot of displaced people that started to flow to the EU countries in 2015. Under EU pressure, Turkey signed a “migrant deal” with the EU on March 18, 2016. According to the deal Turkey accepted to take back the illegal migrants that had entered the EU from Turkey and the EU promised to start visa liberalization and energize Turkey’s EU accession process. EU also promised to give Turkey 3 billion Euros of aid for the Syrian refugees. The agreement was harshly criticized as being illegal, and seen as bribing

---

387 Kara, “Axis Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy during AKP Administration,” 59.
Turkey instead of criticizing it, for the sake of getting rid of migrants, at a time Turkey was becoming more authoritarian.

Obviously, the EU was the main force for Turkey’s democratization, which was quite visible in the first and second terms of the AKP’s administration. Even with its limited Europeanization, Turkey’s foreign policy rhetoric started to be more value-oriented, emphasizing “soft power”, “development”, “human rights” and “zero problems with neighbors” that were in line with EU rhetoric in the first decade of the century.\footnote{Özlem Terzi, The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 133, 136.} However, that trend in Turkey dramatically changed into an assertive one with the changing nature of the Middle East and its uprisings.

According to Davutoğlu, the EU should accept Turkey’s identity rather than expect it to fully Europeanize.\footnote{Davutoğlu, Stratejik derinlik [Strategic Depth], 546–47.} Moreover, even before the AKP’s rise to power, Davutoğlu suggested in his book that, for the sake of independence, Turkey should seek out other regional opportunities as alternative choices to the EU, regardless of the result of the accession.\footnote{Ibid., 550.} Turkey’s enthusiasm in the Middle East could be understood as in line with this attitude. Erdoğan’s interest in being a member of the SCO instead of the EU was also closely related to this idea.\footnote{Pantucci and Petersen, “Turkey: Abandoning the EU for the SCO?”}

Some say that the EU’s long accession process fueled this kind of thinking in Turkey. Nevertheless, we should not forget that Turkey started applying to the SCO as a guest member in 2007 and failed three times, which also bears

mentioning.\textsuperscript{395} Even though the EU is not concerned with China as much as it is the US, Turkey’s loss of interest in the Union still worries some in the EU.\textsuperscript{396}

In fact, excluding Turkey from Europe may motivate the country to consider alternative discourses and policies.\textsuperscript{397} The decision to accept India and Pakistan as a full member and give way to further enlargement in the 2015 SCO summit might make Turkish politicians try their luck with the organization once more. Nonetheless, as a part of the Customs Union Turkey already has charm for attracting China and other countries, and with the outcome of the TTIP it will be increased even further. That is why it could be said that membership to the EU has its own advantages for Turkey – to provide Turkey the opportunity for becoming more attractive to Russia, China and the Middle East. Even more, Turkey’s increasing integration with the latter countries and regions could be turned into an advantage for the EU.

\textit{NATO}

After the US, Turkey has the second largest\textsuperscript{398} land troop capacity in NATO. It hosted the Allied Air Commands İzmir (under Naples commands) in its territories from 2004 to 2013, and has been hosting the Allied Land Commands Headquarters since 2012 in İzmir. The post 9/11 environment once more (since

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{398} Sofiia Hafeddell, “Turkey-NATO Relations at the 60th Anniversary,” Policy Update (Global Political Trends Center (GPoT), March 2012), 2.
\end{thebibliography}
the Cold War) attached great importance on Turkey – the only Muslim country in
the alliance – due to its geographical position. Nonetheless, as has been
aforementioned, Turkey reacted quite differently from its NATO allies, such as
vetoing the Iraq bill for the US. However, it has also cooperated with the US in
Afghanistan. Turkey was recognized for its successful contributions to the
Afghanistan mission. Turkey was also portrayed as a good bridge between
Central Asia and NATO by some pundits.

Meanwhile, Turkey continued to send mixed signals with its balanced stance
between NATO and Russia over the Georgian crisis, and later in Crimea with the
Ukraine crisis. Once again, uprisings in the Middle East have made Turkey’s
position particularly interesting for the alliance. However, from the start of
these events, Turkey has never been on a stable policy line. It first opposed the
Libya mission and then supported it, it first did not cooperate with the US
against ISIS in Syria for a long time and then called NATO for a meeting to evoke
Article 4 that invoked consultation, and it first forbade a missile shield radar

---

399 Pinar Bilgin, “The ‘Peculiarity’ of Turkey’s Position on EU-NATO Military/Security
400 Petros Vamvakas, “NATO and Turkey in Afghanistan and Central Asia: Possibilities
401 Richard Weitz, “Towards a New Turkey-NATO Partnership in Central Asia,” Turkish
Policy Quarterly 5, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 131.
402 Soner Çağaptay and James F. Jeffrey, “Turkey’s Muted Reaction to the Crimean
Crisis,” Think Tank, The Washington Institute, (March 4, 2014),
http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkeys-muted-reaction-to-the-
crimean-crisis.
403 Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “Preface: NATO and Turkey - Meeting the Challenge of
404 Bill Park, “Turkey’s Isolated Stance: An Ally No More, or Just the Usual Turbulence?,”
405 Ibid., 581; NATO, “Secretary General Announces North Atlantic Council to Meet
Following Turkey’s Request for Article 4 Consultations,” Official, NATO, (July 26,
setting in its territories and then allowed the deployment. Lately after the failed coup attempt tensions rose between the West and Turkey, which was followed by the US State Secretary John Kerry’s warning to Turkey that its membership in the alliance would be jeopardized because of the large number of purged commanders whom NATO was working with. However NATO released a statement to express that Turkey’s membership in the organization is not in question, as the debate on whether Turkey and NATO partnership was coming to an end or not was intensifying in Turkey itself.

Looking back on each of these events, it is clear that Turkey is rather different from other NATO members – supporting the arguments for Turkey’s enthusiasm in developing an independent foreign policy and security capability. The motive behind the interest in buying and sharing defensive missile systems with the Chinese is one such alternative stance.

A purchase of earlier mentioned Chinese missiles for Turkey’s missile system project would have made the entire NATO system vulnerable, as Turkey had to integrate the Chinese system into its own system, which was already a part of NATO. That is why NATO and the US put a great deal of pressure on Turkey and the country eventually had to postpone its bid several times, announcing that they would not integrate the Chinese system into the NATO system but would rather

---

use both as a part of “national” system. In the end, Turkey had to cancel the entire program. This issue will be further detailed later on in the thesis, as it is very important for understanding Turkish-Chinese relations as well as those between NATO and the US.

However, Turkey’s stance on this and those on the Ukraine and Syria clearly made Euro-Atlantic alliance uncomfortable. Nevertheless, some argued that the anti-Western rhetoric and differing opinion only remained within the rhetoric and was not reflected in reality. However, others gave further examples that explained the transformation of Turkey’s perceptions of NATO and how its policies have gravitated toward an interest in itself.

In fact, there are divergences between Turkey and NATO’s development prospects on issues regarding Russia, China, Central Asia and the Middle East. Turkey does not want to jeopardize its relations with these countries/regions, but also wants to cooperate in relevant NATO missions. For example, the deployment of NATO’s shield in Turkey with the condition of not mentioning any particular country name (Iran) could be viewed under this lens. In the same manner, Davutoğlu also drew attention to Turkey’s “multi-dimensional foreign policy” while discussing NATO’s future development with other acting parties.

---


411 Yurter Özcan, “Turkey as a NATO Partner: Reality vs. Rhetoric,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 111.


In any case, based on these divergences recent debates on whether or not NATO should keep Turkey or at least punish it with suspension does not imply any great good for neither party.\textsuperscript{415} Such an action will mean the end of Turkey’s membership to the EU and its Europeanization. Turkey, however, expects more empathy from NATO members on sensitive issues, such as on Syria and Crimea. Otherwise, it seems as though Turkey would not be shy in resisting NATO’s assertive decisions when they failed to meet Turkish interests. NATO, it seems, would not allow Turkey to cross the red line on issues jeopardizing its own strategic plans, such as resisting the deployment of NATO radars in Turkey or purchasing Chinese missile systems as has been mentioned above.

\textit{The Middle East and North Africa}

Turkey’s relations with the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) were not particularly good when the AKP came into power at the beginning of the century. As has been mentioned above, Davutoğlu, the main pilot of Turkey’s foreign policy during those years, paid special attention to Turkey’s neighboring regions in order to create an alternative space for the country and not to be completely dependent on the EU. Apart from this, Davutoğlu also brought forward a vision of “historic and geographic heritage” with its “strategic depth” term,\textsuperscript{416} and his principles on “zero problems with neighbors” and “developing relations with neighboring regions and beyond”.\textsuperscript{417} Obviously, the neighboring regions of MENA were relevant to these principles.

\textsuperscript{415} Pipes, “PIPES.”

\textsuperscript{416} Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 947.

With these approaches in action, Turkish-MENA relations not only started to become less problematic, but even started to prosper. Even better, the US and China also welcomed Turkey’s enthusiasm to act as a regional power.\(^\text{418}\)

Eventually, on the eve of the “Arab uprisings”, the Middle East became the second region to have the most foreign direct investment (FDI) from Turkey, topping $6.7 billion in 2010, an increase six times greater than what it had been five years before.\(^\text{419}\) Turkey also tried to build soft power in these countries through civil society and developmental diplomacy, which effectively helped to construct a more popular Turkey in the region.\(^\text{420}\)

Nevertheless, this rosy picture changed a great deal in the following five years. At first, Turkey did not know what to do about the uprisings. Erdoğan did not support Iran’s “green protests” and did not at first support Libya’s uprisings, although he was the first to call for Egyptian leader Mubarak’s resignation.\(^\text{421}\) Turkey could not avoid the change, however, and so the Turkish approach evolved into an assertive one for the region. Turkey started to side with almost every ME country’s domestic issues. It supported the Muslim Brotherhood after the coup in Egypt, in exchange for diplomatic relations.\(^\text{422}\) It sacrificed


\(^{421}\) Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?,” 21–22.

\(^{422}\) Falk, “Can the U.S. Government Accept an Independent Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East?,” 16.
investments in Libya and supported and hosted the Syrian opposition, which made the Syrian regime hostile to its citizens, as it had done in the late 20th century. Turkey’s relations with Israel turned into diplomatic hostility following the flotilla incident since 2010 until a rapprochement in mid 2016. For Iraq, relations were relatively stable after the country was reconstructed.

Turkey’s burgeoning relations in the region before the uprisings and its later backing of some Islamist groups evoked an “axis shift”, and concerns of “Islamization” in the Western sphere. With the latest developments in the region, Turkey lost its global diplomatic reputation, which halted relations with many important countries in the region where Turkey had once been considered a “model”. Turkey’s assertive, sometimes even aggressive tone drew negative attention for many. China was obviously not happy with Turkey’s new stance in politics to do with the Middle East, especially their repeated intervention in Syria’s domestic politics and not preventing the growing extremism and jihadist rebellion there. Chinese firm support of the Syrian regime has also remained as a point of divergence between Turkey and China. Even the developing Israeli-Chinese relations had a potential threat for Turkey, as Turkey’s Israeli relations

426 Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?,” 14–16.
were quite problematic until mid 2016, when a restoration took place. As a final note, “the whole fragile Turkish Foreign Policy, especially in the Middle East, is also an element to make it harder for China and Turkey to cooperate on regional issues,” says Abdulkadir Alkan who is a young Turkish scholar studying on Chinese politics.\footnote{Abdulkadir Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Phone Conversation, August 25, 2016.}

Central Asia

It has already been mentioned Turkey did not realize its post-Cold War expectations had for independent Turkic states in Central Asia (CA). However, Central Asia constituted an important aspect for “new Turkish foreign policy” in the AKP era.\footnote{Thomas Wheeler, “Turkey’s Role and Interest in Central Asia,” Briefing (London: Saferworld, October 2013), 2.} For example, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), which had been established for funding post-Soviet CA states for development in 1992,\footnote{TIKA, “TIKA Faaliyet Raporu 2008 [TIKA Activity Report 2008]” (Ankara: TİKA, July 2009), 13.} evolved as a foreign policy tool for other regions like Caucasia, the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa. At the same time, TIKA still funded CA the most in comparison to other regions from 2007 to 2011, and was the second largest funder in 2012 and 2013.\footnote{TIKA, “TIKA Annual Reports,” Official, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, (2015), http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika_annual_reports-22.} In terms of rhetoric, CA was also a region that fit with Davutoğlu’s idea of neighboring regions as being development priorities.\footnote{Davutoğlu, “Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assesment of 2007,” 81.}
The 2009 establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTSS)\textsuperscript{434} as an umbrella organization for the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA)\textsuperscript{435} and other international institutions, as well as the 2013 foundation of the Organization of the Eurasian Law Enforcement Agencies with Military Status (TAKM)\textsuperscript{436} with Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (the original founder, Mongolia, withdrew in) were also important for integrating Turkey with the region in terms of economy, politics and military affairs. Uzbekistan, it seems, likely refrains from these types of politics because of its problematic historical relations with Turkey, even though there are continuing efforts to change that. Relations with Uzbekistan particularly deteriorated after Turkey supported the UN’s resolution over Uzbekistan’s deadly response to the Andijan protest in 2005.\textsuperscript{437} Moreover, in the following years Turkey’s refusal to deploy Uzbek dissidents only exacerbated the already bad situation.\textsuperscript{438}

Overall, this “Turkic togetherness” with the exception of the Uzbeks, could be described as relatively weak when compared with Russia’s military and China’s economic presences in the region.\textsuperscript{439} On the other hand, not only shared identities and faith but also the growing Turkish presence in education (governmental and

civil society) in the region might increase Turkish influence in the long term. For the short term, what is certain from is that Turkey is trying to take a share of development in the region, which makes it necessary for Turkey to compete with other major players in the region: the US, Russia and China.

It could be said that well-established Turkish-CA relations is something that Turkey’s Western allies would want to see. Turkey was once promoted as a “model” for the region, although the situation is now different. Now, US withdrawal leaves the region open to Russia and China. Thus countries would likely welcome Turkey developing strategic relations in the region, considering its potential to be a connection between the West and CA. Having said that, when this Turkic togetherness exceeds the imagination of the West, it might be in danger of being seen as the Easternization of Turkey. However, Erdoğan’s “common values” propaganda to the SCO with the implication to these Turkic states in the organization, could not convince anyone.

We should also note here that Erdoğan somehow exaggerates the SCO’s value a lot. In any case, if Turkey had to choose between Russia and China, it would choose Russia due to its better relations and dependency. The move would certainly make China worry about Turkish presence, given the already existing

---

443 Satke, Michel, and Korkmaz, “Turkey in Central Asia.”
Chinese fear about the Uyghurs and Turkey in the light of pan-Turkism. The region might also become a connection between Turkey and China with its developing “Silk Road” plans. In that way, both countries will have to tolerate each other to some extent, which may have been one of the reasons behind China’s acceptance of Turkey to the SCO as a dialogue partner in 2012, rather than as a full member.

**Caucasia**

Caucasia was another region where Davutoğlu proposed that Turkey developed a “strategic depth” doctrine that was based on Ottoman history across the Caucasus region. This region is a neighbor to Turkey and also realizes Davutoğlu’s foreign policy vision.

Out of all of the regions with which Turkey is considering aligning itself, Caucasia is perhaps is the most distinctive, due to the three countries there: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The Turkic-speaking Azerbaijan, under a “one nation two states” slogan, always comes to mind when considering the Turkic togetherness of Central Asia. However, Turkey’s nonexistent diplomatic relations with Armenia, due to one of the most problematic issues in Turkish foreign policy – the latter country’s request for recognition of the 1915 genocide

---

446 Davutoğlu, *Stratejik derinlik [Strategic Depth]*, 124.
of Armenians in Turkey, is hard to tackle. Surprisingly, there were various attempts to change this situation. A process started with the two countries’ presidents’ reciprocal invitations to each other to watch a Turkish-Armenian national football game in their respective countries, later called as “football diplomacy” in 2009, played a significant part in Turkey’s of “zero problems with neighbors” policy. Even so, they failed due to domestic pressure as well as Azerbaijan’s discomfort in the initiative. In the year 2015, the centennial of the massacre, Armenians and Turks are far from sitting around the table once again to discuss the issue.

The other country in the region, Georgia, is neither a “sibling” like Azerbaijan, nor a “hostile” state like Armenia. Instead, the relationship is rather cooperative. Improving relations have led to important projects such as the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway line, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project that replaced the earlier canceled Nabucco, and the activated Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, which launched in 2005. These beneficial projects for Georgia as well as Azerbaijan led Russia, who was and still politically dominant in the region, to become anxious, making Turkey in turn to be careful not to anger Russia, one of its biggest trade partners. Turkey’s reaction during the 2008 Russian military intervention in Georgia was a great example of how Turkey sought a balance between Georgia and Russia. On the one side, Turkey


cooperated with Georgia, and on the other hand it made every effort not to confront Russia.\footnote{Igor Torbakov, “The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations” (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, November 26, 2008), 6, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/recentreports/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34181&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=12982f773b.}

In general, Turkey’s attitude to the Caucasus is friendly, emphasizing its historical bonds. Turkey has used developmental foreign policy instruments in the last decade in these regions.\footnote{Fidan and Nurdun, “Turkey’s Role in the Global Development Assistance Community,” 101.} Beside developmental diplomacy, these regions are also important regarding energy resources and as a transportation hub. For example, Caucasia and the Black Sea Region as means of energy transportation play a crucial role in the Eurasian energy roads.\footnote{Zeyno Baran, “The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Implications for Turkey,” in The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West, ed. S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell (Washington, DC: John Hopkins University Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2005), 103.} In terms of “Silk Roads”, Caucasia is also in an indispensable position to Turkey.\footnote{Aras and Akpinar, “The Relations between Turkey and the Caucasus,” 63.} If they ever wish to reach Europe, Chinese-led Silk Road projects have to pass by, or through, this route. It is important to mention that China has neither politically supported Turkey in its diplomatic arguments against Armenia, nor has it recognized the Armenian genocide. If Turkey does not voluntarily reconcile itself, the issue could potentially be exploited by China just as Russia did in 2015,\footnote{Semih İdiz, “Russia’s Recognition of Armenian Genocide Strains Ties with Turkey,” Al-Monitor, April 28, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/turkey-russia-armenia-ties-lost-magic.html.} as had once been recommended by Chinese netizens as a possible response to Turkey’s attitude to the Uygur issues.\footnote{Ekrem, “Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinin 40 Yılı (1971-2011) [40 years of Turkey-China Relations (1971-2011)],” 4.}
Russia

Russia had been one of the most problematic states for Turkey in Ottoman history as well as the Cold War during the Turkish Republic. However, the end of the Cold War brought forth new opportunities for these two states in their reciprocal approaches. As a result of the changing environment and the AKP’s rise to power, a rapprochement was made with Russia in 2003. As has earlier been mentioned, the multi-dimensional approach from the Turkish Foreign Ministry probably first came into fruition during its relations with Russia. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey started to make a “balanced” Russian policy, and cooperation turned what had once been historic enmity between the two countries into a strategic partnership.

Russia is already Turkey’s major gas supplier, with a 60% share. In 2014, Putin announced that Russia would replace the Turkish Stream with the originally planned South Stream, cancelled after the Ukraine crisis. The Turkish Stream was a significant project at a time when Europe was sanctioning Russia over the Ukraine crisis. Ironically, Turkey has historical bonds with Crimea, which was geographically also a part of the crisis. Despite all of this, Turkey agreed to the project with Russia but in 2015 it was announced that the project would be

460 Ibid., 96.
461 Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 172.
cancelled.\textsuperscript{463} However by the end of 2015 despite the Russian jet downing by the Turkish air forces, Putin had still not canceled the Turkish Stream.\textsuperscript{464} The fate of this project is yet unknown even after an apology by Turkey on the jet incident in 2016.

Trade volume was boosted from $14 billion in 2005 to $38 billion in 2008. Although there was a decrease in volume for the following year to $22 billion – mostly a direct cause of the global financial crisis, from 2011 onwards, bilateral trade recovered to $30–33 billion.\textsuperscript{465} The number of the Russian tourists visiting Turkey annually hit 4.5 million.\textsuperscript{466} Turkish-Russian relations are not limited to trade. Turkish interest in Russian missile systems was clear from as early as 2008, along with interest in other military cooperation.\textsuperscript{467} Furthermore, Russia had been building a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu for Turkey.

So what caused this change until the Russian jet downing? One of the reasons was the personal friendship of Erdoğan and Putin, and their strong authoritarian styles of leadership.\textsuperscript{468} However, it could also be said that the factor that brought Turkey and Russia together in their international relations was the West,\textsuperscript{469} specifically anti-Western and neo imperial rhetoric. Thus, apart from their economic and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[466] Alaranta, “Turkey’s New Russian Policy,” 5.
\item[469] Hill and Taspınar, “Turkey and Russia,” 84–85.
\end{footnotes}
energy interests, Turkey and Russia’s strategic goal for a revival of great power is the motivation. However, this threatens bilateral relations: when one of the two starts to become over ambitious, as has happened in Crimea, the other will become worried.

For some, Turkey’s growing relations with Russia is more than a simple implementation of multi-dimensional foreign policy, as Turkey had not sanctioned Russia in the recent crisis over Crimea.\(^\text{470}\) In fact, the Georgian War, as well as Russia’s stances on Syria, the Ukraine and Crimea were all threats to Turkey as they took place in its immediate neighborhood. However, Turkey was arguably over-tolerant towards Russia on those issues until the end of the 2015.\(^\text{471}\)

In his return from Moscow in September 2015, Erdoğan mentioned a possibility of transition with Assad in the distant future, signaling that Assad was not his priority.\(^\text{472}\) Even after Russia’s military intervention in the Syrian Civil War through airstrikes, relations may have been influenced to some extent but no serious crisis was created between Turkey and Russia at first.\(^\text{473}\) Only a month after the airstrikes started, Erdoğan and Putin met for the G20. Nevertheless, their main topics of discussion were Turkish Stream plans and other issues; the airstrikes were hardly a priority at all. At that point right after the G20 summit Turkey shot a Russian jet down due to a 17 second-long violation of airspace in

\(^{470}\) Alaranta, “Turkey’s New Russian Policy,” 5.

\(^{471}\) Çağaptay and Jeffrey, “Turkey’s Muted Reaction to the Crimean Crisis.”


The jet was targeting some anti-Assad forces as well as extreme terrorist groups. Turkey’s sudden change towards Russia could be read together with the cancellation of the Chinese missile as Turkey’s re-orientation with the West. The incident was serious enough to change the entire prospect of Turkish-Russian cooperation including the Turkish Stream project. But once again Turkey managed to find a way to overcome its problems with Russia and with an apology to make rapprochement between the two countries possible. Putin was the first leader to call Erdoğan to show his support after the failed coup attempt and Erdoğan thanked him for that when he visited Russia in August 2016. The improved personal relationship between the two leaders caught the eyes of many observers one more time.

It has already been said that Turkey did not want to antagonize the countries in which it had political interest. What is more, Turkey tried to take advantage of the crises detailed above, using the events to get better deals from Russia. Furthermore, even when those issues appeared to threaten its self-interest, Turkey ignored the issue, continuing to conduct business with Russia. Although the jet incident was vital to change the relationship in the short term, there is so much at stake between Turkey and Russia to turn into full hostility unless there is a war.

---

The jet incident itself is an example of this. Even during the seven months of tensions that followed the jet incident, the two sides somehow managed to refrain from further escalation of the tension. Russia was not only a great partner for Turkey but also the largest power in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood. For this reason, Turkey’s policy for Caucasus and Central Asia were always in line with Russia, so that neither interest in the region nor interest in Russia would be jeopardized.

To date, Turkey and Russia have supported each other on such issues as Turkey’s accession to the SCO and the SCO is an alternative arena to the EU for Turkey. Except for neighborhood politics, the motivation behind Turkey’s growing relations with China is pretty much the same as its motivations for building relations with Russia. We could say, however, that Turkey’s growing friendship with China is rather more worrisome to the West than is Turkey’s relationship with Russia. The West is well aware of the Turkish-Russian hostility over the centuries, and assumed that Turkey would eventually side with West, as it did after the WWII, despite Turkey’s friendship with the Russia in the pre-war period. Russia in Turkey’s neighborhood is a direct threat for Turkey in the long term.

China, however, is different. The country is situated far away from Turkey. Therefore, cooperation between Turkey and China might be useful in overcoming the perception of threats on either side. Turkey may not need to choose sides between the West and China, as there is no immediate risk from China, as there may be with Russia.

Another reason why Chinese friendship is more attractive than Russian alliance is the popular notion of a “rising China” and “declining Russia”. Further, Russia or
China could make use of Turkey against the West. Turkey has been a longstanding Western ally with a non-Western identity. This special identity might be an advantage for powers and regions that wish to create serious political change.\footnote{Weitz, “Towards a New Turkey-NATO Partnership in Central Asia,” 131.}

\textit{Iran}

Another country that has a great influence in Turkey’s neighborhood is Iran. Due to Iran’s importance, it was not included in the ME section where it would otherwise belong. In contrast to other governments that have come into power in Turkey, the AKP also established rather positive relations with Iran and gradually developed communication for a friendship that had not always been in the best shape. To some extent, the “common enemy” – the Kurdish separatist groups – had helped these two countries to come closer. Iran is another country with which Turkey had made a rapprochement, in spite of their historical divergence. Turkey and Iran signed several agreements on security and economic areas during Erdoğan’s visit to Iran in July 2004.

At first, the signal from the West about Turkey’s growing relations with Iran was rather positive. However, it was beyond Western alliances’ expectation that Turkey would become so amicable to Iran that Erdoğan would be the first leader to congratulate Ahmadinejad after his controversial reelection in 2009.\footnote{Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?,” 21.} Turkey skipped “green protests” after the elections. Nonetheless, what surprised the Western alliance most was Turkey’s stance on Iran’s nuclear program.\footnote{Öniş, “Multiple Faces of the ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy,” 53.} Turkey and Brazil exercised a negative vote on the sanctions against Iran in the United Nations.
Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2010 and Turkey succeeded in convincing Iran for a nuclear swap program, even though the project never materialized. Turkey was criticized for this pact by the Obama administration and, as a consequence, Turkey’s plan did not work as the UN sanctioned Iran. Responding to his critics, Erdoğan said that he had been ready for them long before when he initiated the agreement for further relations with Iran. At a press conference held in Tehran during his 2004 visit, Erdoğan claimed “Turkey would develop relations with its neighbors and does not make any discrimination among them.” One could include Turkey’s interest in developing relations with Iran in the same multi-dimensional policies that stimulated relations with Russia and China. Nevertheless, most critics from the West suggested that Turkey had experienced a political axis shift. Turkey’s new “oriental” foreign policy has also been followed with much interest by Chinese experts as well.

Arguing that Turkey’s relations with Iran were only for the sake of the AKP’s “Islamist” tendencies is not entirely correct. The reason is instead that the then Turkish President, Sezer, had visited Tehran and signed economic and cultural cooperation agreements even after the US had started its war on terror and claimed that Iran was one of the “axes of evil”. Moreover, Turkey did not want to see another country’s destabilization in its region from a possible intervention.

---

481 Ibid.
482 Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 953.
486 Kösebalaban, Turkish Foreign Policy, 182.
to Iran, as had earlier been carried out on Iraq. Furthermore, Turkish policy-makers suggested that pushing Iran into isolation would make Iran even more dangerous to the international community.

Nonetheless, Erdoğan government pushed the limits with the nuclear swap deal and sought loopholes in the trade sanctions, such as through the gold trade. It could be said that the nuclear swap deal was an example of Turkey’s self-appointed role as “mediator”, arguing that Turkey was in a beneficial cultural and geographical “central” position to Iran. The 2015 P5+1 (five UNSC Permanent members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the US – plus Germany) nuclear deal with Iran showed that the global community, including the West, followed similar methods to Turkey, namely in embracing Iran rather than isolating it as some scholars had suggested that the US president make use Turkish-Brazilian nuclear swap deal. Nevertheless, we should not forget that the sanctions on Iran played a role in the negotiations, so it is hard to know how relations would have been if there were no sanctions in the first place.

The P5+1 deal is set to integrate Iran into world politics and will allow Iran to further develop its relations with certain countries. One of these countries is the US. The US-Iran business is set to increase. At the same time, Iran’s relations

---

with China will also be effected from this deal. China had been a true friend to Iran when the latter country was in trouble with embargos.\textsuperscript{491} Perhaps the most important components of their relations are their energy programs.\textsuperscript{492}

Moreover, the status of Iran in the SCO is due to improve with the abandoning of sanctions on Iran as a result of the P5+1 deal. These steps will clearly make Iran less isolated from the rest of the world and stronger in the region, which is not a development that Turkey would want to see.\textsuperscript{493} In any case, existing Chinese-Iranian cooperation on issues such as Syria will likely to spread to other areas. Chinese-Iranian relations have fostered quite considerably.

Not only will Iran benefit from this but also China will have greater influence on the ME through developing a bilateral partnership with Iran, as well as via the SCO.\textsuperscript{494} Turkey might therefore be in a relatively less attractive position, not only to Washington and Brussels but also to Moscow and Beijing.

Of course, Turkey also has stakes in the Iran deal as then Turkey would be able to carry out legitimate business with Iran and, with its geographical position, Turkey could benefit from an open Iran just as it does from Russia. Actually “the P5+1 deal provides a great advantage for Turkey”, says Mr. Ahmet Doğru, who studies


\textsuperscript{492} Ümit Alperen, “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Çin’in Ortadoğu Politikası [China’s Policy Towards Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era]” (Master’s, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, 2012), 43–44.

\textsuperscript{493} CCTV News, \textit{Turkey and China: Partners against Terror?}, TV panel (Beijing, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMQLTKlpxtE.

Iran politics talking about the business possibilities. Nonetheless, Iran’s recent attempt to integrate with the international system has been a long-term threat for Turkey’s interests in regional and global politics, just as Iran has always been perceived as a rival for Turkey.

Africa

Africa was a long-ignored continent for Turkish foreign policy-makers. Although there had been attempts to change this attitude in 1998 and 2003 with new policy implementations, the announcement of 2005 as being the “African Year” in Turkey followed by Erdoğan’s visit to sub-Saharan Africa – the first time a Turkish PM would visit in the history of Turkish politics – could be considered the first concrete steps to building relations between the country and continent. 2005 was the very same year that TİKA opened its first offices in Africa. Moreover, Turkey became an observer in the African Union in 2005, and then a strategic partner in 2008. The declaration of the “African Strategy” was a continuum of the Turkish “Opening up to Africa” that had begun in 2005. As a result, the number of Turkish embassies in Africa increased to thirty-nine in 2015, up from twelve in 2009, and the number of Turkish Airlines flight destinations to

---

495 Ahmet Doğru, Interview (Turkish Scholar), interview by Mehmet Süylemez, Face-to-face, August 21, 2016.

This new agreement with Africa, which had been envisioned by Davutoğlu, was an opening beyond Turkey’s neighboring regions, and followed Davutoğlu’s concept of a multi-dimensional foreign policy. As a result, Turkish investments and bilateral trade with the African continent dramatically increased. The trade volume, which had one been close to $7 billion, increased to $14 billion in 2010, and to almost $20 billion in 2014.\footnote{TurkStat, “Main Statistics, Foreign Trade.”} Nonetheless, Turkey was still far from reaching its $50 billion targets for 2015.\footnote{Deniz Ülke Arıboğan, “Açılım Kitasi Afrika! [Opening Continent Africa!],” \textit{Akşam}, January 9, 2013, sec. Columns, http://www.aksam.com.tr/yazarlar/acilim-kitasi-afrika-8803y/haber-198177.} Turkey also started using its tools for developmental assistance to get closer to the continent.\footnote{Hakan Fidan, “A Work in Progress: The New Turkish Foreign Policy,” \textit{Middle East Policy} 20, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 94, doi:10.1111/mepo.12006.} Accordingly, Africa became the first region to receive the most developmental assistance from TİKA in 2012 and onwards. According to the data available, this assistance surpassed that which had been given to Central Asia.\footnote{TİKA, “TİKA Annual Reports.”} Africa is a region like CA where the Gülen movement is broadly active with its educational institutions.

Ironically, the increasing Turkish presence in Africa in the last decade has drawn more attention internationally than it has domestically.\footnote{Arıboğan, “Açılım Kitasi Afrika! [Opening Continent Africa!].”} Other countries have been trying to be effective in the continent, such as India, South Korea and Japan. More importantly France, the US and China have already had long-standing special interest, or at least a long history of relations with African countries.
Turkey, as a new player in the region, is attracting their attention even though it is far from being able to compete with them in terms of economic power and soft power.

Turkey’s opening up to Africa sometimes over emphasizes Muslim African countries such as Somalia, which brings with it some skepticism about Turkish Islamism.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^6\) Downgrading Turkey’s interest in Africa to Islamism, however, would be undermining the long-term influence of already existing and growing investments that the Turkish government and civil society has made in the region. Turkey is keen to make friends with Africa, not only for opening itself up to a new market but also as a source of a diplomatic support with fifty-four members in the UN – this was considered a bonus for Turkey in its bid for membership in the 2009–2010 UNSC meeting. In that sense, this kind of approach was similar to the Chinese approach to the continent.

**Asia**

Despite its good historical bonds with South Korea and Japan, East Asia was the “closed window” for Turkish foreign policy in the 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^7\) Relations turned into economic rather than strategic interest in the first decade of 21\(^{st}\) century.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^8\) However, most economic relations developed in the East Asian region were dominated by China. Trade volume with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and

---

506 Tepeciklioğlu, “Afrika’da Ne Arıyoruz? Türk Dış Politikasında Afrika Açılımı [Why We Are in Africa? Opening up to the Africa in Turkish Foreign Policy].”
507 Arıboğan, “Opening the Closed Window to the East;”
China has grown to 4.8, 2.2, 3.4, 17 fold respectively from the year 2000 to 2012.\(^{509}\)

On issues such as building power plants or infrastructure in Turkey, China, Japan and South Korea often compete against each other, as well as other countries like Russia, the US, France and so on. Japan was set to build the second nuclear power plant in the Sinop province along with a French consortium.\(^{510}\) Moreover, during 2015, Turkey visit Abe stated with Erdoğan that they are looking forward to enhance the Turkish-Japanese partnership in big investments.\(^{511}\) However, China was never completely left out of the equation, with its interest for a third plant and other projects. On the S. Korean side, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Turkey and S. Korea (effective 2013, expanding 2015), prepared the way for increase bilateral trade exchange to around $8 billion as of 2015.\(^{512}\) Considering Turkey’s anti-damping taxes for some Chinese goods and the FTA with S. Korea, the latter might be a competitor for China in the Turkish market in the near future. Lastly, Turkey had established diplomatic relations with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 2001 but saw no further development, suggesting that it had other, perhaps better relations on its agenda.\(^{513}\)

\(^{509}\) Cólakoğlu, “Turkey’s East Asian Policy: From Security Concerns to Trade Partnerships,” 144.


Taiwan used to be a very important factor with regard to Turkish-Chinese relations as it was, for many other countries, an issue for KMT-CCP rivalry on the ground and ROC-PRC antagonism in Chinese diplomacy. However, after recognizing the PRC’s “One China” policy, Turkey did not use Taiwan for any other purpose except for trade. Therefore, Taiwan does not possess any strategic meaning for Turkey, unlike the US. Additionally, Turkey is still trying to maximize the possibility of doing business with Taiwan. A visa agreement was made in 2013, and Turkish Airlines flights to Taipei began in 2015 though these steps for increased diplomacy between Turkey and Taiwan troubled China in 2010.

Soon after, other previous closed windows had started to open, such as those towards South and Southeast Asia. Already existing good relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan continued to improve in the AKP years. More importantly, the inclusion of India and Pakistan to the SCO made Turkey’s application for membership more meaningful as it looked to further expansion. Pakistan could be a negotiator for Turkey in the organization, as it had already done so in the establishment of Turkish-Chinese diplomatic ties. Turkey also declared its interest in becoming a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) after signing a cooperation agreement with the organization in 2010. However, the agreement did not sound plausible, as Turkey is not located in Southeast Asia.


What would make sense would be another mechanism that would facilitate cooperation between ASEAN and Turkey, as ASEAN’s other major partners have been doing. Even so, Turkey is still quite new to the region. China would not want to see any other country becoming influential in this already problematic region. However, Turkey is far from having enriched relations with Southeast Asian countries, let alone strategic influence.

If we take a look at trade figures between Turkey and Asia, (excluding those from Middle Eastern countries, Turkic states and Russia, in order to understand the position of East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia vis-à-vis China), we could see that China has constituted near to half of its trade volume with some $27 billion out of $63.7 billion in 2015 to those regions.

In 2005, the volume for China was $7.5 billion, while the rest of the countries in those regions constituted $21 billion.\(^{517}\) That means that China represents over half of Turkey’s Asian trade, up from a third in the preceding decade. Furthermore, if we exclude China from Asian countries (along with the ME, Turkic Republics and Russia), Asia’s overall import trade share in Turkey was only 12.4% in 2015, up from 11% in 2005, and its exports share reached only 1.8%, from 1.5% in the same period.\(^{518}\)

Germany, China, and Russia were in this order Turkey’s three major partners in 2015. Looking at Table 2, we can see the figures for Turkish trade as well as total foreign trade in the years 2005, 2010 and 2015. This table could give us an understanding of the trends in Turkey’s economic relations. It is useful to

\(^{517}\) TurkStat, “Main Statistics, Foreign Trade.”

\(^{518}\) Ibid.
compare these figures with the figures mentioned above, in order to understand how insignificant Asia is in Turkey’s foreign policy, with the exception of China. Therefore, it could be assumed that Turkey’s multi-dimensional foreign policy has not been successfully implemented in Asia, despite positive rhetoric and some wishful statements of the Turkish politicians. It seems as though the Asian window is still waiting for Turkey to open it.

Table 2: Turkey's Major Trade Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Import</td>
<td>Export</td>
<td>Vol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (without China)</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Trade</td>
<td>116.8</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>190.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turkey’s China Policy

When the AKP came into power, it adopted a new foreign policy that was in accordance with its own vision. This vision was first in favor of normalizing with its neighbors and developing relations with its neighboring regions – the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Africa. Turkey utilized its historical links with these regions to realize its rapprochement. Next, Turkey

---
519 Ibid.
tried to be a global power and develop a multi-dimensional foreign policy.\textsuperscript{521}

Lastly, in that regard Turkey emphasized its central geographic location in order to present itself as a bridge country between different regions, such as between Europe and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{522}

When the AKP came into power, Turkey had only just adjusted its policy toward China. Despite the fact that the two countries had established official ties twenty-nine years before and had initiated high-level diplomatic contacts five years later, Turkey had only started to change its attitude on the Uyghur issue in 1996, and the Turkish PM had sent a secret curricular in 1998; it was in the year 2000 that the two countries both declared that they changed their stance on certain issues and wanted their relationship to be raised to an “enhanced partnership”.\textsuperscript{523} Some Chinese observers analyzed this long-term evolution as turning from pawns into real players of their relationship.\textsuperscript{524} According to this belief other global players used to influence Turkey and China’s bilateral relations. In other words, 2000 was the year that Turkey and China declared their bilateral rapprochement.

Before evaluating Turkey’s foreign policy on China, the Uyghur issue needs further elaboration. As it had been a long-standing obstacle between the two, all of Turkey’s policies for developing relations with China (discussed later), became possible only through solving the Uyghur problem. An adjustment had been made

\textsuperscript{521} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{522} Feng Jihua (冯基华), “美国中东政策的战略支点——土耳其 [Turkey: The Strategic Pivot for the American Middle East Policy],” 亚非纵横, no. 4 (2012): 49.
\textsuperscript{524} Xiao Xian （肖宪）and Wang Wenzhang (王文章), “中国与土耳其关系的演变、问题与未来 [The Evolution of Sino-Turkish Relations],” 外交评论(外交学院学报) 2, no. 95 (April 2007): 35.
in 2000 but there were ongoing problems. 2009 saw a short-term shock for Turkish-Chinese relations. The deadly riots in Xinjiang in July 2009 took the Turkish attraction. The reaction of the Turkish PM Erdoğan was strict, describing the incident as genocide.\textsuperscript{525} Obviously, this led to frustration from the Chinese side, and relations between the two countries paused for a number of months despite Turkey’s Foreign Ministry attempting to build bridge soon after the riots.\textsuperscript{526} The damage, however, had already been done.

Later, high-level visits from ministers during the Shanghai World Expo 2010, such as the Turkish FM Davutoğlu and the Minister of Culture and Tourism Ertuğrul Günay, were very successful and created a positive environment that contributed to improving relations.\textsuperscript{527} For example, the two sides decided to celebrate the 40\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 2012 – declared the “Year of China” in Turkey, while China celebrated the “Year of Turkey” a year later in 2013.\textsuperscript{528} Even further, the two countries agreed to open a Turkish industrial zone in Urumqi in 2011.\textsuperscript{529} At the same time, Chinese and Turkish air firms started flights from Urumqi to Istanbul\textsuperscript{530} and Antalya.\textsuperscript{531} These

\begin{flushleft}


\textsuperscript{527} Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai, Senior Staff and Operation Supervisor, 2010.


\end{flushleft}
developments showed that the region had begun to be seen as an area of cooperation in order for Turkey to further develop relations with China.

Again in 2015, there were wide scale anti-China campaigns and protests held in Turkey for over a week. There have been some false reports on the Chinese killing the Uyghurs for not obeying a fasting ban in Ramadan, and the Turkish public became really angry about these allegations. Although the Turkish and Chinese foreign ministries exchanged some concerns over the issue, there was no major damage to Turkish-Chinese relations at the time. Nevertheless, just a month after these events allegedly took place, Erdoğan visited China. There, he met with President Xi and Premier Li, and several agreements were signed during this meeting. Turkey and China reemphasized their 100 billion trade volume targets for 2020 and agreed to cooperate on third markets. Possible Chinese investments for significant projects in Turkey were also discussed.

Going back to the foreign policy issues, parts of Turkey’s new foreign policy and its terminology could be considered irrelevant to China. China is not a bordering country for Turkey – the former is at the very east of Asia while the latter is at the very west of Asia with part of its soil in Europe. In this sense, Turkey’s interest to develop relations with its neighbors or neighboring regions was not relatable to China. Yet neighboring regions are only a part of the question when we discuss

Turkish-Chinese relations. It also involves competition and cooperation, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The most important aspects that relate to China in Turkey’s new foreign policy understanding are the following: multi-polarity and multi-dimensional or independent foreign policy-making, a “central country” vision, and regional and global endeavors.\(^{535}\) Bearing in mind China’s rise in the world and China becoming a new power center, Turkey’s global interest has a lot to do with China. That is why Turkey developed relations with China quite significantly since the AKP came into power in 2002.

The bilateral trade level that had been below $1 billion prior to 2000 had reached to almost twentyfold, with $19.5 billion in 2010.\(^{536}\) Turkey and China had agreed to boost these numbers to $50 billion in 2015 and $100 billion in 2020,\(^{537}\) but, as indicated above, the former objective was not reached. The total volume for the years 2011 and 2012 were around $24 billion and were $28 billion for the years 2013 and 2014, and $27 billion for the year 2015.\(^{538}\) This kind of relation boosting, as had been seen in Turkey-Russia relations, was explained by Turkish multi-dimensional foreign policy-making. In addition, the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan upgraded their relations to “strategic

\(^{535}\) Feng Jihua (冯基华), “美国中东政策的战略支点——土耳其 [Turkey: The Strategic Pivot for the American Middle East Policy],” 48–49.


partnership” in the year 2010. \(^{539}\) Therefore, Turkish-Chinese cooperation further expanded in the political, social, cultural, and economic fields, \(^{540}\) as well as strategically and militarily. As Alkan says: “the warming of military relations starting from those years prove that both governments want to make sure that their relations develop in this area.” \(^{541}\)

Turkey launched its first high-definition Earth observation satellite, Göktürk-2, from the Gansu Jiuquan Space Station in 2012. \(^{542}\) Chinese interest for building a possible nuclear power plant in Turkey still remains, even though Chinese side had failed to win the bid for its first and second plants. \(^{543}\) In June 2016, both countries signed a memorandum of understanding on nuclear power cooperation. \(^{544}\)

In terms of multi-polarity, in 2010 the international community witnessed an important event: Chinese jets joined with Turkey’s aerial military training, the “Anatolian Eagle”. \(^{545}\) It was remarkable as it was the first time that a NATO country had performed such an action with China. \(^{546}\) Similarly, Turkey increased its will to join the SCO. The Turkish Ambassador to Beijing, Murat Salim Esenli,


\(^{541}\) Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).


\(^{543}\) World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in Turkey.”


\(^{545}\) Yılmaz, “Türkiye-Çin Askeri Tatbikatı [Turkey-China Military Training],” 1.

commented on Turkey’s entrance as a dialogue partner to the SCO in 2012 as “contribut[ing] to relations between Turkey and member states”. The Turkish Under-secretariat for Defense Industries also declared that a US-sanctioned Chinese company won the bid for producing the first Turkish long-range air defense system in 2013. Although this bid was not finalized due to pressures from NATO and the US for long time, and cancelled in November 2015, this announcement showed that Turkey was not afraid of showing China as its strategic partner. It also strengthened the independence of Turkey’s foreign policy orientation. Nonetheless, a Turkey-China related NGO Turkish representative thinks that military cooperation was perhaps the only dimension that would have made their partnership strategic, and believes that Turkey and China “missed that chance” because of the failure of the missile bid.

Turkey also showed great interest in Chinese projects about reviving the Silk Road and several relevant attachment projects by Turkey is trying to be made, increasing Turkey’s integration with Asian countries. In fact the interest from the Turkey’s immediate neighborhood, including Arab and non-Arab states, to China is also quite big and in that sense Turkey is no different from them. It might be


550 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Wechat, August 22, 2016.

even less excited than them. A Turkish NGO representative interviewee claims “Turkey is one of the most important countries in the Silk Road Hinterland after Russia”; yet he thinks the importance of China’s new Silk Road projects is not fully understood by Turkey.\footnote{AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).}

Meanwhile, the Turkish application to become a founding member of the Chinese leading Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was welcomed and approved by China.\footnote{“Turkey Joins AIIB as Founding Member,” News, Global Times, (April 10, 2015), http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/%E5%A4%8D%E4%BB%B6%20916228.shtml.} Although the Undersecretariat of the Treasury made the announcement in a neutral tone, this action was obviously the key to bolstering Turkey’s claims of multi-polarity, as many observers have compared the AIIB to the IMF and the World Bank. Although US officials have not directly commented on Turkey’s involvement, the US is not happy with the bank and has unsuccessfully tried to block its ally’s involvement.

Turkey expects a lot from China in terms of its regional and global role. As a permanent member of the UNSC, China attracts Turkey’s interest, as Turkey needs support from such countries in order to realize its targets on international issues.\footnote{Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Turkey-China Relations: Rising Partnership,” Ortaduğu Analiz 5, no. 52 (April 2013): 33.} Although China has so far not been greatly supportive of Turkish claims on certain issues in need of resolution, China’s international position is important in terms of where Turkey geographically and politically locates China. These issues will be addressed in relevant sections later in this thesis.

On the other hand, China has realized Turkey’s endeavors to be a regional and gradually international influencer on some issues, therefore, during the Turkish
president Gül’s visit in 2009 to Beijing, the Chinese president Hu Jintao indicated that China would be willing to work with Turkey for “maintaining multilateral cooperation to promote world harmony” and that “China supports Turkey to play a bigger role in international and regional issues”.

In terms of its central country and bridge arguments, Turkey has a unique position as a NATO member state with close relations to Central Asia and Russia, it is a democratic and secular state in the Middle East, it tries to be a part of the EU with a Muslim-dominated society, and it is a close ally to the US relative to the rest of the region. Therefore, Turkey’s special position can be very beneficial regarding the country’s developing relations with China in regions of mutual interest. In this regard, the “China” option cannot be completely seen as an axis shift for Turkey. On the contrary, the shift can give Turkey an opportunity to enjoy utilizing her new understanding of foreign policy.

It is necessary to say a few words about how Turkey perceives a rising China/the China threat, even though this topic will be elaborated in the following chapter. It should be noted that Turkey does not feel any threat to its security from China because they have not been opponents on common ground or conflicting security zones since the Korean War (1950-1953). It was known that China had been underlining the stability in the Middle East. If China does not change that approach into an unfavoring one for Turkey in the region, there should not be any threat for Turkey in any short-middle term future.

If we elaborate this point a little further, Turkey is not in a geographic position that could be directly linked to tensions between the US and China, as is the case for Japan and Vietnam. It is very clear that Turkey’s geographical position is far from both the US and China, which makes their tension irrelevant, especially from the military. However, Turkey’s traditional foreign policy alignment is not irrelevant, at least to one of them: the US. As a US military ally, Turkey has to think about potential future requests from the US if its military is needed as in Iraq War or the Syrian Civil War. We might choose, here, to make a speculation: if a war were to break out between the US and China, and spread to other countries, Turkey would still try to act independently and keep as much distance as it could.

We can see similar patterns in Turkey’s involvement in WWII, in which Turkey only joined in February 1945 to satisfy UN procedures.\textsuperscript{557} This time, Turkey would not choose a side as it was geographically irrelevant to the ongoing rivalry. Another example is Turkey’s involvement in the Korean War. The circumstances in the Korean War, however, were quite different for Turkey. There was the threat of Russian expansionism, and Turkey expected to be protected under the NATO umbrella, seeking support from the US.\textsuperscript{558} Thus, Turkey’s involvement in this geographically distant and irrelevant war was actually motivated by its own issues in its geographic neighborhood.

However, in the current scenario it seems as though Turkey could avoid involvement, as there is no immediate threat for Turkey from China, and Turkey


\textsuperscript{558} Ahmet Yücel, “Kore Harbinin Türk Dış Politikasına Etkisi [The Effect of Korean War to the Turkish Foreign Policy]” (Master’s, Ankara Üniversitesi, 2005), iii.
already has the NATO protection guarantee, if necessary. Nevertheless, we should note here that in case of NATO’s involvement then Turkey, as a member, has the obligation to follow NATO so. Turkey is currently trying to find a balance between the two. For example, Turkey announced its purchase of Chinese missiles not long after it deployed patriot batteries in Southeast Turkey against a threat from Syria.\textsuperscript{559} How will the announced withdrawal plans of patriots by Germany and US in 2015 and 2016 respectively affect the Chinese missile deal is a question to be answered in the future. The cancellation of the project is a bit telling in that sense.

Another aspect of the threat is the economy.\textsuperscript{560} Trade deficits grew exponentially along the Turkish and Chinese transactions. The 2015 trade deficit was $22.5 billion, while the overall volume was 27.3 billion for that year.\textsuperscript{561} Therefore, assuming China posed a threat for Turkish business and economy sounds correct to some extent.\textsuperscript{562} For example, one of the main pillars of Turkish industry – the textile industry – has been negatively affected after China’s joining of the WTO.\textsuperscript{563} At the same time this issue is becoming a problem for Turkey and China, as “Neither the Turkish government nor the business institutions has a clear strategy about how to deal with China” says a Turkish businessman who has been

\textsuperscript{559} Meick, “China’s Potential Air Defense System Sale to Turkey and Implications for the United States,” 3.
\textsuperscript{560} Deng, China’s Struggle for Status, 105.
\textsuperscript{561} TurkStat, “Main Statistics, Foreign Trade.”
\textsuperscript{563} Zarife Kerim, “Çin’in Dünya Ticaret Örgütüne Katılımının Türk Tekstil Sektörü Üzerine Etkisi [The Effects of the China’s Accession to the World Trade Organization to the Turkish Textile Industry]” (Master’s, Istanbul Üniversitesi, 2004), 113.
dealing with China for a decade.\textsuperscript{564} The problems these issues create will be discussed and elaborated in Chapter 6 under the section on trade asymmetry and competition.

Turkey and China, however, could make use of each other. Turkey’s rise at the beginning of the century was perceived to be positive development in the EU. Meanwhile, Turkey started to be known as “Europe’s China”, with fast development in the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.\textsuperscript{565} As it has been explained, Turkey, like China, is also an advocate of multi-polarity. While China is trying to use its relations with the EU to realize multi-dimensionality, Turkey is using China against the EU for the same purpose. Turkish-Sum relations are a good example of this.\textsuperscript{566} After the initiation of the new Silk Road projects, Chinese perception of Turkey being a “gateway to the European market” with its EU Customs Union agreement has substance.\textsuperscript{567} A Turkey that has good relations with the EU is an “opportunity” for China. In that sense Turkey’s position in the Western alliance and NATO in particular makes it more valuable in China, believes Dr. Ümit Alperen, who was a visiting scholar at Peking University and is studying Chinese foreign policy. “A weak Turkey in the West cannot have an influence on China’s foreign relations. Turkey had an impact on China when in

\textsuperscript{564} Tamer Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 11, 2016.
\textsuperscript{566} Zan Tao, “An Alternative Partner to the West? Turkey’s Growing Relations with China,” Middle East Institute, October 25, 2013, http://www.mei.edu/content/alternative-partner-west-turkey’s-growing-relations-china.
\textsuperscript{567} Changgang Guo, “Turkey: An Increasing Interest for Chinese Academia,” Middle East Institute, October 9, 2013, http://www.mei.edu/content/turkey-increasing-interest-chinese-academia.
the recent years it had better relations with the West,” he says. Actually this point of China’s leverage power against the West is the most important factor making China distinct from any other developed country in the region like South Korea or Japan.

Turkey’s Perceptions of China

So far in this chapter, we have tried to explore Chinese developments from the year 2000 and its IR consequences with regards to Turkish-Chinese relations. Here, Turkey’s perceptions of China will be elaborated. The perceptions that have been analyzed here have been chosen as the major ones. Moreover, these perceptions from the constituencies of Turkey on Turkish-Chinese relations have been grouped under different titles such as the AKP, opposition parties, the military, civil society, the media, and certain business circles. Although we can group the latter two and even political parties in civil society under to some categorizations, given their different natures they are here discussed separately. They will, in any case, be discussed around similar themes. Let us look them individually:

The AKP

When we discuss political parties, we should separate them into two sections. The reason is that the AKP has been in power from 2002 to 2016 –almost the entirety of the time period that we have covered here. This party’s relations with the Communist Party of China will be analyzed in further detail in Chapter 5. Here, it

---

568 Umit Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Phone Conversation, August 24, 2016.
is mentioned only to highlight the AKP’s perceptions of China. The AKP will be discussed first, followed by the other political parties.

Before going into the AKP’s ruling term, we should say a few words about its parent organizations. Before the AKP had been founded, its key players had been in the RP. The RP’s stance on China was determined by religious nationalistic factors. In other words, the Uyghur issue was a major issue against seeing China. Erdoğan’s statements about the İsa Yusuf Alptekin Park opening in Istanbul show that he was sympathetic to the Uyghurs and was firm against actions from the Chinese government. Nevertheless, Erdoğan and his colleagues’ stance like on many issues, including the EU, changed once they founded the AKP and came into power. During a conversation with a former RP member and an AKP founder, it is observed that “communism” or “Uyghurs” do not play a crucial role in the AKP perception of AKP of the CCP and its relations with China, or at least it chooses to ignore those issues.\textsuperscript{569}

The AKP is obviously trying to advertise the concept of a rising China in order to justify developing relations with it. In its party declaration for the July 2015 elections, the AKP gave a statement that relations with countries like China, Japan, and South Korea would be increased to the strategic level under the Asia-Pacific section on Turkey’s foreign policy.\textsuperscript{570}

Moreover, the AKP’s foreign policy with regards to China, given in the final section of Chapter 3, attaches great importance to multi-polarity. In that regard, if

\textsuperscript{569} AA, Interview (Senior Turkish Politician), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.

one looks at Turkish foreign policy over the last decade and a half, a clear emphasis on multi-dimensional policy-making can be seen. Whenever Turkey made a surprising move and consequently “axis shift” debates gathered momentum, Turkish government leaders underlined Turkey’s multi-dimensional policy-making, developed on the basis of a multi-polar world.\(^{571}\) It should be noted here that Erdoğan and the AKP’s use of “the world if bigger than five” banner, implying the permanent members of the UNSC, could also be understood in the same line. Obviously, discussions in Turkey also included China.\(^{572}\) Nevertheless, the most relevant points, namely the axis shift or multi-dimensional policy, were usually given with reference to Turkey’s surprising “shift” towards Iran and the Middle East prior to 2010. Beginning in that year, Turkey also made moves toward China or the “Eastern axis”.\(^{573}\)

It should be noted here that even though Erdoğan made provoking claims from time to time, it would be an exaggeration to say that the AKP has moved into a completely Eurasian stance.

**Opposition Parties**

The two of the AKP’s three opposition parties, which were in the parliament during the 2011–2015 term and won the right to be there in the July 2015 general elections, also exclusively mentioned China in their party program for their election campaign. The Republican People’s Party (CHP) placed China under the “Far East” section in their foreign policy and said that bilateral relations would be


\(^{572}\) Kalın, “In the Shadow of the Sword,” 10.

developed and that trade deficit would be fixed.\textsuperscript{574} The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) considered China one of the world’s “rising powers” (this included China and Japan) and said that Turkey should try to develop relations with those types of countries.\textsuperscript{575} The Kurdish People’s Democracy Party (HDP) did not specifically mention China in its party declaration for the June 2015 election.

There are also some minority parties that extolled the virtues of improving relations with China not for the sake of Turkey’s economy and adapting a free market with “Chinese characteristics” but for the sake of its communist ideology. One of these minorities was the Communist Party of Turkey. The party, however, suspended its activities in 2014. Although two of its factions later established the People’s Communist Party of Turkey and the Communist Party, they continue to be quite small parties with no real influence over politics.

Another small but nonetheless significant party is the Patriotic Party (Vatan Party), and with its major Euroasianism concerns it is considered the ultra-national laicist group. The party, with its leader Doğu Perinçek who is both pro-Russia and pro-China, could be counted as Turkey’s long-standing pioneer of Euroasianism. In fact, the party once included Maoist ideology in their party declaration. However, what makes the party significant for our topic is something else: Perinçek, who had strong ties with Russia and China, was arrested after the Ergenekon case (cf. Chapter 3, domestic politics) along with other prominent political figures.\textsuperscript{576} That

is why, compared with the party itself, the party leader was been rather a popular figure in the political sphere.

It is clear that none of the main political parties reject developing relations with China or preach about possible threats from China. In their daily discourse, we also do not hear much about the growing China threat for Turkey, unless it is about such sensitive issues as with the Uyghur people in 2009 or 2015. In those cases, some party figures called for a boycott of Chinese products, but the motivation is rather combined with other sentiments like nationalism rather than it being a perception of an actual Chinese threat per se.

The Military

Before I give the Turkish army’s perceptions on China, the army’s influence over Turkish politics and its major positions will be important to underscore, as relations between the military and politics are significant in Turkish politics. The most important indicators here are the frequent military interventions in politics, in response to different “threats” such as communism, Islamism or Kurdish separatism. Most of the time, these threats have been externally rooted or related. Therefore, the interventions have always been largely related to foreign policy as well. Meanwhile, the fact that since 1933 six of the first seven Turkish presidents were military officers or representatives of the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu or NSC) has ensured military influence over politics.\(^\text{577}\)

In order to change this military power over politics, the AKP knew that democratization could be very handy and consequently gave momentum to EU

\(^{577}\) Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle, Wash: University of Washington Press, 2003), 77–78.
reforms when the party first came into power. In 2003, a substantial reform about the NSC was produced. Under this reform, a military official could no longer become the Secretariat General of NSC; rather, a civil official would take this position. The EU also praised the new definition of the NSC as only a consultative advisory body.  

Nonetheless, the European Commission’s 2005 Progress Report put forward that Turkey needed to take greater action, as its army was still influential in Turkish politics. The EU report was not wrong because the NSC kept producing a National Security Policy Report, more commonly known as the “Red Book” in Turkish politics. The report was regarded as the hidden constitution of the country because it defined what a “threat” for Turkey was and set out guidelines for the actions that should be implemented for overcoming those threats. It is important to mention here that this report was initially introduced to Turkey in accordance with the interests of NATO and the US, and once it had played an important role during the Cold War.

The latest acknowledged military intervention that led to government change was a consequence of a NSC meeting. In 1997, the army forced the government to resign, due to “increasing religious fundamentalism” in the country. This enforcement was referred to as a “post-modern coup” in the Turkish political context. During the NSC meeting, military officials established a clandestine organization named the West Working Group (Batı Çalışma Grubu, or BÇG), which would have branches in the military and in some government institutions.

---

578 Commission of the European Communities, “2004 Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress towards Accession” (Brussels, October 6, 2004), 22.
such as the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurumu, or YÖK), in order to control “Islamist reactionism”, in other words, Islamist fundamentalism.


An insider close to the group explained the reason for the coup by way of Turkish political history: the founders of the Turkish Republic had been military officers, and their orientation was toward the West. He continued by stating that Turkey was a part of NATO and its Islamization is thus not allowed.\footnote{Hekimoğlu İsmail, “Batı Çalışma Grubu [West Working Group],” Zaman, September 25, 1997, sec. Columns, http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/hekimoglu-ismail/bati-calisma-grubu_477306.html.} From that point of view, many firmly believed the 1997 postmodern coup to have been initiated by the US and NATO.\footnote{Ahmet Taşgetiren, “28 Şubat’ın Dış Politika Boyutu [Foreign Policy Dimension of the 28 February (1997 Military Intervention)],” Aksiyon, April 23, 2012, http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/ahmet-tasgetiren/28-subat-in-dis-politika-boyutu-532333.} In 2013, it was reported that a secret Cabinet circular had abolished the BÇG or its continuum the Prime Ministry Monitoring Council (Başbakanlık Takip Kurulu, or BTK) in 2010.\footnote{“İşte Erdoğan İmzalı Özgürlük Genelgesi! [Here Is the Freedom Circular Signed by Erdoğan],” Akşam, December 6, 2013, sec. Siyaset, http://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/iste-erdogan-imzali-ozgurluk-genelgesi/haber-266799.} However, another report suggested that it was still active in 2013.\footnote{Mehmet Baransu, “Uygulaması Var [Still in Practice],” Taraf, November 30, 2013, sec. Haberler, http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-uygulaması-var-140877/.} It is unknown whether or not the group had been fully dissolved or not, but similar activities remained alive for many years during the AKP’s rule. Hence, it could be assumed that the influence of such bodies in domestic and foreign policy-making persisted during the AKP’s terms.
Thus, for some, Russia and China were the two key components for Turkey’s Eurasian movement. Various political segments in Turkey represented this view. For example, a journalist arrested in the Ergenekon investigation claimed that the BÇG were making efforts to save Turkey from American imperialism, and planned for Turkey to develop closer relations with Russia, China and Iran, so increasing Turkish influence in Eurasia.\textsuperscript{586} However, the BÇG claimed to be connected to the Ergenekon organization, or the “deep state”,\textsuperscript{587} a contradiction to one of the famous eighteen decisions that were made in the 1997 NSC meeting (the post-modern coup) – later revealed as preventing Iran’s influence in Turkey.\textsuperscript{588} However, as the intervention’s nature was against Islamist revisionism, it made sense to be against influences from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Libya.\textsuperscript{589} The popular perception of the BÇG and 1997 military intervention planners was that the group was both pro-Western and pro-NATO.

In fact, the people who were charged for being members of the Ergenekon organization at the time were regarded as pro-Eurasian and anti-Western in the 2000s. However, as stated above, BÇG planners were perceived as pro-Western.

It is possible that there was more than one clique in the “Gladio-like” deep state and the army. Another possibility was the changing nature of such clandestine organizations after important events. It should be noted that the Ergenekon case

\textsuperscript{586} Hikmet Çiçek, “28 Şubat’in Diş Politika Ayağı-(TAMAMI) [28 February’s Foreign Policy Leg],” 

\textsuperscript{587} “How the Mosaic of Ergenekon Terror Gang Was Created,” 

\textsuperscript{588} Doğan Akin, “15 Soruda 28 Şubat, Batı Harekât Konsepti ve Batı Çalışma Grubu [28 February in 15 Questions, West Operation Concept and West Working Group],” News, 

\textsuperscript{589} Ibid.
was the first time that the deep state or alleged military interventionists in Turkey was considered as pro-Eurasian rather than pro-Western.\footnote{Ali Bulaç, “Ergenekon, Rusya ve Kafkaslar [Ergenekon, Russia and Caucasia],” \textit{Zaman}, August 13, 2008, sec. Columns, \url{http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/ali-bulac/ergenekon-rusya-ve-kafkaslar_725297.html}.}

In spite of the reality of the existence of such an organization, in the Ergenekon investigation, many important figures were arrested who had strong ties with Russia, such as the leader of Patriotic Party Doğu Perinçek and President of Istanbul University Kemal Alemdaroğlu.\footnote{Hacıoğlu, “Ergenekon’un Beynini Rus Başını Buldu [Russian Press Found the Ergenekon’s Brain].”} The former Secretary Generals of the NSC Tuncer Kılınç and Şener Eruygur both declared – while incumbent and retired – that Turkey should be sided with Russia, China and Iran instead of with the EU and NATO. They were both arrested under the Ergenekon investigation, along with other former generals who used to employ pro-Eurasian rhetoric.\footnote{Hasan Cemal, “Rus’cular, Çin’ciler, Şanghay, AB, Vs... (1) [Pro-Russians, Pro-Chinese, Shanghai, EU, Etc.],” \textit{Milliyet}, February 6, 2013, sec. Columns, \url{http://www.milliyet.com.tr/rus-cular-cin-ciler-sanghay-ab-vs--1-/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/06.02.2013/1665038/default.htm}.}

Therefore, it would be safe to assume that there were strong ultra-nationalist, pro-Russian and pro-Chinese cliques in the army as well as in the so-called deep state. Therefore, the following important factors should be taken into account when discussing the issue: the Ergenekon investigations started in 2008, then the figures were released in the last few years with change in the political climate, and Erdoğan increasingly employed similar rhetoric with the BÇG and the Ergenekon people not only on domestic issues\footnote{Can Dündar, “Hangisi Kazansa Türkiye Kaybeder [Whose Win Is Turkey’s Loss],” \textit{Cumhuriyet}, December 27, 2013, sec. Columns, \url{http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/23033/Hangisi_Kazansa_Turkiye_Kaybeder.html}.} but also on foreign relations such as

\footnotetext{591}{Hacıoğlu, “Ergenekon’un Beynini Rus Başını Buldu [Russian Press Found the Ergenekon’s Brain].”}
\footnotetext{592}{Hasan Cemal, “Rus’cular, Çin’ciler, Şanghay, AB, Vs... (1) [Pro-Russians, Pro-Chinese, Shanghai, EU, Etc.],” \textit{Milliyet}, February 6, 2013, sec. Columns, \url{http://www.milliyet.com.tr/rus-cular-cin-ciler-sanghay-ab-vs--1-/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/06.02.2013/1665038/default.htm}.}
whether Turkey should be a part of Eurasia instead of the West. It should be noted a major figure of them, Perinçek, claimed that it is Erdoğan who came to their line, not them to his. “Erdoğan today has been captured by the patriotic forces of Turkey,” he said to the New York Times. All these questions and moves bore important implications for Turkish foreign policy as well as domestic politics.

Despite the fact that Turkey is a long-standing NATO member, the representatives of other cliques (pro-Russian and pro-Chinese) in the Turkish army are always first to seek opportunities that would further broaden the Eurasian dimension within Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, these views may not only be associated with pro-Eurasian dimension, but might be justified for becoming an independent power. In that sense, it is very significant that an article “The future of SCO and Turkey” appeared in the Armed Forces Magazine, which was published by the General Staff and was cited in a newspaper claiming full membership to the organization would be in accordance with Atatürk’s vision for Turkey. Meanwhile regardless of the reality of the claims that NATO was behind the coup attempt in 2016, it could be anticipated that many of the purged generals and colonels were pro-Western figures. In other words, the large

594 Pantucci and Petersen, “Turkey: Abandoning the EU for the SCO?”
number of purges in the Army from this clique may prioritize the other fractions, namely the Euroasianists.\textsuperscript{598}

When we discuss the Turkish army and its stance on foreign policy today, we should pay attention to the following points: Turkey, as a NATO member country for more than a half-century, has been educating its soldiers according to NATO’s priorities. The result is that the Army has taken a “Westernized” and secularist point of view on many foreign policy issues. However, since the 2008 Georgia crisis and the 2015 Syria crisis, there has recently been an increasing number of debates on whether or not NATO should abandon Turkey, or vice versa.\textsuperscript{599} Despite NATO’s 2016-statement claiming that there is no question over Turkey’s membership, the need for such a statement is self-evident since it tries to address the very questions asked about it.

Those debates have mostly been down to Turkish irregularities regarding the security block, such as increasing military cooperation and exchanges with Russia and China. Nevertheless, there is no convincing proof to suggest that Turkey and NATO are in a serious crisis so far;\textsuperscript{600} nor should we totally ignore increasing


Turkish enthusiasm for building a more independent foreign policy as well as an independent military capability. The 2015 developments in Syria prove that Turkey needs NATO. In this regard, the increasing number of exchanges between the Turkish-Chinese military that had started from zero in the mid 1990s and has boomed in recent years with ongoing military purchase possibilities like anti-missiles defense systems and F-X fighter jet projects, should be carefully observed.601

The Media

It is very interesting, meanwhile, to see that the majority of news in the mainstream Turkish media is positive about China. An enlightening study has been conducted about positive phrasing of China’s growth in Turkey’s two most popular and bestselling newspapers, Hürriyet and Zaman.602 Nonetheless, despite positive propaganda, the public tends not to perceive these reports as good news. For example, if the news is about a success story of a Chinese textile brand, it reminds the Turkish people how Chinese goods are on the rise in a market that has negatively affected the local Turkish textile industry.

Thus, not everyone is praising a rising China or trying to revive a new Silk Road with China in Turkey. When considering the Uyghur issues, attitudes are quite different. The label “murderer China” is commonly used when there is a campaign about the Uyghurs. Obviously, one group that often deploys such

rhetoric is the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. Other groups include the Islamist media, the so-called pro-government media, and the nationalist media and circles. Associating the words “slaughter”, “massacre”, “torture”, “killer” and so on with China is quite common in these circles. There is also frequent use of the terms “red China”, or “Communist China”. It is also very common in the same circles to use “murderer” discourse. Uyghur diaspora publications like Gökbayrak or Uyghurnet.org, pro-government media like A Haber, dissident Islamist media like Milli Gazete, and nationalist groups often deploy severe anti-Chinese language in their publications, broadcasts and activities. Not surprisingly, this rhetoric only appears in the media when China attracts their attention, to be precise, when there is an issue about the Uyghurs.

---

This kind of language triggers social hatred against China and the Chinese people. From time to time, there are even anti-Chinese campaigns on social media. Those are sometimes followed by anti-Chinese protests. In such campaigns, we can see a great deal of bloody photos, given under the name of “Chinese slaughter”, shared by the people who claim to defend the Uyghurs. Some governmental officials or prominent citizens call for a boycott of Chinese products. The Chinese people are easy targets in Turkey. Recently, due to public pressure the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to publicly state its concerns for China over Uyghur suppression in Xinjiang. In retaliation, China declared concern over the Ministry’s statement and asked Turkey to prove the allegations.

These kinds of media and social media campaigns considerably troubled China and negatively influenced the Chinese against Turkey, which resulted a cooling down period between the two countries for the short term. “Especially those exaggerated or distorted news about China are disastrous,” says one diplomat from the Turkish Foreign Ministry. He says that he is “having difficulty to explain this situation to the Chinese people he meets”. “I do not see any good in it, I believe they are doing it on purpose,” he adds about those false news, without explaining what would their purpose be.

---

610 Söylemez, “Uygurlar ve ‘Çin Zulmü’ [Uyghurs and ‘China’s Slaughter’].”
611 Blanchard, “China Upset with Turkey’s Concern on Ramadan Restrictions.”
613 AG, Interview (Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Messenger, June 30, 2015.
In the face of this situation, China sometimes takes precautionary steps, such as warning its citizens not to visit Turkey.\textsuperscript{614} However, this discourse remains most often in China’s domestic sphere, as it does not necessarily reflect China’s stance on Turkey. Those discourses’ influence on Turkish-Chinese relations is limited in the long term. A good example of this is the 2010 signing of the strategic partnership agreement after Erdoğan’s accusation of the 2009 Urumqi incident being “almost genocide”. Another example is that anti-Chinese campaigns did not prevent President Erdoğan from visiting China less than a month after anti-Chinese rhetoric spread throughout Turkey, culminating in protests in 2015.

Another issue with the media in Turkey is that the news that they focus on are usually those kind of “interesting” stories such as a Chinese lady beating the lover of his husband on the street or a disaster happening somewhere in China. In terms of culture, politics or life there is very little reporting in the media. Obviously it has a reason. “Our editors usually refuse our stories from those areas”, says one journalist reporting about China. He also adds “even if they decide to publish them nobody cares, but when it is about a disaster in China then it sells good”.\textsuperscript{615} Another journalist explained to me how he used to be an idealistic reporter at first, with a self-defined mission of reporting “properly” about China, as he had studied in China. However, he notes that he was disappointed to face a similar experience of the other journalists.\textsuperscript{616} Alkan, who has been writing for the mainstream Turkish media, says that his experience was also similar: “Despite the fact that I


\textsuperscript{615} AL, Interview (Turkish Journalist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, August 22, 2014.

\textsuperscript{616} AM, Interview (Turkish Journalist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, August 22, 2013.
have been studying Chinese politics in China, mainstream media asked me to write stories on technology etc. It is only after I insisted about my competence that they eventually understood how they should utilize my knowledge and skills,” he explained.617

Business Communities

First, an introduction to Turkey’s important business circles and their major views will be discussed, followed by their perceptions of China perceptions. Most Turkish chief business executives have a pro-Western stance for foreign policy issues. The biggest and most powerful secularist business organizations, the Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSİAD) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), have openly pro-EU views, considering they are a part of EU organizations.618 Another organization, the Independent Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD), which had once been an “anti-Western National View Movement” close to the AKP changed its stance with the AKP’s pro-EU policies in the party’s first and second term.619 Nonetheless, due to the AKP’s recent leanings away from the EU in its third term, this pro-EU stance could be questioned. The Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON), an organization that belongs to the Gülen movement, showed its support for Turkey’s EU accession by opening its first representative office in Brussels.620 MÜSİAD and TUSKON also have a strong global network, which facilitates small and middle enterprises opening up to the

617 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
618 Terzi, The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy, 69.
619 Ibid., 70.
world. Among them, TÜSİAD represents the Kemalist elites and is the strongest business club with the best business people in Turkey as members. We should also count the Kemalist elite and the liberal and democrat circles as championing the Westernization or Europeanization of Turkey. Although from time to time they have failed to do so, these civil society members have been the main forces pushing the government for EU accession and democratization.

TOBB has also become influential in Turkey’s relations with Asia, particularly Central Asia and Russia but also with the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East with its support for the projects like the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), the Economic Development Foundation (İKV) and the Industry for Peace Initiative in the Middle East region. A notably important development is that the authority of the DEİK was given to the government with a new legislation at the end of 2014, which implicated the government’s increasing control of civil society.

However, we should be reminded that business circles have given greater importance to rising China with some relatively new initiatives. The Silk Road has been of particular use in the rhetoric coming from Turkey’s business communities. In fact, long before the Xi administration’s new Silk Road plan, Silk Road discourse was applied by Turkish civil society to address the country’s relations with China, even for the contemporary era. In reaction to this new Silk

---

621 Terzi, The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy, 70–71.
623 Xin Jianqiang (幸俭强) and Ding Yi (丁宜), “新华国际时评：打造中土文化交流的‘新丝绸之路’ [Xinhua International Commentary: Making the ‘New Silk Road’ of the
Road, TÜSİAD\(^{624}\) and TUSKON\(^{625}\) opened their China representative offices almost a decade ago, while MÜSİAD\(^{626}\) sent representative businessmen to China. Once a branch of the TOBB, DEİK set up the Turkish-Chinese Business Council in 1992.\(^{627}\) The Turkish and Chinese Industrialists and Businessmen Association’s (TÜÇSİAD)\(^{628}\) Shanghai office, the only bilateral business-related Turkish association to be officially registered in China, is trying to connect businesses between the two countries together with its headquarters in Turkey.

It is important to understand the orientation of Turkish elites and business classes on China. The openings of the TÜSİAD and TUSKON Beijing offices are significant as they otherwise have offices in Brussels and Washington, along with Berlin and Paris (TÜSİAD only) and Moscow (TUSKON only).

**Civil Society**

Traditionally, Turkish civil society had a relatively weak impact on policy-making.\(^{629}\) However, since becoming a EU candidate, Turkish reforms have

---


enabled a more active presence from civil society in the political sphere.\footnote{Terzi, \textit{The Influence of the European Union on Turkish Foreign Policy}, 67.} In fact, the number of countries in which Turkey has civil society organizations (CSOs) is bigger than the number of countries in which Turkey has diplomatic missions.\footnote{Kösebalaban, \textit{Turkish Foreign Policy}, xiii.} An emerging civil society has a direct and indirect impact on Turkey’s foreign relations.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Think EU accession is</th>
<th>EU Favorability</th>
<th>Think Turkey should cooperate with EU</th>
<th>Think Turkey should act independently</th>
<th>Think NATO is essential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>45 36</td>
<td>35 21</td>
<td>38 39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>53 29</td>
<td>45 28</td>
<td>33 49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>44 23</td>
<td>41 25</td>
<td>29 38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, a survey carried out over the years by the German Marshall Fund shows the declining trend\footnote{Soy, “Turkish Support for EU Membership on Decline, Opinion Divided on NATO.”} of EU accession members, and views towards NATO over the last years have become favorable since 2014. In 2013, 45% of Turkish people thought accession to the EU would be good for Turkey, while 53% agreed in 2014. Another survey, again by the same institution indicates that 44% believed...
that the EU membership would be good for Turkey in 2015. Respondents who thought negatively about the accession dropped from 36% to 29% and then to 23% in the same three consecutive years. Moreover, favorability in the EU increased from 35% in 2013 to 45% in 2014, and then decreased to 41% in 2015. In 2014, the popularity of NATO was at its highest since 2005, with a sharp ten percent increase to 49%. Also 38% respondents believed that NATO is still essential for Turkey’s security while 35% said it was not in the 2015 survey. In accordance with these statistics, more Turks believed that Turkey should cooperate with the EU (28% in 2014, a 7% increase from 2013), while the number of respondents who thought that Turkey should act independently was 33% in 2014, a 5% drop from the previous year. In 2015 while 25% said that Turkey should cooperate with the EU, 29% said that it should act alone.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that many Turkish people believed Turkey should deal independently with China (44%) and the ME (46%). They responded that in dealing with China and the ME, support for collaboration with the EU is 19% and 21% and with the US is 21% and 18% respectively. Corruption scandals and escalating tensions with Syria have increased the need for the EU to be associated with transparency and democratization, and NATO has for Turkish citizens become associated with security, especially in 2014. We could speculate there to be sharp favorable increases for Western allies due to these reasons, and it

638 GMF, “Transatlantic Trends Key Findings 2014,” 44.
640 GMF, “Transatlantic Trends Key Findings 2014,” 42, 44.
could be said that Turkish people still seek an independent approach to Turkey’s other foreign relations, but not in exchange for Western alliance.

There are also some minority groups, like Islamists and Euroasianists, in Turkey’s civil society, which have other foreign policy stances. Some Islamists are ideologically close to the AKP, and Turkish Non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders have initiated the largest international Islamic coalition Union of the NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW). The organization has a central aim to unite and empower the global Muslim civil society. This also overlaps with the AKP government’s enthusiasm in reviving Turkey’s influence in previously Ottoman territories. Hence, the government also supports the idea behind the UNIW.

Returning to Turkish perceptions of China, we can summarize four major popular viewpoints or rhetoric in Turkish society: the two positive stances are the “Silk Road” (including the One Belt One Road initiative) and notions of a “rising China”, while the two negative stances are that of “murderer China” and “red China”. The latter two will be explained in further detail under the subsection on the media.

In terms of positive discourse, we could say that the Chinese Culture Center (Çin Kültür Merkezi) initiated by Turkish people and opened at the beginning of the 21st century in Istanbul had been the main driver in Turkey for years to promote

642 Ibid., 173.
643 Ibid., 183.
China. It introduced Chinese culture to Turkish people by offering language courses, seminars, and business and tourism services. Other institutions that serve developing friendly relations with the Chinese are the Turkish Chinese Friendship Foundation (TÇDV)\textsuperscript{645} based in Ankara, and the Anatolia Cultural and Dialog Center (ACDC)\textsuperscript{646} based in Hong Kong. All these institutions employ “friendly” rhetoric about China, mostly focusing on cultural exchanges instead of political issues. They usually emphasize a rising China and the richness of Chinese civilization. Other business-related institutions will be discussed separately. All these developments are a reflection of a “rising China” and have, since 2000, helped to create an impression of China in Turkey as well as develop bilateral relations.

As has already been mentioned, there is also negative public opinion of China that can be categorized under the “murderer China” label. We should note here that this is a very important factor in shaping civil society’s perception about China. Obviously, these perceptions are related to the Uyghur issue. Therefore, Xinjiang is one of the main forces for shaping negative perceptions about China in Turkish civil society. In fact according to Ma, “these issues are becoming a headache for the bilateral relations during times of tensions.”\textsuperscript{647}

Apart from that, lack of knowledge or ignorance is the other important factor to shape the perceptions. Generally speaking Alperen notes that China is not


\textsuperscript{647} Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
understood well by the people in Turkey at any level. A senior academic says that “Turkey definitely needs to learn about China and understand about it, we cannot afford not having an understanding of China…In today’s world it is very crucial to understand China.” A security officer from China also believes that improving the understanding and perceptions of Turkish people about China would be very helpful for the future of the relations.

Ma, who has also studied in Turkey on the Middle East, says that “she was fed up with the absurd questions she was facing in Turkey such as ‘Do you have tomatoes in China?’”. She says “Turkish people has very little information about China and its size”. This is also a common scene in my own study life in China. All of my vacations back to Turkey I was busy answering those kind of questions from friends, relatives etc. In fact this is a well-known phenomena among Turkish students studying in China as well.

Conclusion

I have attempted to analyze Turkey’s domestic settings in terms of its foreign policy-making, particularly those influencing policies on China. Turkey’s domestic settings have been dominated under a one-party rule between 2002 and 2015, which has brought consistency and stability in some aspects, while producing authoritarianism in others. The debates about Islamism have also gained momentum in the 21st century. Islamism, which has influenced the AKP’s

---

648 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
649 AO, Interview (Turkish Scholar and Paper Columnist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, April 3, 2016.
650 AQ, Interview (Chinese Security Officer), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 30, 2012.
651 Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai, Founding member and Moderator, Four years until 2012.
rule and policies today, also played a part in political discussions in the late Ottoman era. Today, Turkey still remains to be secularized in terms of the state’s (non)-interference in religion. There had been an endeavor to control religion in the past – and that endeavor still continues. The only change from Kemalism to the AKP, or rather Erdoğanism, is the ideology that is behind it. In terms of how Kemalism and the AKP govern, they are ironically rather similar to each other.

The Ergenekon and other such relevant cases, which have to do with alleged Gladio-like Turkish clandestine organizations, are important in terms of political discussion about China, because the Ergenekon organization was accused of being pro-Eurasian, namely, defending an alliance with Russia and China in exchange for alliance with the US and the EU. During the AKP term, several cases have been opened in order to weaken military tutelage.

Overall, we have witnessed new terminologies and theories such as “zero neighbors with problems” in Turkish foreign policy. This may have initially been successful but it was overemphasized and later failed to development. Moreover, Turkish policy-makers and academics started to emphasize Turkey’s “central” position in describing a new foreign policy. They argued that Turkey could have the best of both worlds due to its location. In fact, Turkish leaders also emphasize these points by saying that Turkey is not a regular country of, say, Europe or Middle East, as it has an equal number of different and yet familiar features with both of these regions. As a consequence, especially during the AKP’s term, a “central country” phenomenon arose in Turkish foreign policy debates, which argued for a multi-dimensional policy-making doctrine. These could be understood with the balance of powers theory. In other words Turkey was trying
to locate itself while the power was shifting. Additionally, Turkey has for the same reason been accused of an axis shift by its observers.

I have also reviewed Turkey’s relations with the rest of the world, and tried to reflect these against Turkish-Chinese relations. These countries or organizations were the US, the EU, NATO, the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus, Russia, Iran, Africa, and East Asia. Turkey’s historical Western alignment and its recent progress on EU accession, as well as its crises, were discussed in the first section. What has been highlighted, is that regardless of the reasons that Turkey has been previously rooted in the West, Turkey’s worsening relations with the West has paved the way for a better environment to develop relations with the East, not only from the government’s use of rhetoric but also from society’s changing interests. Relations have been developed with non-Western regions and countries, encouraging Turkey to develop relations with China that falls under the former country’s multi-dimensional policy. Furthermore, Turkey realizes the importance and/or challenge of building a relationship with China considering Turkey’s potential role in being a key player in the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus and Africa, as well as a figure against Russia and Iran. Overall, there has been a trend toward pro-active diplomacy and multi-dimensionality since 2000. Increasingly one critical interest in Turkey’s foreign policy-making is China.

Before the end of this chapter and in order to complete the context of Turkey and its Turkish-Chinese relations, I will illustrate Turkey’s policy on China by highlighting a few important developments in the two countries’ bilateral relations in the early 21st century. Prior to this century, the two countries had not had very intense relations. They worked on some adjustments in the late 1990s. As a result, in the early 2000s, Turkey and China created a joint communiqué, marking the
rapprochement between the two and solidifying their commitment to build an “enhanced partnership”. This marked the beginning of a new era of Turkish-Chinese relations.

Meanwhile the AKP’s “new” foreign policy understanding contained some sections that related to China. These were mostly multi-dimensional and independent foreign policy-making endeavors that were in favor of a multi-polar world, being a regional and global figure that needed the support of China, and being a bridge or a central country that rooted Turkey’s position between China and other regions. Again here the idea of balancing itself among the powers and enhance its independence is at work as a result of realist approach.

As a result of these ideas, Turkey started to enrich its relations with China. From the 2000s onwards, Turkey and China started to build on their previously shaky relations. They increased their bilateral trade and had some political dialogue. They maintained military dialogue during the first decade of their relations. In a relatively short space of time, there was a visible increase in trade volume, the number of reciprocal high-level visits and investment talks, bilateral project interests, cultural contacts and strategic cooperation between the two countries.

From that year on, Turkey carried out military exercises with China – the first of its kind from a NATO country, declared to buy a billion US dollar military project from a US-sanctioned Chinese firm, joined the SCO as a dialogue partner and stated the will to upgrade to full membership, joined the AIIB as a founding member, cooperated with China on its space, technology, culture, tourism and finance programs, and so on. Now, both countries are willing to build the new Silk Road from China to Turkey, as a new hub for modern trade routes. All of
these developments were in accordance with Turkey’s claims for multidimensional and independent foreign policy-making, as well as its regional and global endeavors. Some of them, like the Silk Road initiatives, supported the claims of the argument that Turkey was a bridge country, as Turkey could be a beneficial hub connecting Europe to China. Yet even despite these developments, it would not be true to say that China has any special priority position in Turkish foreign policy. Although China has a major place as a trade partner and potential investor for Turkey, strategically speaking, the benefits of China’s placement are still far from the US, the EU and Russia. It is a major source for trade, a charming investor and sometimes a useful leverage against the West, but it is not a major “strategic” partner as was claimed in the Turkish-Chinese 2010 agreement.

Finally, Turkey’s perceptions of China were given. The groups that were discussed are the AKP, opposition parties, the military, civil society, the media and business communities. The AKP obviously has a positive perception of China, stating that Turkey would be able to develop good relations with it, as the AKP has been a ruling party during enriched relations between the two countries. The opposition parties also have a positive perception of China. Although some of them – especially the most nationalist and conservative – have sometimes used negative discourses against China, their views are not being acted upon as they have not had a place in government for a long time. The people arrested as a result of Ergenekon, many of whom included army staffs and top-level executive, were not shy in declaring this negative stance. Therefore, we can also anticipate the existence of an important group in the army suggesting closer relations to China. Nevertheless, we should not forget Turkey’s NATO membership and the army’s Western orientation. Overall I would say that the army is more closely aligned to
Western axis but that it remains open to other options and seeks independence in terms of foreign policy. In all of these discussions about bilateral perceptions we can see the dominance of the constructivist approach that how the ideas and -to some extent- policies bound to them are constructed and reconstructed by those actors.

Turkish civil society has very clear-cut positions on foreign policy, especially when it comes to China. The main arguments are constructed around the “rising China” and “Silk Road” rhetoric, which emphasizes opportunities for discourse with China; as well as the “red China” and “murderer China” rhetoric, which negatively implies communism and the Uyghur issue. In the media, we can see each of these kinds of discourses being played out. If the news is about an economic issue, then the discourse is usually positive. However, if the news is about the Uyghurs, then the discourse is generally negative. Positive rhetoric is becoming increasingly apparent in business circles and power centers, while negative rhetoric has become an instrument for nationalists to reject developing relations with China.
Chapter 4: China’s Political Context

This chapter will focus on China. Before discussing China’s global issues and their effects on Turkish-Chinese relations, I will briefly discuss China’s domestic and foreign policy issues, also its Turkey policy and perceptions of Turkey from the year 2000.

Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy

As has already been mentioned on various occasions, the 21st century began in quite different settings for China and the international environment: namely, the 9/11 attacks and its aftermath laid out a new design for post-Cold War order. For China, there were two central issues: China’s accession to the WTO meant a China that was more integrated into the world system, and the power transition from the Jiang Zemin to the Hu Jintao administration. Therefore, when we talk about 21st century China, we mostly mean a China as a part of world system and as governed by both the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping administrations.

Most of this century saw an average of a 10% growth rate, which brought the Chinese economy to a number 2 ranking (number 1 on some accounts652) in the world in 2014. Despite this growing China, the Hu administration did not take an assertive stance on foreign policy. Instead, the administration continued along Deng Xiaoping’s policy lines of remaining low profile and taking a non-

confrontational stance to foreign policy, focusing instead on national growth. A good policy was emphasized for relations with neighboring countries.653

Nevertheless, with China becoming a new global major power in the new millennium, many started to debate the “China threat”, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Hence, the Hu administration created a new discourse for a “peaceful rise”, and tried to present China as an opportunity rather than a threat. It did work for some time,654 and during this era the construction of a positive image for China went smoothly with China’s successful hosting of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai. In both cases, China was exhibited as a nice and capable country. In domestic politics, Hu Jintao used “harmonious society” rhetoric as being the ideal for the country, probably due to increased grievances in Chinese society. Hu’s “scientific outlook on development” envisioned a more egalitarian, democratic and humanistic society to build a “harmonious society”.

During the last few years of the Hu administration, China started to gain a tighter grip on its civil society. Beginning in the Jiang era, the suppression over civil society, NGOs, religious groups and activists has been gradually tightened. Moreover, with the deadly 2008 Lhasa-Tibet and 2009 Urumqi-Xinjiang incidents, China started to become much more cautious and tougher in these areas in the

coming years. A less confrontational way of governing had come to be replaced by a more assertive one.\footnote{Zhao, “Hu Jintao’s Foreign Policy Legacy.”}

This new style of government was also followed by its stance on foreign policy issues. China’s endeavors to create a good image for itself, or to possess soft power, say, with building Confucian institutes that promote Chinese values, often fail with contradicting aggressive policies like those from other countries that share the South China Sea.\footnote{Joseph S. Nye, “What China and Russia Don’t Get About Soft Power,” \textit{Foreign Policy}, April 29, 2013, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/.} China’s conflicts with Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan over islands such as Spratly and the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the South and East China Seas made China’s “good neighboring policy” meaningless.

The Xi Jinping era began with its call to fight against corruption, make further legal reforms and increase neo-Maoist rhetoric. Immediately after Xi came into power, he started an anti-corruption campaign that prosecuted many current and former top-level officials. Nevertheless, many saw the campaign as a way of consolidating Xi’s power in the party. Even more, some have claimed that he plans to break the unwritten rules in Chinese politics and that he prepares to stay in power after 2022, when he is expected to step down.\footnote{Willy Lam, “Xi Jinping Forever,” \textit{Foreign Policy}, April 1, 2015, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/01/xi-jinping-forever-china-president-term-limits/.} Forecasting this desire is not easy but it is certain that Xi’s policies are very assertive and the party’s rhetoric has emphasized the importance of just one man. So far, Xi has given an impression of being a neo-conservative leader with a strong hold on governmental power. The trend of a repressed civil society and repressed activism continues in the Xi era.

\footnotetext[655]{Zhao, “Hu Jintao’s Foreign Policy Legacy.”}
Xi Jinping began his governorship by underlining the “Chinese dream”. This dream was more than about individual dreams for a better life. It also envisioned the “revival of the Chinese nation”. Therefore, it was already clear that Xi Jinping’s foreign policy had no plans to be low profile, as had the policy that had once been set by Deng. It could be understood as a continuum trend of Hu’s last years’ assertive policies, however Xi with the rhetoric being used from the start of his rule gave another outlook.\textsuperscript{658} Hu’s assertiveness could be read as a reaction, to some extent, to several developments, but Xi’s “Chinese dream” puts forward a more deliberate policy framework.

On the one hand, the Xi administration has introduced attractive tools for integrating with the regional and global community, such as the New Silk Road plan and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. However, these have also been seen as a way to visualize China’s world system as being a viable alternative to the status quo. So far, excepting for the US, many countries welcome these kinds of initiatives.

In the first 2-3 years of his rule, Xi showed a more assertive tone regarding China’s foreign policy. For instance, the implication of establishment of an Asian security institution and the controversial Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) issues.\textsuperscript{659} These conflicts also continued in the South and East China Seas. Even


further, China started to build islands in the South China Sea, which attracted unwelcome responses from many neighboring countries, as well as the US.\footnote{David Alexander, “U.S. Hopes Chinese Island-Building Will Spur Asian Response,” News, Reuters, (May 29, 2015), http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/29/us-asia-usa-defense-idUSKBN0OD0AX20150529.}

Nonetheless, the latest intentions, such as improving relations with Japan after two years of stalling and Xi’s use of a softer rhetoric like “win-win”, gives the impression of the government relaxing its past foreign policies.\footnote{Tom Mitchell and David Pilling, “Xi Jinping Tones down Foreign Policy Rhetoric,” Financial Times, December 1, 2014, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b95a3730-792f-11e4-a57d-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3Xxbw4YFj.} However, Xi’s administration does not guarantee building relations with Japan, as nationalistic sentiments are still very popular among the Chinese people and government. No matter what the real motive behind it was, Beijing’s organization of the “70th anniversary of Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War and the World Anti-Fascist War Victory Commemoration Day” in September 2015, which involved a huge military parade in front of more than thirty nation leaders, once again underlined China’s will to present itself as a powerful country, reminding the Japanese of their hostility. Not only were hostile neighbors to China made aware of their history in the parade but also the exhibition of many weapons – including long-range missiles – sent a clear message as far as the US.\footnote{“China’s Parade Sends an Unmistakable Message,” Financial Times, September 3, 2015, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/05ee1924-5227-11e5-b029-b9d50a74fd14.html#axzz3lz6rMexU.}

In today’s China, some of the most important and critical topics are: Xinjiang and Tibet’s ethnic problems, Taiwan’s de facto independence, environmental problems, and the distortion of social instability and corruption. No matter which issue we discuss, it would not be incorrect to claim that Xi is using an assertive
tone and strong hold on governmental power, for his opinions are dominant in all questions about resolving the many problems that China is facing.

Another factor – the recent Chinese economic slowdown – might also be crucial regarding future discussion about China. Despite rapid developments over the last few decades, China has already started to slow in its economic growth, which has made the global economy confused and worried.663 The Chinese government is presently trying to avoid a crash as a result of the controlled slowdown.664 Nevertheless, we are not yet sure to what extent the Chinese government is able to control the system. These doubts have already started to affect the global economy. The Asian markets have begun to fall due to the Chinese slowdown,665 and China has created a domino effect elsewhere in the world, even striking the US.666 If we think of China’s geographic placement as being a major import destination for Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, the EU, the US and so on, then we would have a better understanding of what decreasing purchasing power in China means for the rest of the world.667 This issue is also related to China’s foreign relations, as we will soon discuss in later contemplations about China’s rise. If China’s decline continues, we will see what are the implications of “China’s decline” instead of China’s rise that we will have a closer look.

667 Walker, “Why China’s Slowdown Matters.”
International Relations

While China continues to grow and engage more with the world, its relations with other countries are also developing. We cannot discuss all of China’s foreign relations here but we will look at those who are key in terms of Turkish-Chinese relations, or those that are significant vis-à-vis Turkey. It could be said that the major countries or organizations that are most relevant to the topic of this thesis are: the US, NATO, the EU, Russia and Iran. Any other relevant countries/organizations/regions have been discussed in the previous chapter on Turkey. Therefore, only the major countries/organizations/regions mentioned above and their relations with China are going to be discussed here, once a general picture of China’s rise and discussions surrounding it have been described. Sometimes, these country-specific issues will focus on how they directly relate to Turkey.

China’s Rise

The end of the Cold War marked an important change in the international system. Debates about the future of the global outlook accelerated after one superpower, the USSR, was dissolved. There was a question that the American hegemony, if ever existed, would last for how long. Not long after stepping into the 21st century, powers like Russia, India, Brazil and China emerged. China, with its significant capacity and growth, started to become central in debates about global power. Along with these developments, it was also suggested that there should not be a
hegemonic but rather a multi-polar world system. Some claimed that this new world system would be multiplex, where interrelations between countries would be more complex and the system would be dominated by interdependence among global alliances.

In this era, at least, China is becoming a leading power if not hegemonic. As China has overtaken the US in some economic aspects, the “multi-polarity” discourse is now used more frequently for China. It is important to note that China claims that it does not put itself in a hegemonic position and does not foresee a future “Chinese century”. There are also Western scholars who do not necessarily think that the new situation should make the West “alarmed” as much as others suggest it should be. In fact, there are alternative voices supporting the claim that China is not looking for hegemonic power, and that they are opting for a multi-polar system that democratically handles international affairs.

Although some believe that the power center is “not really” shifting from west to east, some recent developments imply that the reverse could happen or even

---

that it is happening right at this moment. One of the most important organizations as a symbol for the new pre-2015 power centers was the SCO. Not surprisingly, when Turkey was accepted into the organization as a dialogue partner, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized in a press release that the partnership “will contribute to the strengthening of Turkey’s ‘multi-dimensional foreign policy’”.

It could also be said that Turkey is using the SCO as a counteragent against the EU and NATO. In 2015, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was set to become the Asian or Eastern version of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, which is a symbol for the main executives of global capitalism. The difference, however, lies therein: the Chinese lead the AIIB, and so it is the Chinese who write the rules. Turkey also applied to the AIIB and was accepted as a founding member of the new development bank, just as did a number of other US allies (the UK and France), despite US warnings. In an environment where the UK and France join China, it would not be fair to accuse Turkey of an axis shift if it only followed suit. Alkan also confirms “Turkey’s developing relations with China or reactions to China related initiatives are just like those of the UK, it is the result of both multi-polarity and China’s rise”.

This situation is even more poignant when one bears in mind that Turkey has been accused of shifting an “axis” to which it never belonged or had been

---

679 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
accepted into. In that sense, Turkey’s multi-dimensional foreign policy fits well with the multi-polar world system that has been pioneered by China.

Another major debate that is also related to multi-polarity is that of a “rising China”. If we had to summarize these debates very roughly, we could say that on the one side is the rhetoric from the Chinese government of China’s “opportunity” and “peaceful rise”, while on the other side there are concerns of a “China threat”. At the beginning of the 21th century, forecasts were made that a rising China would be a threat to the US and to global security.680 In fact, not everyone was treating China’s rise as worrisome as was America and Japan. Studies show that there is a variety of countries approving both China’s military and economic rise, or opposing both of them, or approving either one of them and opposing the other.681 Europe, for example, was much more welcoming of China’s rise and the region looked forward to cooperating with China.682 Immediately after coming into power, the Hu Jintao administration attempted to adopt discourse of China’s “peaceful rise” (heping jueqi). Nevertheless, this adopted discourse lost its meaning with the developments of the Taiwan crisis.683 It is also possible that the ballooning Chinese military capabilities and recent Chinese behavior in the East China Sea and South China Sea did not help in painting an image of a peacefully rising China.

683 Deng, China’s Struggle for Status, 119.
As has been stated in the previous chapter, Turkey does not directly perceive any security threat from China. There could be arguments about the threat to Turkish economy and those will be addressed in the last chapter and will be elaborated in Chapter 6.

It should also be mentioned that another point that makes Turkey’s discussion about China’s “rising power” relevant is that Turkey has also historically been perceived as a “rising power”. For some, despite the fact that Turkey and China do not have much cultural or ideological commonality, they are both rising powers – especially in terms of their emerging economies – and there is the potential for economic cooperation or bilateral opportunities between the two countries.\(^{684}\) These debates often emphasize economic cooperation, which was in accordance with the “opportunity” that China offers its partners.\(^{685}\) Beside the economic opportunities that China can provide, the population – in other words, the size of the Chinese market – is also a potential benefit for Turkey.\(^{686}\)

Another debate has been focused on the “New Silk Road” initiatives of China. The AIIB is often regarded as the driving power behind the Silk Road project. Given Turkey’s location, the Silk Road project attracts Turkey a great deal and Turkey is in a good position to benefit from the project.\(^{687}\)


\(^{687}\) Güven Sak, “Bu Da Amerika’nın Değerli Yanlızlığı Mıdır, Nedir? [Is This USA’s Precious Loneliness or What?],” NGO, \(\textit{2015 Turkey T20},\) (March 19, 2015), http://www.t20turkey.org/tr/pages/blog/b18.html.
this long-term strategy with its geopolitical location. Beijing may expect help on Central Asia and Middle East [from Turkey]. And both Beijing and Washington will view Turkey as a regional power, which is crucial to stability. And its economy is rather strong in the region, and China will certainly care about that,” says the international news reporter of the Mingpao daily about Turkey’s relation to China’s New Silk Road plans.688

The Silk Road projects connect Europe to China by a highway through Turkey – this would give new investment opportunities for Turkey.689 It is also possible to say that the boost in Turkish-Chinese relations has already proven that Turkey perceives China as an “opportunity” rather than a “threat” against its own development,690 notwithstanding the trade deficit problem.691 On the Chinese side, there has recently been greater understanding of the opportunities that Turkey can provide for China.692

China’s Major Partners

As has already been discussed, the post-Cold War period started to see international relations in a new light. Developments to international relations could be regarded as very relevant to US foreign policy, as the US was at the time the newest major superpower in the world. The rising China and its implications

---

688 Chau, Interview (Chinese Journalist).
689 Rıza Kadılar and Andrew K. P. Leung, “Possible Turkish-Chinese Partnership On a New Silk Road Renaissance by 2023,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 135–36.
690 Altay Atlı, “Questioning Turkey’s China Trade,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 108.
are more acute for the US than it is for any other superpower in the global system. Nevertheless, the 21st century began with the infamous 9/11 attacks and was followed by the US focusing on the Middle East; China was at that time not a priority.\textsuperscript{693} Meanwhile, a China threat was suggested and the US has in recent years gradually started to consider it as more of a priority. In the last decade and a half, US foreign policy has shifted towards a more China-oriented outlook.

In the meantime, observers have started to look at China’s rise in terms of power transition theories. According to that idea, confrontation between the “status quo” power (US) and “rising” or “revisionist” power (China) is inevitable.\textsuperscript{694} Increasingly there have been forecasts written about possible war between the two. With China increasing its military capabilities and tensions in South China Sea, speculation about impending war have become popular.\textsuperscript{695} Chinese news outlets have also recently started to speculate about a war with the US.\textsuperscript{696} That is the reason why one can get more than hundred results over the last year after running a Google News search on “US China War”, meaning that a media outlet has made a news report with that phrase almost once every three days.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{694} Steve Chan, \textit{China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory: A Critique} (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 5. \\
\end{footnotesize}
Not everyone, however, suggests war. In any case, many observers think that competition is inevitable even if the two countries decide to coexist peacefully.\textsuperscript{697} It should be understood that competition between the two countries is quite different from that which has been witnessed in the Cold War. First, there is no longer a war of ideology; second, there are now many more interdependent figures.\textsuperscript{698} So far, the competition between the two regards the Asia-Pacific borders.\textsuperscript{699} Nevertheless, the competition and divergence in opinion are not limited in conventional military capabilities, maritime safety, intellectual property protection, market access and economic development issues. Competition has since expanded to space, cyber, and science and technology issues. Another area of US-Chinese conflict is to do with democracy and human rights issues. In those areas, the US is pushing China as much as it can, and China is obviously not happy with the situation. This thesis gave the dimensions of the US-China-Turkey power triangle in the last chapter. Thus, no more explanation will be made here.

Another point to discuss here is the latest development for the US-Chinese relations, especially during Obama’s second term of office. The Bush administration spent most of its years on the war on terror, focusing largely on the Middle East. However, Obama’s plan to withdraw US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, coinciding with the “pivot to Asia” initiative, has drawn a lot of


attention and suspicion from China. On the one hand, this action has further increased China’s distrust of the US. On the other hand, it has enabled more space for China to operate in the Middle East. At the same time, this maneuver also gives more space to Turkey and its pro-active Middle Eastern policy, which Turkey is very enthusiastic about. During these years, Turkey has started to become increasingly involved in Middle Eastern politics, although not always successfully. China is also trying to have more responsibility in Afghanistan since the withdrawal of US troops. Dr. Alperen said “Turkey’s position in the Middle East is important for China, although it has damaged a little bit in recent years”. China needs to take more steps in the Middle East for achieving stability because the region is crucial for China’s energy supply. For that reason, Turkish-Chinese cooperation has gathered ground.

Under these circumstances, China and the US have been trying to develop a new kind of relationship through which they can overcome mutual distrust of each other and avoid future confrontation. It is quite remarkable that the Chinese wording for this kind of relationship emphasizes “the new model...” (新型) which had been used by the People’s Daily back in 2000 for the Turkish-Chinese “enhanced partnership”. From that, we could see that China perceives Turkey and the US as a bit problematic, even though it wants to restart relationships with both countries. In June 2013, Obama and Xi met in California for an informal summit

---

702 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
and both gave constructive comments for building a cooperative win-win
relationship between their countries.\textsuperscript{703} Before that, the establishment of “China-
US Strategic and Economic Dialogue”, which brings high-ranking Chinese and
US officials together for an annual meeting, tried to articulate better cooperation
methods. Nonetheless, these developments are still far from fully convincing
China to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and what the motivations from
the US are.\textsuperscript{704} If China gets involved in the TPP, it would indirectly affect the
possibility of Turkey using Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
for attracting China as treating Turkey as a gateway to the US.

As has already been mentioned, EU welcomed China’s rise much more than did
the US. This is one of the reasons that Chinese-EU relations have sought deeper
meaning despite areas of conflict. In the first five years of the new century,
optimistic comments of improved relations even stretched to a “European-Chinese
axis”.\textsuperscript{705} Nevertheless, some events, such as severe US pressure on abandonment
of the arms embargo since the 1989 Tiananmen incident, as well as the
enlargement and institutionalization of the EU, weakened claims for a EU-
Chinese axis and dampened China’s hopes to counterbalance US domination over
the global system.\textsuperscript{706}

\textsuperscript{703} Center for American Progress, “A New Model of Major Power Relations: Pivotal
Power Pairs as Bulwarks of the International System,” U.S.-China Relations: Toward a
New Model of Major Power Relationship (Center for American Progress and China-

\textsuperscript{704} Keith Bradsher, “Once Concerned, China Is Quiet About Trans-Pacific Trade Deal,”
The New York Times, April 28, 2015,

\textsuperscript{705} Ting Wai, “EU-China Relations in the Age of Globalization and Regionalization,”

\textsuperscript{706} Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “China’s Relations with the Major Powers: The United States,
European Union and Russian Federation,” in Charting China’s Future: Domestic and
China and the EU, however, still advanced their comprehensive partnership to a “comprehensive strategic partnership” in 2003.\textsuperscript{707} The EU-China cooperation has been increasing in many areas, and the EU and China are currently the largest trade partners in the world.\textsuperscript{708} Nonetheless, due to such reasons as the arms embargo, cancellation of joint strategic projects such as the Galileo GPS (Global Positioning System), reciprocal market regulation expectations and human rights issues, there are obstacles to China-EU “strategic” relations reaching their goal.\textsuperscript{709} The “EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation”, agreed in 2013 during the bilateral summit, is set to guide the relations in the coming years. The agenda acknowledges many points on which parties must cooperate under the banners of “peace and security”, “prosperity”, “sustainable development” and “people-to-people dialogue”.\textsuperscript{710} The discussion about the EU-Chinese-Turkish triangle has been given in the preceding chapter, thus no further discussion will be given here.

There is one country where China’s relations are always more complicated than others: Russia. The reason is their frequently altered status of friendship, hostility, and trust-distrust levels. Their rapprochement after the dissolution of USSR was followed by a “strategic partnership” and continued with “good neighborliness” and “friendly cooperation”. For obvious reasons, Russia became China’s friend in

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ting Wai, “China’s Strategy towards the EU: A Strategic Partner of No Strategic Significance?,” in \textit{Asian Countries’ Strategies towards the European Union in an Inter-Regionalist Context}, ed. Hungdah Su (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2015), 9, 11, 12, 17, 25, 26.
\end{itemize}
the making of a “multi-polar” world. Not only was Chinese-Russian trade increased but also the military and political cooperation were enhanced. China purchased military equipment from Russia, but their copying of it made Russia uncomfortable. China and Russia founded the SCO out of the Shanghai Five but Russia’s alternative channel, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which comprises Russia and its Central Asian neighbors, made China feel isolated. Overall, though, Russia has played the important role of accompanying China in its construction of a “multi-polar world”.

There are some difficulties to Chinese-Russian relations. For instance, China’s increasing presence in the Central Asia through trade and energy agreements has always made Russia uneasy. Putin declared Russia’s “pivot to Asia” in 2012, however, it was still far from realized and Chinese-Russian cooperation was limited. This picture changed dramatically in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukraine crisis. The EU and the US imposed sanctions on Russia, which made Russia turn to Asian market, particularly to China, in order to keep economically afloat.

China did not miss this opportunity and a long-awaited cheaper gas deal was made. In exchange, Moscow gave the go ahead to the Silk Road projects, which meant accepting the increasing presence of China in Central Asia. It also allowed anti-status quo institutions, such as the AIIB, to operate. With EU sanctions on

---

Russia, a new market emerged for Chinese technology.\textsuperscript{715} Given this new outlook, Russia could be perceived as more dependent on China, however, despite increasing cooperation any truly long-term alliance between them has yet to be seen. As has been stated before, Chinese-Russian relations are complicated and will always have the potential to change dramatically.

The Russian-Turkish relations also affect Turkish-Chinese relations. It may not explicitly affect relations with China, as do Turkey’s relations with the US, but it is still an important factor in discussing Turkish-Chinese relations, particularly when it comes to Central Asia, the SCO or Syria.

The last major figure for Turkish-Chinese that we should discuss here is Iran. China has long been the country that provides the most breathing space for Iran in the last decades. Since 2003, when US sanctions began because of Iran’s nuclear procurement program, China became more vital to the latter country.\textsuperscript{716} The Tehran-Beijing cooperation ranged from energy to arms sales\textsuperscript{717} and strengthened in 2007 with China’s placement as Iran’s largest trade partner.\textsuperscript{718} Further, despite allowing a UNSC sanction resolution against Iran in 2010, China continued to do


\textsuperscript{716} Mustafa Seçim Uz, “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde İran’ın Küresel Güçlerle İlişkilerinin Türkiye Üzerindeki Etkileri [The Impact of Iran’s Relationship with Global Powers on Turkey Durign the Post-Cold War Period]” (Master’s, Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, 2009), 129.

\textsuperscript{717} Alperen, “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Çin’in Ortadoğu Politikası [China’s Policy Towards Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era],” 43, 60.

business with Iran.\textsuperscript{719} At this time, there were claims that Iran was growing unhappy, not only with China’s support of the resolution, but for its own increasing dependency on Beijing.\textsuperscript{720} It was also widely thought in Iran that relief of the sanction would boost Chinese-Iranian trade and cooperation in many areas, which had been a factor for China’s willingness to participate in the P5+1 negotiations.\textsuperscript{721} In fact, when the nuclear deal had been reached, China had already started to seek for ways to further enrich transactions.\textsuperscript{722} Except for relief to their bilateral relationship, other effects from the deal were Iran’s full membership prospect to the SCO and the country’s contribution to the new Silk Road project.\textsuperscript{723} Iran joining the AIIB would also enable Iran to become more active in future Chinese projects in Asia. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to claim that China was the ideal friend for Iran during times of strife, and would likely continue to be one even after the nuclear deal.\textsuperscript{724}

How would this deal affect Turkey? As Turkey’s regional rival, Iran will have greater influence on the region. Iran’s increasing activism is a worrying development for Turkey in terms of its stakes there. For example, Turkey’s

defense expenditures increased after Iran gained observer status to the SCO. In light of this, we might assume that Iran’s full membership to the organization would make Turkey more worried for its own status in and balancing need for the SCO. However, Turkey might also seek higher status in the organization by playing on Iran’s full membership to the organization. It is known that Russia offered India in exchange for China’s suggestion of Pakistan, for SCO membership. Similarly, Turkey might convince Russia to use Turkey’s pending membership to counterbalance China’s interest in giving Iran full membership.

Mr. Doğru, a Turkish scholar, points that Iran is important for China mainly for two reasons: its large influence in Middle East and its energy resources. He believes that Turkey has no capability to compete with Iran regarding China relations as Turkey neither has energy resources nor it has a proxy power in Middle East and even in Central Asia over Sunni Muslims just as Iran has over the Shia populations. Regardless of Turkey’s ties with Central Asia, Alperen says, China favors Iran over Turkey in the region.

The Silk Road project also will facilitate Iran in the region and in the greater Asia trade routes. Turkey also has great expectations of the project. Therefore, Turkey can also cooperate with Iran in the Silk Road Project in addition to developing its bilateral trade and energy cooperation with Iran. It is all up to Turkey and Iran to find a way of dealing with each other in the wake of stark regional upheaval. As a last note, Turkey may need to revise its regional policies, especially those that

---

726 Doğru, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
727 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
have jeopardized its credibility in the region as with its stance on Syria and Egypt. This would likely challenge Iran’s attractiveness to China and the West.\textsuperscript{728} If Turkey’s 2015 adjustment on Syria and its opening of its military base for US aircrafts have a reverse effect on developing partnerships with China and Iran, then Turkey may need to find other ways to make up for its multi-dimensional foreign policy claims.

**China’s Turkey Policy**

Turkish-Chinese relations and their developments in 2000–2015 and earlier have been discussed in several chapters. Here, they will be briefly summarized, with China’s perspective given particular focus. As discussed in Chapter 2’s detail on the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Cold War and the Uyghur issue determined Sino-Turkish relations. After the end of the Cold War, China realized that the Uyghurs are going to cause the country a headache if it did not take necessary action. This issue was also related to Turkey, as in the early 1990s, Turkey was the main support base for Uyghur independence. Nevertheless, as has already been mentioned, Turkey quickly realized the importance of a rising China and thus started to readjust its policies toward the Uyghur people.

As a result, after visiting Turkey in 1999, Li Peng, the Head of the National People’s Congress, disseminated information in China about Turkey’s change on the issue.\textsuperscript{729} At this point, China also decided to change its policy on Turkey. In 2000, Jiang Zemin accepted a visit to Turkey and signed an enhanced partnership


\textsuperscript{729} Ekrem, “Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinin 40 Yılı (1971-2011) [40 years of Turkish-Chinese Relations (1971-2011)],” 50.
communiqué.” China’s change in stance was understood in terms of its openness for letting Vice PM Bahçeli visit Xinjiang in 2002. This tradition continued for President Gül’s visit in 2009, the PM Erdoğan’s visit in 2012, and visits from opposition parties – the CHPs in 2013 and the HDPs in 2015. If nothing else, these visits were a sign of China’s expectation of understanding and cooperation on the Uyghur issue.

Despite all this, China still treated Turkey cautiously, as historical perceptions from the Cold War and the Uyghur issues were still prevalent. For example, when the 2009 Urumqi incident happened, China has shocked by Erdoğan’s claims that China had committed “almost genocide.” Thus, China did not easily regard Turkey as a partner, even when giving due respect to all the positive developments that had been made in the last decade or so. However, in 2010 Turkish-Chinese relations received another dimension: China became willing to boost relations to the next level – “strategic partnership” – which showed that China had every intention of developing further relations with Turkey despite the problems between them.

There were several reasons for this change. One was Turkey’s regional role, as Hu Jintao himself stated in 2009 during President Gül’s visit. As it was mentioned in Turkey’s China policy, Hu found Turkey’s regional role appealing and claimed

---
730 “Joint Communique Between The Republic Of Turkey And The People’s Republic Of China.”
that China supports Turkey in playing a larger role in these areas.\textsuperscript{733} Xi’s 2012 visit was also important in giving some clues about the position of Turkey for China at the time. Xi visited Turkey a part of a three-leg visit, which included the US and Ireland – the latter of which was waiting to take over the next EU presidency – in his show off just before taking top posts in his country, and this visit signaled to Xi Turkey’s influential regional position for the Chinese.\textsuperscript{734} Another factor, which made the post-2010s easier for China to become closer to Turkey, is the AKP’s relative anti-Western rhetoric as could be seen from the headings in the \textit{Global Times}, which drew attention to the rift between Turkey and the West.\textsuperscript{735} This supported China’s multi-polarity claims, as has been aforementioned. Hence the once “unwanted Turkey” now started to become an opportunity for China.

China realized that in developing relations with Turkey, it would not only gain in terms of regional benefits (as a gateway to the EU and the Middle East), but also gain credibility for the rest of the world, as Turkey has been an old US ally and NATO member. China, therefore, started to make use of Turkey as much as it could. For example, it was mentioned in the defense missile project and China’s military production gained popularity, as Turkey was the first NATO country to show interest. The deal was unsuccessful for China, but being mentioned at all

\textsuperscript{733} “Chinese President Hu Jintao Holds Talks with Turkish President Gul.”
was still a positive outcome. Alperen also notes that China has acted very pragmatically in this issue: it has presented the missile deal as a business transaction more than anything else. Similarly, “although it does not seem quite possible that Turkey gets into the, if it happens despite Turkey’s alliance with the West, it would be like taking a ‘castle’ from the West to give it to China”, says Alkan. In that sense the visit of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming to Turkey just two and a half weeks after the failed coup attempt–before any such visit from Turkey’s Western allies–underscores the importance China gives to Turkey.

It could be argued that this pragmatist approach to political relations has been China’s main motive for developing partnerships with Turkey. If we were to summarize China’s expectations from Turkey, we would give three areas:

1) The economy. In terms of trade cooperation, China looks to gain from Turkey as much as it can, however, Turkey has a special position in its geographical location between east and west. In that sense, Beijing is trying to make use of Turkey for its trade and/or investments in Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. It could be said that China attaches relatively great importance to Turkey’s position and influence in the Middle East. These third markets could also become areas of competition for China and Turkey, as will be further discussed in Chapter 6. Even so, they could also be areas for cooperation if

---

736 Ibid.
737 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
738 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
enough dialog were sustained and the Silk Road projects were realized.\textsuperscript{741} In fact in 2013 during the early phases of the One Belt One Road initiative, Xi Jinping discussed a possible transportation linkage from China to Europe through Turkey.\textsuperscript{742} That is why Turkey in 2015 is important for China in terms of the Silk Road. Apart from this; China’s trade relations and investment goals vis-à-vis Turkey are another element of which China wants to make use. In that sense Turkey’s booming economic relations with China since year 2000 is attracting Chinese attention while China is on the way to become Turkey’s largest trade partner.\textsuperscript{743}

2) The Uyghur issue. China wants to stabilize its relations with Turkey with regard to the Uyghur diaspora in China. The Chinese administration wants Turkey’s cooperation on limiting the Uyghur’s independent activities as well as Uyghur-linked terrorism. That is why, in all high-level meetings, there have been statements from the Turkish side that Turkey would not allow any separatist movements in its territories with regards to China. Obviously, China also wants to control Uyghur refugees and jihadists fleeing Xinjiang and joining the Syrian Civil War. The worst-case scenario for China would be the uncontrolled return of these people to its territory. In that respect, Beijing expects Ankara’s cooperation more and more in response to the Syrian crisis.\textsuperscript{744} For this reason perhaps China has been suspicious of Chinese Muslims’s contacts with Turkey. A Chinese

\textsuperscript{741} Kadılar and Leung, “Possible Turkish-Chinese Partnership On a New Silk Road Renaissance by 2023,” 134–37.
\textsuperscript{742} Peter Ferdinand, “Westward Ho- the China Dream and One Belt, One Road- Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping,” \textit{International Affairs} 92, no. 4 (2016): 949–50.
\textsuperscript{743} Li Bingzhong (李秉忠), “‘土耳其模式’刍议 [An Exploration into the ‘Turkish Model’].” 欧洲研究, no. 5 (2012): 142.
religious figure says that that Chinese government has been watching their encounters with foreigners and has indirectly warned them not to engage with Turkish institutions or people.\textsuperscript{745}

3) Turkey’s leverage as a bridge country. Turkey’s interest in SCO or joining to AIIB, is useful for China to making itself attractive to others. Furthermore, military cooperation and Turkey’s interest in buying Chinese weapons have great potential for China.

Due to these reasons, we can see China’s more positive attitude to Turkey. Increasing cultural relations, educational cooperation and trade cooperation, discussed in details in Chapter 5, are evidence of China’s realization that Turkey is a country from which it could profit not only for these reasons but also to boost its soft power abroad.\textsuperscript{746}

Still the relations are not problem-free. One thing making it hard for China to adjust its policy towards Turkey in regional politics has been in the last few years the rapidly changing nature of Turkish foreign policy.\textsuperscript{747} Turkey easily turning foes from friends as in Syria and Israel examples in the last decade is an example of this. Similarly unusual events in Turkish domestic politics are also another puzzling issue. One China related Turkish NGO representative said: “Chinese diplomats in Turkey are confused over how to react after big events in Turkey as

\textsuperscript{745}AS, Interview (Senior Chinese Muslim Religious Personality), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 15, 2014.


\textsuperscript{747}Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
they do not understand whom to trust.”\textsuperscript{748} The difficulties Turkish passport holders are facing in Chinese immigration, for many years, is also another problematic aspect of the Chinese treatment to Turkey.\textsuperscript{749} A lack of efforts made by the Chinese side to balance the trade asymmetry and the worsening Turkish image in China in recent years are other causes of setbacks, Öpçin points out.\textsuperscript{750}

**China’s Perceptions of Turkey**

When we discuss China’s perception of Turkey, we get a very different picture to the one drawn about Turkey’s perceptions of China in Chapter 3. The settings for the two are not the same. In China, government, party, and military’s perceptions of Turkey will be discussed as a whole as they operate under the leadership of the same institution, in other words, the CCP. In fact no extreme different accounts were found in a search made through for example Global Times (party organ) and Jiefang Junbao (military organ) on Turkish perceptions. Even media and business circles’ perceptions are also very close to the state’s stance. There is no political opposition at all worth mentioning and there is also a big question mark over the existence of a truly civil society in China. Thus we can discuss them to some extent, with the help of interviews and observations. We will also discuss the Chinese people’s direct perceptions of Turkey.

*The State*

For the sake of the discussion, first the official state discourse will be explored.

The Chinese official language is very diplomatic. It could be said it is in line with

\textsuperscript{748} AI, Interview (Turkish NGO Representative), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, February 19, 2016.
\textsuperscript{749} Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\textsuperscript{750} Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
the “Tao Guang Yang Hui (韬光养晦)” foreign policy style as it is described in the section where we discussed about China’s foreign policy. In other words there is no chance to hear anything sentimental or harsh said by a Chinese official to the contrary of Turkey’s case.

On the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Turkey is located in the “Western Asia and North Africa”, namely MENA section. Neither is it included in Europe where Turkey is seeking political membership of the European Union, nor in the European and Central Asian Region, which is surrounding Turkey and including countries like Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan etc. In the same line, Hu’s speech during Gül’s visit underlined Turkey’s position in the Middle East with only one reference made to the Middle East in the whole speech: “China is ready to strengthen communication and coordination with Turkey on the Middle East issue.” The fact that the majority of the think tanks or academics in China locates Turkey into Asia consolidates this official perception. For example while describing Turkey’s economic development in the recent decade Chinese Ambassador in Ankara, Yu Hongyang, qualifies Turkey as an “economic miracle in the Middle East”. Another two common points that often appear in the official texts or speeches are economic cooperation, including the Silk Road projects and cooperation in the fight against

752 “Chinese President Hu Jintao Holds Talks with Turkish President Gul.”
terrorism, which is becoming increasingly crucial with the Syrian war.755 Also in
general China’s stance on Turkey is similar to those in the Middle East, yet there
are still often mentioned distinctions as Turkey’s western aspect and leverage as
well as its lack of energy resources unlike other countries in the region.

Besides, the Chinese state officials like then Minister of Public Security Meng
Jianzhu and then Party Secretary of Shanghai Han Zheng (both were members of
CCP Politburo from 2012 to 2017) always have a positive language and
perception of Turkey. They see Turkey as a beautiful and colorful country.756
Nevertheless they are officials who have the chance to see Turkey by themselves
and have a better understanding of Turkey. Things are different when we talk to
lower level officials. Dozens of provincial or city level state officials have
tremendously changed their perceptions about Turkey after they visited the
Turkish Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo. Most of them, firstly, had no idea
about the history and location of Turkey. They were quite surprised when they
learned that Turkey was located in a place that saw the emergence of so many
famous civilizations. It was acknowledged by a senior security officer saying “I
wish we could have a better understanding of each other, because Turkey is a very
beautiful and rich country in terms of different cultures.”757

Here, it is also important to point out that Chinese security officials have always
been very concerned by Uyghur issues. “The security guys usually come and
check if there are any Uyghur staff working in the pavilion with us,” said Faruk

755 Xi Jinping (习近平), “拓宽和充实中土战略合作内涵 [Broadening and Enriching
Connotations of the China-Turkey Strategic Partnership],” 杭州(周刊), 2015.
756 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
757 AP, Interview (Senior Chinese Security Officer), interview by Mehmet Söylemez,
Face-to-face, June 30, 2012.
who was a Senior Staff Supervisor at the event.\textsuperscript{758} A journalist claimed that “there is a persistent mistrust from the state officials towards Turkey on the issue,” and that he was being under state surveillance because of this.\textsuperscript{759} “In order to make sure that I will not be deported I would not write stories about Uyghurs, even if other foreign media are reporting on certain events. If that was me, a Turkish journalist, then it would be a big trouble for me.”\textsuperscript{760} Security officials from different channels were watching Turkish pavilion very closely during the whole Expo organization for similar reasons.\textsuperscript{761} Many Turkish expats living in China would have faced questions regarding Uyghurs, whenever they had talks with Chinese security officials. The officials would somehow approach the Turkish expats living in China and ask them about Turkish people’s view of Uyghurs or the Uyghurs they know in China, etc.\textsuperscript{762}

\textit{The Media}

According to a recent study on the mainstream Chinese media reporting about Turkey we can easily find that media reporting is mostly in line with the official stance.\textsuperscript{763} The study focused on three newspapers, namely People’s Daily (人民日报), Guangming Daily (光明日报) and China Youth Daily (中国青年报) covering 6 years between 2009 and 2014. Years 2010 and 2012 saw a peak with

\textsuperscript{758} Faruk Zemheri, Interview (Expo 2010 Turkish Pavillion Events and Staff Supervisor), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, May 15, 2016.
\textsuperscript{759} AK, Interview (Turkish Journalist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, May 25, 2011.
\textsuperscript{760} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{761} Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
\textsuperscript{762} Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.
75 headlines each year including key word “Turkey”. The reason is that 2010 was the year the strategic partnership between both countries was signed (during Chinese PM Wen Jiabao’s visit), while 2012 was the year of reciprocal visits of Turkish PM Erdoğan and Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping as well as China’s Culture Year in Turkey.

A detailed analysis on the years of 2013 and 2014 has shown that out of 133 titles including “Turkey”, politics is the area covered mostly with 42 times. Other areas covered as following counts: disasters and riots–28 times, culture–23 times, military–13 times, violent [terror] attacks-6 times, economy–17 times, sports and weather–4 times. The author concluded that the reporting ignored the problematic areas between the two countries such as international political conflicts, trade problems and the Uyghur issue. There are also exceptional times during which the Chinese media reported about Turkey in a negative way such as claiming Turkish officials are turning blind eye to the Uyghur jihadis passing into Syria. This kind of reporting mostly came as a response to an earlier Turkish action, the aid offered by Turkey to some Uyghur refugees in Thailand, in this case.

Looking behind the general news reporting, we can see that the Chinese media have little idea about Turkey due to lack of familiarity with the subject. “When journalists came to our pavilion I can say that most of them had no idea about Turkey,” said Zemheri, the Events and Staff Supervisor of Expo 2010 Turkish

764 Ibid., 103.
765 Ibid., 107.
766 Ibid., 111–12.
After having talked with a hundred Chinese journalists from all sorts of media including the mainstream media, I can conclude that just a few of them knew about Turkey. The most common unknown aspects for them are Turkey’s European side, secular system and society. “Chinese media have little interest in Turkey”, a senior Chinese journalist says, “Our editorial leaders are hardly showing interest to cover stories about Turkey. There is a bias regarding Turkey, as it is not very well known by the people,” she explains. Prominent international news commentator Ma Xiaolin confirms the point that Chinese does not know much about Turkey.

Business communities

From a political point of view, Chinese business people mostly believe that Turkey belongs to the West. At least it is not the East according to them. Several of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) members think that Turkey would not get into the SCO for that reason.

In general it is accurate to say that Chinese business circles have little knowledge about Turkey. “Chinese are not familiar with Turkish brands or trade opportunities,” said a Chinese businessman who is running several businesses connected to Turkey. “I have to do a lot of promotional work when I bring some

---

768 Zemheri, Interview (Expo 2010 Turkish Pavillion Events and Staff Supervisor).
769 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
770 AX, Interview (Senior Chinese Journalist), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 13, 2010.
772 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
products from Turkey to China,” he adds.\textsuperscript{773} It can also be observed from more than a dozen trade trips that Chinese businessmen do not know much about Turkey and they are kind of scared to do business at first.\textsuperscript{774}

Even if they show the will to do business, they do not know how to do it or where to start.\textsuperscript{775} “They don’t like taking risks, and unfamiliar with Turkey they think it is very adventurous to invest into Turkey-related trade,” said Öpçin over a question regarding the issue.\textsuperscript{776} He continued, “I can confirm that they have little knowledge about how to do business with Turkey.”

In small-scale transactions, Chinese perception of Turkish tradesmen is that they are tough negotiators and prefer to buy cheap products. A question being asked frequently to the Chinese students studying in Turkey confirms this point: “Why Chinese products are so cheap?”\textsuperscript{777}

\textit{The People}

According to a study carried out by the Chinese newspaper \textit{Global Times} (环球时报) in 2012, 67.5\% of the respondents had an unfavorable view of Turkey.\textsuperscript{778}

Another survey by \textit{Global Times} in 2015, right after the anti-China protests in

\textsuperscript{773} AY, Interview (Senior Chinese Businessman), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, October 15, 2010.
\textsuperscript{774} Personal Observation, Turkish businessmen’s business trips in China, Translator, Six years until 2013.
\textsuperscript{776} Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
\textsuperscript{777} Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
Turkey, found that 64.4% respondents hold unfavorable view towards Turkey.\footnote{Guo Pengfei, “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM],” News, 环球网, (July 8, 2015), http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2015-07/6945094.html.} A study cites the reasons for Chinese people’s low support for Turkey as being the Turkish-East Turkestan connection.\footnote{R. Kutay Karaca, “On the Misperceptions between the Peoples of Turkey and China,” \textit{Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)} 7, no. 1 (2013): 108–9.} The Chinese do not like this connection and Turkish support for Xinjiang’s independence. Other major reasons cited in the survey are: historical memories linked to the Cold War, the Turkish-US alliance, Turkey being influenced by the Western media in a bad manner, and so on.\footnote{Liu, “Perceptions and Misperceptions between Chinese and Turkish People - A Preliminary and Tentative Research,” 234.}

Dr. Alperen notes that Turkey’s image has been hurt in China in recent years with the increasing terror attacks in the country.\footnote{Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).} “The Chinese start to believe that Turkey is not a safe country and it has been affecting the inflow of tourists from China”, he explains. Ma confirming this point says, “Chinese people associate terrorism with Turkey more frequently these days. If you have a look at the Chinese Internet forums like Weibo you would see that people are discussing Turkey with ISIS and other terror groups. Unfortunately, an increasing number of people see Turkey as an extreme Islamist country”.\footnote{Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).} Another point she makes is that the people’s feelings were hurt badly when then PM Erdoğan likened Urumqi events in 2009 to genocide. “At that time people were very angry,” she says. In addition, following the 2015 anti-China Ramadan protests in Turkey, 87.2% of
the 11,000 respondents of the *Global Times* survey in China said that they would drop Turkey from their travel list.\(^{784}\)

Another point is that Chinese people generally view Turkey as a backwards and uncivilized country. Ordinary Chinese people’s perceptions were changed when they encountered Turkey just like bureaucrats and media people. One respondent said: “Turkey needs to do more promotional work. I did not know that Turkey was such a rich country in terms of culture. I will definitely seek a chance to have a look”.\(^{785}\) In fact many Chinese people who have attended Turkish related events have similar reactions. In the 2015 *Global Times* survey, 57.9% of the Chinese netizens said that they were not familiar with Turkey before.\(^{786}\)

I also made use of Baidu (baidu.com) search engine to see what Chinese language users are searching about Turkey, as I did the other way around via Google. As of 3 September, typing “Turkey” in Chinese characters and pinyin (土耳其 and tuerqi) on the Chinese search engine Baidu gives following auto-complete options----for characters: “Turkey tourism” (土耳其旅游), “Self organized trip tips to Turkey” (土耳其自助游攻略), “Free travel (not with the tour groups) tips to Turkey” (土耳其自由行攻略), “Turkey time” (土耳其时间); for pinyin: “Turkey” (土耳其), “Turkey tourism” (土耳其旅游), “12 day Turkey tour” (土耳其 12 日游), “Turkish ice cream” (土耳其冰淇淋). Although these search engine

---

\(^{784}\) 郭鹏飞 (Guo Pengfei), “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM].”

\(^{785}\) Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.

\(^{786}\) 郭鹏飞 (Guo Pengfei), “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM],” 60.
results are not universal, they show us that Turkey is getting popular as a tourism destination in recent years. Yet, we should keep in mind that Chinese Internet is under strict government regulation. Hence, it is unlikely that Baidu gives us autocomplete options like East Turkestan or Uyghurs even if they are the most searched items with Turkey.

Many people know Turkish kebab. Most of the Chinese somehow have heard about it, but there is a misconception there. As Uyghur kebab is also famous in China, they always confound that kind of lamb kebab with Turkish kebab. When they learn about different styles of Turkish kebab they are usually surprised. But generally speaking, Turkish food is welcomed by Chinese people.\textsuperscript{787} Another aspect that Chinese would associate with Turkey is football. Turkey’s winning of the third place in 2002 World Cup held by Korea and Japan is well remembered by Chinese as Turkey beat China 3-0 in the group level. Many Chinese would either tell you a word “kebab” or “football” with a “thumb” gesture when you tell them that you are Turkish.\textsuperscript{788}

Lack of knowledge about Turkey is very common in the Chinese business community, media and even more in the society. The impact of this reality on China’s relations with Turkey is hard to evaluate: it can mean neutrality and help Beijing better promotes its interest there. But it can also be an obstacle to business and people-to-people exchanges. In any event, Turkey’s close relationship with the Uyghur and the Xinjiang issue is likely to remain a major component of China’s perception of this country.

\textsuperscript{787} Personal Observation, Turquoise Turkish Culture and Food Festival in Shanghai, October 10, 2013.
\textsuperscript{788} Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.
Conclusion

In this chapter, China in the context of Turkish-Chinese relations has been elaborated. In order to do that, a brief summary of Chinese foreign politics since 2000 has been provided. China’s integration into the world system with its accession to the WTO began the new century for China and the rest of the world. Despite its previously typically low profile on foreign policy, in the late 20th century China started to become more assertive, especially in late Hu and Xi eras. As has been mentioned, global discussions about a rising China and its possible consequences have emerged, and the question as to whether China is an emerging opportunity or a threat has been raised. Furthermore, China’s self-identification has also reflected or touched upon Chinese thoughts about a “peaceful rise” or “revival of the great nation”. Here we have discussed both dimensions of realist approaches to China and China’s constructivist approaches to itself and outside world at the same time.

Secondly, China’s positions in the world and its relations with major countries or organizations that affect Turkish-Chinese relations have been discussed. First and foremost, with the emergence of China and relative decline of the US at the beginning of the 21st century, there have been debates around global multipolarity. Moreover, Chinese discourse also deploys this rhetoric of multi-polarity in its “Is China becoming next superpower?” debates. Turkey’s emphasis of having a multi-dimensional foreign policy is in accordance with these developments from China. Thus Turkey, if not explicitly, then at least implicitly wants a multi-polar world so that it can also emerge as a major power just as it had been in the past as the Ottoman Empire, as it is claimed in the realist balance of power theories.
However, Turkey’s recent history and alliance to the West, particularly to the US and NATO, is crucial and binding when considering US-Chinese relations. The US is increasingly pivoting toward Asia, with a special focus on China. The reason is obvious and mutual to Turkey’s interest: a rising China. With or without acknowledging it, the US has tried to restrain China on some policies, just as the US tried and (mostly) failed in the case of the AIIB. Except for Japan, many of the US’ key allies joined China despite its warnings, including Turkey.

When compared with the US, the EU is not greatly relevant to Turkish-Chinese relations directly. However, relations with the EU has great indirect advantages, such as Turkey being considered a gateway to the EU market for Chinese manufacturers, and the EU market being an area of competition for Turkey and China. And they are quite significant in trade relations. Turkey’s EU bid is also important for deciding whether or not Turkey will strengthen its more than half a century commitment to the West, or whether it will try to seek new alliances for itself in the long term in the wake of global change. There is also Russia and Iran to consider as countries influencing Turkey. Chinese-Russian relations especially relate to Turkey when considering their competition against each other. Turkey’s good relations with Russia seem to be constraints against any deeper involvements for Chinese-Russian-led areas such as Central Asia and the SCO. Nevertheless, Russia could catalyze Turkish-Chinese relations by becoming a trust-building mechanism between them. Iran’s developing relations with China, especially in the wake of the P5+1 nuclear deal, seems to benefit Iran in terms of development and regional influence. That means a greater challenge in Iran is emerging for Turkey in the Middle East. Having said that, if Turkey could manage to cooperate with Iran on certain areas and if both countries could come
together regarding relations with China, then Turkey could benefit as much as Iran from the nuclear deal. Turkey could become a trade hub with Iran through the Silk Road project, and can be also very active in Iran’s anticipated trade boom. The friendship between Turkey and Russia in spite of all the problems, Turkey’s possible cooperation with Iran, and Turkey’s existing brotherhood with Pakistan could have all be used as pawns for moving Turkey into the SCO, provided it is done without antagonizing China.

We can conclude that China is increasingly becoming aware of Turkey as an opportunity, rather than as a hotbed for Uyghur independence. China has also started to develop a partnership with Turkey – this will be given further attention in the following chapter. Overall, if we were to assess where Turkey was in China’s foreign policy priorities, we would say that Turkey is not very high on the list. Having said that, we can still argue that Turkey has a special place. The reason lies in Turkey’s distinct features that directly relate to China’s immediate and long-term interests. Turkey is not anymore regarded as hostile, as it once had done on the Uyghur front, and is one of the major countries with which China wants cooperate on the issue. With the emergence of the Syrian crisis, Turkey has become more relevant for the Chinese and their worries about Uyghur militants in Syria. Perhaps this is the most common perception in China about Turkey in the last decade or so: the Uyghur issue and terrorism in Turkey. Although state policies have changed as explained above, China is still very cautious on the issue both at the state and the society levels. On this issue we can clearly see how identity influences bilateral relations as it is claimed in the constructivist approaches.
In terms of the Middle East, China sees Turkey as a potential regional partner. In fact, the Foreign Ministry of China classifies Turkey under West Asia and Northern Africa, in other words, the MENA region. This tells us that China sees Turkey as a Middle Eastern country, in addition to other things like gateways between Europe and Central Asia.
PART III – CURRENT INTERACTIONS
Chapter 5: Features of the Turkish-Chinese Relations: An Emerging Strategic Partnership?

In this chapter, I will detail Turkish-Chinese relations and its features from the year 2000. namely: both countries’ political and strategic dialogues, international convergences, party-to-party dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, military and security cooperation, and cultural and educational cooperation.

Political and Strategic Dialogues

As has already been described in detail in Chapter 2, modern Turkish-Chinese relations have been rather weak from the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1971 to the end of the 20th century. The reasons for this had to do with internal issues, reciprocal perceptions, distance and so on. With China’s engagement with globalization and Turkey’s realization of China’s rise led Turkey to rethink its China-related policies. Therefore, Turkish policy-makers have reconsidered a long-standing issue for Turkish-Chinese relations: the Xinjiang issue. As a result, Turkey adopted its relevant Uyghur policies between 1996 and 2000. Hence, the year 2000 not only marked the beginning of a new millennium but also marked a new era in Sino-Turkish relations. In other words, 2000 was the year that Turkey and China declared their bilateral rapprochement.

The new age had only just begun. At the beginning of the year, rather serendipitously on St Valentines Day, the Turkish Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan signed the Cooperation on Countering Transnational Crimes Agreement
with his Chinese counterpart in Beijing. This agreement envisioned that China would not support the Islamist Hezbollah and the PKK, and that Turkey would not support pro-independent East Turkestan movements. It was also the finalization of the revision to the last four years’ policy on the Uyghur issue. Now, both parties were ready to set up their plans for boosting their relations to another level.

Two months later when President Jiang Zemin visited Turkey, the Turkish President Demirel honored him with the highest state medal that was available for foreigners. During his visit, the two presidents pointed out that this was the beginning of the “enhanced partnership” and signed a joint communiqué. Although the wording differed from an official Turkish source that termed it a “strengthened partnership” to one Chinese source, the agreement with Turkey was for a “closer partnership” and to another official source it was a “new model of cooperative partnership”

---

791 “Joint Communique Between The Republic Of Turkey And The People’s Republic Of China.”
The English version of the joint communiqué states the relationship as “decided to establish an enhanced partnership based on mutual respect, trust, benefit, equality and common development.” It is important to note that, at this point, Sino-Turkish relations were just beginning to normalize rather than speed up. They had for some time remained quite remote from each other – now, they decided that they needed to catch up on lost time.

As a response to Turkey’s changing stance on the Uyghur issue, China allowed Nationalist Movement Party’s (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi or MHP) leader and Vice Premier Devlet Bahçeli to visit Urumqi and Kashgar when they visited China in 2002. The visit was remarkable because it was the first high-ranking Turkish official visit to the region. Similar favors were made during President Gül’s visit to China in 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (FM) Davutoğlu’s visit to China in 2010 and the Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit to China in 2012. It could be the case that the region’s swift growth impressed the Turkish officials who visited the developing areas.

---


795 “Joint Communique Between The Republic Of Turkey And The People’s Republic Of China.”


797 Ibid., 266.

798 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, “Global Order and Justice in the 21th Century” (Unofficial Translation of the Speech by H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Seta Foundation at Washington DC, Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC, May 17, 2013), 11.
A Turkish diplomat who played an influential role in the China relations also stated that there was a phone diplomacy channel between the Turkish Foreign Minister and his Chinese colleagues during emergency times.

In fact, in 2015 a Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson told the press that Turkey and China have good dialog and currently have a joint working group and a mechanism being established in Ankara. The spokesperson did not give further details, except for saying that they conducted fifteen meetings in very few months. Furthermore in June 2016, Chinese-Turkish Foreign Ministers' Joint Study Group was convened for the fourth time in Beijing, according to China’s Ambassador in Ankara. Currently we do not have much information on what kind of issues this study group has been dealing with.

The next important milestone for Turkish-Chinese relations was the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to Turkey in 2010. At the time, Wen and his counterpart Erdoğan signed eight agreements and declared the Sino-Turkish Strategic Partnership as active. Therefore, after a short pause because of the 2009 Urumqi riots (which will be given due attention in the following chapter), Turkey and China were ready to become closer than they had been before. This was all thanks to the agreements that had been signed, such as: the framework

799 AB, Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, October 16, 2012.
801 Ünal, “Chinese Envoy to Ankara Sees Improved Economic, Political Ties.”
803 “Wen Jiabao Holds Talks with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan.”
agreement on further expanding and deepening bilateral trade and economic cooperation; the memorandum of understanding for initiating a joint study for a medium- to long-term development plan on bilateral trade and economic cooperation; the memorandum of understanding on enhancing cooperation on infrastructure, construction and technical consulting services in third countries; the memorandum of understanding on the composition of a joint working group on the new Silk Road connection; the plan for implementing a cultural exchange and cooperation project for 2010–2013; the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the fields of information and communication technology; the memorandum of understanding to secure cooperation on transport, infrastructure and maritime affairs; and the agreement on railway cooperation. With these agreements and, more importantly, the declaration of going into a “strategic partnership”, Turkey and China had prepared for a brand new era in their bilateral relations.

By fully understanding the drive behind these two major partnership agreements in 2000 and 2010, it will be possible to identify the meaning of Turkish-Chinese relations in the various eras of their development. In order to do that, we must look to such agreements made by Turkey or China with other countries. The first agreement was an “enhanced partnership”, and was rather a rapprochement than building of something new and significant. This was the first time since the establishment of official relations that the countries expressed a readiness for

---

cooperating and forgetting the difficulties of their recent past. At the same time, it was signaling the next step of the bilateral ties, which came 10 years later.\(^{805}\)

Nevertheless, the second agreement – the “strategic partnership” – sounds as though it should be more attractive and important. Yet just how significant is it to Turkish-Chinese relations? Observers of China know well that China has been arranging for a number of bilateral strategic agreements with various countries, especially since the beginning of the 21st century.\(^{806}\) Among others, an important motive behind these agreements is to create a feeling of mutual trust with every country in order to eliminate the perception of the rising “China threat”. In other words, if the “China threat” were a poison created by others, then “strategic partnership” would be the antidote made by China.

Since the Cold War, China has signed at least fifty such agreements, mostly with countries and a few international organizations. Therefore, it is very hard to standardize the meaning of such agreements. Their wording also differs from one to the other. Both close friends and “casual acquaintances” of China have similar agreements. To give an example, among the number of countries that have partnerships with China are: Spain and Greece, with a “comprehensive strategic partnership”; Vietnam and Thailand, with a “comprehensive strategic cooperative

partnership”; and Chile and Turkey, with a “strategic partnership”, while North Korea does not have any such agreement with China.\(^{807}\)

A Middle East observer, Charlie Chau, claims, “Strategic partnership is only a political jargon of the PRC foreign policy. It certainly means upgrading relations from the normal level, yet it is still far from the peak of the relations.”\(^{808}\) Another interviewee with years of work in Turkey-China relations says: “The strategic partnership sounds dreamy just like Turkey’s zero problems principle. Yes, it sounds nice but not easy to realize. It has not been realized so far.”\(^{809}\) Alkan agrees with this realpolitik approach and states: “in an environment where Turkey quickly becomes enemy with old friends and friend with old enemies, this kind of rhetoric has lost its meaning in my eyes. Because it only stays as rhetoric, it does not necessarily become the real policies.”\(^{810}\) “The strategic partnership is overrated especially in Turkey; politicians do not view it as important as the media and academia,” he adds. Dr. Alperen says, “The strategic partnership is only on the paper, they need to have a common threat perception. But Turkey and China has a lot of conflicting areas like Uyghurs, Central Asia rather than common threats.”\(^{811}\) A senior Chinese bureaucrat also adds, “Turkey and China could have made good partners, but there are still problems to solve”, and points out the conflicting areas.\(^{812}\)

Hence, claiming that strategic partnership is a very special agreement for China is not quite true. Nonetheless, it is still important, as many countries feel it necessary

\(^{807}\) Ibid., 8, 18–19.
\(^{808}\) Chau, Interview (Chinese Journalist).
\(^{809}\) AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
\(^{810}\) Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
\(^{811}\) Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\(^{812}\) AP, Interview (Senior Chinese Security Officer).
to boost their cooperation with China, as China became an economic giant. That is why we can say not every strategic partnership of China is as strategic as it may state, but all of them are significant in terms of beginning/developing bilateral relations with China.

Yet Turkey’s strategic partnership agreement is significant for various reasons, reasons mostly that shape Turkey’s “strategic dialogue” with China. The exception to the rule regards the history of Turkish-Chinese relations. The “enhanced partnership” agreement marks the beginning of developing relations in Turkish and Chinese history. Therefore, coming into a strategic partnership after an unstable relationship is important. The second reason is the number of subsequent agreements that the partnership has facilitated between the countries, and the cooperation that it has developed for different economic areas, from space programs to third market cooperation. The third reason might be considered Turkey’s special political position: as a US ally, a EU candidate, and a NATO member. However, this is only significant relative to China’s agreements with other European countries such as the UK, France, Germany, and Denmark, as they have full EU membership and some are intensifying their strategic partnership agreements with China. Hence more concrete things, such as SCO membership, may only prove the real specificity of Turkey’s relation with China.

Another reason regards agreement wording. Turkey is among very few countries where the “one China” policy is mentioned for China and Taiwan. In addition, the Turkish-Chinese agreement makes clear the respect for, reform of, or cooperation
with the United Nations. This can be seen as a direct move that Turkey has made regarding the Xinjiang issue, and that Turkey is taking advantage of China’s UNSC membership.

Therefore we conclude that Turkish-Chinese strategic dialogue does exist, or at least that each side wants it to exist for different reasons. For counterterrorism, cooperation between global institutions is absolutely essential. Normally, one would expect strategic dialogue partners to also consider people-to-people and regional issues, but even though they both frequently state that Turkey and China have every plan to work together on regional and global issues, it appears that they have not yet had any serious conversations on these issues. One of the most significant examples would be the Syria issue: on this issue, Turkey and China simply ignore each other – they are far from having an effective strategic dialogue. Other issues, such as the Uyghur people in China and international problems relevant to China’s UNSC membership are examples that show Turkish-Chinese relations are weak in terms of strategic dialogue. Alkan says: “Despite the strategic partnership, Turkey and China are far from cooperating with each other on international issues such as Syria.” Thus, the agreement does have strategic features for both Turkey and China separately but it does not necessarily work bilaterally. Jilian Ma claims that “The strategic partnership is only important in two areas: economic cooperation and the Uyghur issue. Not much more than that.

---

814 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
China has established partnerships with a lot of country. It does not mean something special to China, but it is special for Turkey.\(^{815}\)

“I do not think the new partnership is so powerful in all aspects, but obviously it has lifted the relationship, especially in terms of economic relations” says Öpçin.\(^{816}\) Another businessman confirms that the agreement has lots of economic potential, but declaring his suspicions about other aspects like military relations.\(^{817}\)

What makes the Turkish-Chinese strategic partnership much more significant is its setting of a level of discourse in another dimension. Such surprising moves as Turkey’s SCO bid and China’s missile project have only become possible through the strategic partnership agreement. Therefore, except for the reasons that have been given above, the most important feature of the “strategic partnership” for Turkey and China is that it sets a completely new tone in their relationship. It could be regarded that it gave leverage for Turkey to enhance its relations with China, as China is already doing it with many others. In other words this new tone is also much more important for Turkey rather than China.

There are also setbacks and weaknesses in terms of diplomatic organization on the Turkish side. A Turkish diplomat who was working in China says: “There is not enough human resources for promotion of Turkey in China”.\(^{818}\) Another diplomat confirms this point and claims that there are just a few Turkish diplomats who can

\(^{815}\) Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
\(^{816}\) Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
\(^{817}\) AH, Interview (Major Turkish Businessman), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, October 11, 2014.
\(^{818}\) AC, Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, October 16, 2012.
speak Chinese in the Foreign Ministry and they have only been recruited in the last few years.\textsuperscript{819} And a diplomat working in the ministry at Ankara says: “the organization about the East and Southeast Asia is rather weak in the ministry’s headquarters.”\textsuperscript{820} I have encountered the problem when conducting this research. Despite having all the documents online in the ministry’s website, I could not find the strategic partnership agreement in any foreign ministry website or archives as of August 2015. The disappearance of the strategic dialogue agreement from the ministry’s archives is ironic but tell a lot about the weakness of the China section in the ministry. A few requests have been made to my Foreign Ministry contacts, but the document still could not be found. Hence, as it can be seen, only the official Chinese version--with my own English translation--is presented in Appendix 2.

After talking about the reasons behind their political dialogue, it is now important to look at the features of Turkey and China’s relations. Reciprocal high-level visits between the countries had not been very frequent until the latter half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. From the Turkish side, this meant President Kenan Evren’s 1982 visit, PM Turgut Özal’s 1985 visit, and President Süleyman Demirel’s 1995 visit, while from the Chinese side this meant President Li Xiannian’s 1984 visit and Zhao Ziyang’s 1986 visit. These visits, however beneficial, were still far from creating a mutual agreement on the countries’ developing relations.

\textsuperscript{819} AE, Interview (Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.
\textsuperscript{820} AF, Interview (Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 13, 2016.
Table 4: Reciprocal High Level Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>President Kenan Evren</td>
<td>President Li Xiannian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>President Li Xiannian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>PM Turgut Özal</td>
<td>Premier Zhao Ziyang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Premier Zhao Ziyang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>PM Süleyman Demirel</td>
<td>President Jiang Zemin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>President Jiang Zemin</td>
<td>Premier Zhu Rongji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Premier Zhu Rongji</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>AKP Leader R. Tayyip Erdoğan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>President Abdullah Gül</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>President Abdullah Gül</td>
<td>PM Wen Jiabao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>PM R. Tayyip Erdoğan</td>
<td>President-in-waiting Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>President R. Tayyip Erdoğan</td>
<td>President Xi Jinping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>President R. Tayyip Erdoğan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 21st century, top-level visits not only became more frequent, but they also resulted in a boost of bilateral relations between the two countries. From the Turkish side; there was the AKP Leader Erdoğan’s 2003 visit (made during the AKP’s ruling term, but due to his previous political ban, he would be the PM right after this visit), President Gül’s 2009 visit, PM Erdoğan’s 2012 visit, and President Erdoğan’s second visit in 2015, Erdoğan’s visit in 2016 for the G20 summit in Hangzhou, while from Chinese side; there was President Jiang Zemin’s 2000 visit, Premier Zhu Rongji’s 2002 visit, PM Wen Jiabao’s 2010 visit, Vice President (President-in-waiting at the time) Xi Jinping’s 2012 visit and Xi’s visit in 2015 for the G20 summit in Antalya. From 2010, ministerial level visits also became quite frequent.

If we were to organize these top-level bilateral visits by date, we would see that there were visits made by presidents and premiers from each side once in the 1980s, with a similar number made in the post-2000 period with presidents (twice)
and a premier (once) from Turkey visiting China, while a president (once) and premiers (twice) visited Turkey from China. However, the most important distinction to make is the productivity of these visits.

The Vice PM Devlet Bahçeli’s 2002 visit and Wu Bangguo’s 2012 visit also played a crucial role as Wu was not only Chair of the National People’s Congress but also the second in command in the CCP. There were also several foreign ministers and ministers from both sides visited each other at the beginning of the 21st century. Foreign ministers included figures like the president-to-be, Gül, and the PM-to-be Davutoğlu. Here Chinese Vice FM Zhang Ming’s visit to Ankara after the failed coup should be noted as having a special meaning for Turkey.

Fighting against terrorism was discussed during Erdoğan’s visit in 2015 and Turkey’s decision to fight ISIS was perceived as very positive. Xi Jinping met with Erdoğan again in 2015 during his visit to Antalya for the G20 summit. During the meeting, they discussed security issues and Turkey once again guaranteed China that Turkey would not allow any harmful organization into China. More importantly, the two sides signed seven agreements during the meeting. Most of these agreements were about the Silk Road plans, and include: a memorandum of understanding on the harmonization of the Silk Road Economic Belt, an agreement for plans for a 21st Century Marine Silk Road and the Middle Corridor Initiative, a memorandum of understanding on strengthening cooperation in e-commerce, a Railway Cooperation Agreement, a Framework Cooperation Agreement between the Prime Ministry Investment Support and the Promotion Agency of Turkey and China Export and Credit Insure Corporation, and the

---

agreement on the transfer of Kumport Port shares.\textsuperscript{822} At the G20 summit in 2016 in Hangzhou, the two leaders met and pledged cooperation to counter terrorism.\textsuperscript{823}

During the bilateral meetings three more agreements were signed: Cooperation in Nuclear Safety, Cooperation on Renewable Energy and Coal, as well as Agricultural Health Certification covering pistachio plants.\textsuperscript{824}

As I will later discuss the issues that come with analyzing the strategic meaning of, for example, energy cooperation, investment projects and security cooperation, I will not mention them in detail here. However, those diplomatic developments increased concrete cooperation for Turkey and China in the last decade, for example, cooperation in the space race. During Erdoğan’s 2012 visit these strategic aspects of the cooperation were discussed, according to a senior Turkish diplomat.\textsuperscript{825} Turkish officials stated on numerous occasions that Turkey would be willing to cooperate with China in building a mutual ground station and launching satellites.\textsuperscript{826} In fact, in 2006 Turkey joined the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization, where China numbers among seven member states.

Moreover, in 2011 the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) signed a satellite launching agreement with the Great Wall Industry

\textsuperscript{825} AB, Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat).
Corporation (CGWIC) of China, another company that had been sanctioned by the US. Finally, in 2012 Turkey launched its first high-definition Earth observation satellite, Göktürk-2, from the Gansu Jiuquan Space Station in China. Meanwhile, a Deputy Director of the space program in TÜBİTAK stated that Turkey had already been cooperating with China on satellites, GPS and earthquake prediction programs, and planned to expand cooperation to jointly designing programs in aeronautics. During Erdoğan’s 2015 visit, Xi Jinping also declared that China was looking forward to further cooperation with Turkey in new areas, like space technology. For example, the Chinese were interested in building a possible Turkish nuclear power plant. In August 2016, Turkey ratified an agreement on “nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” signed during Erdoğan’s 2012 visit to Beijing. During the Turkish Energy Minister Berat Albayrak’s visit to Shanghai in June 2016, another memorandum of understanding was signed as well. It is highly expected that China will start building Turkey’s third nuclear power plant soon.

Before finishing this subsection, it must be highlighted that Turkey currently has an embassy in Beijing, as well as three consulates: in Shanghai, Guangzhou and

---

830 Shengnan and Jia, “Sino-Turkish Links Highlighted.”
832 “Turkey and China Sign Deal on Nuclear Cooperation.”
Hong Kong. China, in return, has an embassy in Ankara and a consulate in Istanbul. Neither of these missions is very big.

**International Convergences**

In terms of having political dialogue in international organizations, there have been several occasions where Turkey and China have been in the same environment. The most important was the UNSC, during Turkey’s non-permanent membership in the 2009–2010 term. Moreover, Turkey’s presidency in the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) for the 2010–2014 term was handed over to China for the 2014–2016 term. During its presidency in CICA, Turkey organized nineteen Special Working Group and Senior Officials Committee meetings, three of which were hosted by China.\(^{833}\) Numerous conferences and workshops had also been organized during this term. The Turkish presidency in the G20 (Group of 20 major economies) in 2015 was also passed to China for 2016.

These handovers are important for two reasons. First, they strengthen bilateral relations. The two countries have expectations from each other. China focuses on Turkey’s role in counteracting terrorism, and Turkey focuses on China’s role in the global economy.\(^{834}\) Moreover, Turkey wants to continue dialogue with China, in order to get Chinese support on certain international issues already for several years.\(^{835}\) However, so far, looking at issues of Turkish interest such as Cyprus,


\(^{835}\) He Wenping (贺文萍), “土耳其地缘外交战略及当前中土、中非关系的现状和走向 [Turkey’s Geopolitical Strategy and Current Status and Trends of the China-Turkey
Syria, Egypt and so on, we cannot claim that Ankara has yet been successful in convincing Beijing on its position. Observers confirm that Turkish-Chinese bilateral cooperation on these issues is very hard. “First of all China acts pretty passively in international organizations, it always follows Russia. Turkey’s issues –Armenia, Cyprus etc. –are very distant for China, and they are very risky. Why would China bother to take that risk?” says one China watcher.836 Another one says: “Look at the Syrian case, did Turkey and China manage to work together? No. They are far from cooperating on international issues.”837 One additional problem about this cooperation is that policy makers and implementers from two sides do not understand each other. In several occasions, I have noticed that the Turkish diplomats dealing with China related issues have difficulties in working with their Chinese counterparts.838

The second reason relates to global politics, as both countries want to “rebalance the international power and global governance”.839 They are both against the status quo, and demand a fairer international system, for example, in the IMF, the UN and so on.840

As a result, for example the AIIB will become China’s plan to create its own kind of IMF, after having waited for the IMF to evolve for a few years. Again, for

836 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
837 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
838 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai; Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.
multilateral developments, it is claimed that with their increasing share and activation in that area the CUBISTS (China, the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and South Africa) might evolve multilateral systems. Nevertheless, there have not yet been any concrete efforts made by these countries/regions. Some initiatives have been made by BRICS, yet that does not include Turkey. Therefore, the AIIB is one of the most important initiatives for linking Turkey with China in an international organization for cooperation.

One of the most important grounds for organizational dialogue that has not been mentioned above is the former Shanghai Five or the SCO. Turkey has long been interested in joining this organization. A month after Erdoğan’s visit to Russia in 2005, where he had declared to Putin that Turkey was interested in being a member of the SCO, Gül, the Vice PM and FM of the time shared knowledge of the same interest with the Chinese Premier Wen. Nevertheless, Turkey has been refused membership without any response from the Chinese side, even though Russia and Kazakhstan have signaled welcome for Turkey. Turkey applied to be a member again in 2011 when the EU reforms had slowed down and the process had started to frustrate the Turkish public. However, treating this frustration as the primary reason for Turkey’s interest to the SCO would not be completely correct. Turkey’s first interest in the organization rather came at a time when EU-oriented reforms were being made and welcomed by the EU. Still, “I

would not be very surprised if Turkey goes for the full membership of SCO because anti-Westernism keeps growing in Turkey,” says one Turkish observer, pointing out that it is an important motivation for Turkey.844

At this point, it is important to indicate that the SCO has remained ineffective as an international organization since its foundation. Yet in the last few years, there have been some developments for the accession of new members.

Eventually, Turkey was accepted as an SCO “dialogue partner” in 2012, the most limited status in its structure. According to the regulations, a dialogue partner has the right to attend meetings of heads of ministries and/or departments of SCO member states, meetings of working groups, commissions of senior officials, scientific and expert meetings, days of culture, festivals, exhibitions, contests, sports competitions and so on. As of 2015, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka have also become SCO dialogue partners.

Table 5: SCO Member, Observer, and Dialogue Partner States as of 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member States</th>
<th>Observer States</th>
<th>Dialogue Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
<td>Republic of Azerbaijan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
<td>Republic of Belarus</td>
<td>Republic of Armenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
<td>Republic of India*</td>
<td>Kingdom of Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
<td>Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Tajikistan</td>
<td>Republic of Mongolia</td>
<td>Republic of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Islamic Republic of Pakistan*</td>
<td>Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In June 2016 accepted to be member states, finalization is under process.

844 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
Immediately after these additions, Erdoğan joked to Putin that Turkey would say goodbye to the EU if the SCO were to let Turkey in as a full member. More importantly, in a television interview Erdoğan talked about his frustrations in the EU process and that the SCO had become a real option for Turkey’s political orientation. Following these remarks, Russian analysts said that Russia would probably welcome Turkey into the SCO.

China’s earlier comments suggesting that Turkey would not be a good choice for the SCO due to its Western alignment had also begun to change in the years that followed. The analysis started to evolve from “Turkey would not give up the West, the moves against the East are only to charm the West,” to “In fact Turkey’s strategic position is important for SCO” and “China should support Turkey’s SCO membership”, etc. However, it does not mean that skeptics have disappear. “Officials from the Chinese Foreign Ministry think that it is very hard to talk about the possibility of Turkey’s full SCO membership,” says one interviewee who is in a position to meet important actors of the bilateral relations in Eurasia.


from both sides. He also adds, “Claiming that Turkey will give up on the West is kind of a bluff. I do not think they are serious. I think it would be very beneficial to Turkey if it had really joined the SCO.”

In 2015, the enlargement of the SCO did not include Turkey. Instead, the acceptance of Pakistan and India as members, and the possible membership of Iran, is likely to change the nature of the organization. Iran is already among the SCO’s observer members, second rank in the organization, along with Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia. Iran and other countries joining the club may also positively trigger Turkish accession. These expansions mean a broader worldview for the organization through its representation of such politically diversified countries. Thus, accepting a democratic, Western ally in Turkey might be easier than it had once been before. Before the enlargement, Turkey was set to be the third largest economy in the club, as well as an influential figure for Turkic and Muslim countries. However, the latest expansion of the organization would diversify the organization and thus weaken possible Turkish influence. That might pave the way for Turkey achieving at least observer status, if not full membership in the coming years, as it decreased some of China’s previous concerns.

**Party-to-Party Dialogues**

---

850 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
In addition to governmental institutions and relations, I would also like to talk about party-to-party relations and how they resonate with political issues. The CCP has relations with some 400 parties from all over the world. Usually, other communist and socialist parties are the focus of Communist Party of China, but not all of the ideologically left-rooted parties have established good relations with the party – some have even distanced themselves from it. Further, sometimes parties from other ideological roots establish very close ties with the CCP. As I have already said, the CCP and Maoist ideas gave influence to Turkey’s communist movements and parties, especially in the 70s. Nevertheless, in today’s Turkey’s things are somehow different. Given Turkey’s different political parties although not all the party-to-party relations are very enhanced in total, but they are important as they bear significant meanings.

The first is to be mentioned here is Turkey’s AKP. Unlike the many leftist, communist and socialist parties in Turkey, one of the closest parties to the CCP is the AKP. The first important statement in AKP-CCP relations was the AKP’s Leader Erdoğan’s 2003 visit to China – that visit could be considered the date from which their party-to-party relations started. In 2003, the AKP had already become the majority government in Turkish parliament, but at the time Erdoğan was still politically banned. Therefore, during his visit his official title was leader of the AKP rather than PM of Turkey. Later on, the AKP and CCP established quite close relations. Following that year, reciprocal visits continued almost annually, either from one or the other country. Wang Jiarui, the CCP Central Committee international relations minister joined the AKP party’s convention in 2004, where he met with PM Erdoğan. In 2005, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, the then-AK Party deputy chairman, paid a visit to China with a party delegation on
Wang’s invitation. As Zhang Dejiang, as a provincial party secretary, headed a delegation in the same year, Fırat declared the two parties “sister parties.” 853 Another delegation of the AKP visited the CCP in 2008 with the deputy head of the parliamentary group and other administrative figures. They agreed to further cooperate in party relations. They also envisioned a dialogue and cooperation between their women and youth. 854 In fact, earlier that year the Secretary of the CCP’s youth division, Erkin Turahun, visited Turkey and the AKP’s female Vice President, Nükhet Hotar Göksel, visited China. Visits continued into the 2010s, and in 2013, Liu Qibao, Head of the CCP Propaganda Department, visited the AKP Vice President Salih Kapusuz. 855 In the same year, Kapusuz also paid a visit to China. In 2014, while receiving the Party Secretary of the Xuhui District (Shanghai) Mo Fuchun, the AKP Vice President Mehmet Ali Şahin underlined the importance of reciprocal visits between Turkey and China, especially after 2010. 856 Each of these visits stressed further cooperation between the two parties. Answering a question about how he perceives relations with CCP, one senior AKP politician says: “We give great importance to our relations with all the parties from all around the world. China is one of the biggest economies of the

world. So the CCP deserves a special attention. We would like to maintain good relations with it.”

The AKP having close relations with the CCP was unusual for Turkey as the AKP’s grassroots were rather nationalistic, religious and conservative. Those were not attractive values for the CCP, given its “communist” title. Yet the AKP was pragmatic in this respect, and chose to ignore its origins in favor of developing relations with China and the CCP. Thus, their relations became elevated to the level of “sister parties”.

The major opposition party of Turkish politics during the AKP’s time in office was the Republican People’s Party (CHP). The CHP was one of the oldest parties in Turkey and its foundation was very close to that of the CCP’s. CHP and CCP have a long time friendship also due to CHP’s leftist and/or secular nature. Nevertheless, during the period of Republican China, Turkey’s party-to-party relations were not established with the CCP. Following the PRC’s recognition of the CHP and some earlier factions of it like the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti or SHP), the party had good relations with China in the 1980s.

Today, CHP leaders often emphasize their Socialist International membership when they discuss their relations with the CCP. In 2004, a delegation of Central Committee members of the CCP visited the CHP on an invitation. During the visit,

---

857 AA, Interview (Senior Turkish Politician).
the long history of the party-to-party relations and the CCP’s respect to the CHP’s founder, Atatürk, were emphasized.\textsuperscript{859}

Despite initial good relations, the CHP did not send any representatives to the National Congress of the CCP, even though it had been invited – unlike the AKP – in 2007.\textsuperscript{860} Nevertheless, in 2013 the CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu headed up a big party delegation to visit China. During his visit, party-to-party relations were discussed outside of Turkish-Chinese bilateral relations issues. Moreover, the two parties agreed to cooperate in their women and youth divisions.\textsuperscript{861} The CHP does not carry out a great deal of international visits, as they are currently an opposition party. One respondent, who had been a CHP city administrator for years, said “unfortunately, the CHP administration is so busy with the current domestic issues that it cannot even think about international relations. Though we came to China as a big delegation this year, I know many of us came here just for fun or shopping without any aim to develop relations.”\textsuperscript{862} Nevertheless, the visit was important at least in terms of its scale and meaning to the party. During his trip, Kılıçdaroğlu visited Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Urumqi as a part of the Chinese tradition of bringing Turkish politicians to the Xinjiang region to prove that it is taking good care of the Uyghurs.\textsuperscript{863}

\textsuperscript{860} “AK Party Strengthens Ties with Chinese Communist Party.”
\textsuperscript{862} Personal Observation, Turkish businessmen’s business trips in China.
The leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Devlet Bahçeli, paid a visit to China in 2002 to meet with his Chinese counterparts. As could be anticipated from the Uyghur issue, Turkish Nationalist Party supporters do not have good impressions of China, and neither does the party itself. What needs a special attention here is that although we have not witnessed necessarily significant, or even a non-significant party-to-party relation between MHP and CCP, the Chinese Embassy in Turkey still mentions that the CCP has established friendly relations with the CHP and MHP, as well as the AKP following the CHP’s visit to China in 2013.\footnote{Ibid.} What that means, is that even though the MHP is not a fan of the CCP, the CCP still wants to approach the MHP for the sake of reaching out to Turkey’s nationalists who are closely watching developments in the Uyghur’s situation.

In 2015, right after the pro-Kurdish party, the People’s Democracy Party (HDP), won representation in Turkish Parliament the CCP extended an invitation to the HDP. With its left leaning, the party finds itself not too ideologically distant from the CCP. However, the invitation and following visit meant more than a union of similar left leaning. Since the HDP represented Kurdish voices in Turkish politics and its success in the June 2015 elections tackled the AKP to win another majority government, their relations with the foreign institutions was much more intimidating for the AKP pundits. CCP’s invitation to the HDP this time was much more eye catching as HDP was in the parliament. Given the good relations between the AKP and CCP one would not expect anything from CCP to unease the AKP, but still the CCP proved its close interest in HDP with this invitation.
As a result, the HDP’s Vice President Nazmi Gür headed a delegation for an over ten-day visit to China in late June and early July of 2015. The HDP announcement stated that during the visit the party intended to discuss the unfolding events in the Middle East as well as shared experience of municipal governance, in addition to party-to-party relations and global and regional issues.\footnote{“HDP’ye Çin Komünist Partisi’nden Davet! [Invitation to HDP from Chinese Communist Party!],” News, 
Muhalefet Biz, (June 29, 2015), http://www.muhalefet.biz/siyaset/ckp-hdp-iliskileri/21666/} It was surprising for some that the visit also covered Urumqi, since some connected Turkey’s Kurdish diaspora with the Uyghurs in China’s. The visit could additionally be considered the first HDP-CCP contact, given the HDP’s first representation in parliament.

Another important party to be mentioned here is Turkey’s Vatan Party. Previously named Workers’ Party, the Vatan Party has close ties with the CCP. Although the Vatan Party does not have any representative in Turkish Parliament, its relations with China are significant, given their nature. In the past, the Workers’ Party even mentioned Mao Zedong and his revolution as being an influence on them. Many were skeptical of the Vatan Party’s relations with the CCP, as communism was not a very well received ideology in Turkey. Even so, the leader of the party, Doğu Perinçek, visited China often, and much more so than other Turkish party leaders.

The Communist Party of Turkey, founded in 2001, was divided into two parties in 2014: the People's Communist Party of Turkey and the Communist Party. The latter bears an ideological attachment to China and the CCP. In fact, the Communist Party is a continuation of Turkey’s first communist party with the
same name, founded in 1920 with Atatürk’s support. In any case, in reality that connection is not the case. As it has already been explained, the AKP has rather good relations with the CCP, even better than the Communist Parties of Turkey, and that become a controversial topic among communist circles in Turkey. The Communist Party of Turkey has been criticized for being silent about the close relationship of the CCP and AKP. We also have not yet witnessed anything from the two newborn communist parties regarding the CCP.

Overall, if we were to analyze these relations, we should draw attention to a few points. For AKP-CCP relations, we could say that their relations are mostly for pragmatic reasons. For the CHP, with its socialist and leftist background, it is proximally close to the CCP in ideology. In that sense, the CHP’s 2013 visit to China has a special meaning. The CHP was the first party to be invited after Xi Jinping took over administration of his party. Inviting the CHP instead of the AKP – the ruling party – was proof of this proximity. Another party who might have close relations with the CCP is the HDP, as they were invited to visit China immediately after they had representation in parliament. However, in order not to contradict their stance on the Kurdish issue in Turkey, the HDP’s critical position on the Uyghur issue might be an obstacle against developing further relations with the CCP, despite the HDP’s left leaning. Nevertheless, the CCP also wants to develop closer relations with the HDP for the same reason. In other words, as a legitimate Kurdish party the HDP enables the CCP to be in touch with Turkey’s


ethnic minorities. These Turkish-Chinese relations are crucial for whenever China wishes to speak about the Kurds, or when Turkey wishes to do something about the Uyghurs in the future. Hence, it could be said that Turkey’s party that has the most special relations with the CCP is the HDP, even though although it is the youngest of Turkey’s governmental parties.

At this point we can argue that one thing is of particular importance for the CCP when it reaches out to Turkey’s political parties: the CCP gives a lot of importance to official representation in parliament. Not only does the HDP’s initiation immediately after they won an election to be represented in the National Assembly prove this point but also China’s mentioning of the MHP and the AKP during CHP’s visit has the same meaning. In a sense, the CCP takes parties that have representation in order to become a dialogue partner. It seems that the CCP does not want to put itself in a position that is perceived as supporting dissidents.

Although they say that the HDP is very critical of the AKP government due to official representation in the legislative organ, the CCP probably does not see establishing relations with the HDP as meddling in Turkey’s politics. Otherwise, why would it not establish relations when HDP members went into elections as independent candidates and won seats then joined their party in 2011?

The answer is that the Kurdish movement did not take part in the 2011 elections as a party due to their belief that they could not make it above the 10% threshold for representation. In any case, these special relations of the CCP, especially with the CHP and the HDP, are important in addition to its close relations with the AKP. We could say that the AKP does not perceive relations with the CCP in a negative way or as a threat in general, at least from what has been seen so far.
Moreover, all of these party-to-party dialogues are helpful in terms of Turkish-Chinese relations. As will be discussed in the next chapter, ignorance about the other is an obstacle for future bilateral relations. Of course, the parties are part of civil society and the political spectrum. Although diplomatic relations have not been much affected from the perceptions of the people in the last decade or so, political parties are very influential in shaping perceptions of China in Turkey.

In that sense, establishing relations with the CCP and the two parties paying reciprocal visits is important for combatting suspicion. Judging from all Turkish politicians’ visits, general understanding of China has changed a great deal; a positive development for establishing healthier relations between the two countries.

**Trade and Economic Cooperation**

Post-2000 was a golden era for bilateral relations in Turkish-Chinese trade. China’s accession to the WTO in 2001 affected the country’s trade. As a result, Turkish-Chinese business also increased dramatically.\(^{868}\) Turkey’s new East Asia opening policy made in 2005 also targeted boosting trade with countries of the region, especially China with the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s Chinese Market Promotion Program.\(^{869}\)

---

\(^{868}\) Gözde Polat, “Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti’nin WTO Üyeliği ve Türkiye Ekonomisi Üzerine Etkileri [People’s REpublic of China’s WTO Accession and Its Impact on Turkey Economy]” (Master’s, Marmara University, 2009), 110.

The annual trade volume hit 1 billion USD (all the $ signs mean USD in this section and elsewhere in the thesis) for the first time in the year 2000. Bilateral trade was consistently boosted in the following years and trade volume grew to around $28 billion for 2013 and 2014, and over $27 for 2015 as can be seen in Table 6. The only exception in the last decade has been the significant decrease in 2009. The global financial crisis has affected Turkish-Chinese trade according to Tables 3 and 4, where there was a more than $2.5 billion decrease. This is true if we talk about the absolute total amount. When we look at Table 9 about the share of Turkish-Chinese trade overall, we see another side of the story. There, we discover that the share of Turkish-Chinese bilateral trade in Turkey’s overall

Table 6: Turkish-Chinese Bilateral Trade (Turkish Data)\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Export ($ millions)</th>
<th>Import ($ millions)</th>
<th>Volume ($ millions)</th>
<th>Deficit ($ millions)</th>
<th>Export/Import %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>1,636</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>2,610</td>
<td>3,115</td>
<td>2,105</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>4,476</td>
<td>4,868</td>
<td>4,084</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>6,885</td>
<td>7,435</td>
<td>6,335</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>9,669</td>
<td>10,362</td>
<td>8,976</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>13,234</td>
<td>14,274</td>
<td>12,194</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>15,658</td>
<td>17,095</td>
<td>14,221</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>12,677</td>
<td>14,276</td>
<td>11,078</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>17,180</td>
<td>19,440</td>
<td>14,920</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,467</td>
<td>21,692</td>
<td>24,159</td>
<td>19,225</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,833</td>
<td>21,295</td>
<td>24,128</td>
<td>18,462</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3,601</td>
<td>24,685</td>
<td>28,286</td>
<td>21,084</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>24,918</td>
<td>27,780</td>
<td>22,056</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,415</td>
<td>24,874</td>
<td>27,289</td>
<td>22,459</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) TurkStat, “Main Statistics, Foreign Trade.”

279
foreign trade increased even in 2009, despite the decrease in bilateral trade volume that year.

Table 7: Turkish-Chinese Bilateral Trade (Chinese Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Export</th>
<th>Import</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Surplus</th>
<th>Export/Import %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1,378</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,065</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2,598</td>
<td>1,532</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,821</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>3,413</td>
<td>2,230</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4,254</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>4,875</td>
<td>3,632</td>
<td>684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7,303</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>8,069</td>
<td>6,537</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10,476</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>11,768</td>
<td>9,183</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10,606</td>
<td>1,963</td>
<td>12,569</td>
<td>8,643</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8,334</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>10,095</td>
<td>6,573</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11,942</td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>15,111</td>
<td>8,773</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15,614</td>
<td>3,124</td>
<td>18,737</td>
<td>12,490</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>15,585</td>
<td>3,511</td>
<td>19,096</td>
<td>12,074</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17,747</td>
<td>4,486</td>
<td>22,233</td>
<td>13,261</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>19,306</td>
<td>3,705</td>
<td>23,011</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>18,607</td>
<td>2,943</td>
<td>21,551</td>
<td>15,664</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows that according to Chinese data, Turkish-Chinese bilateral trade was only slightly, with its share in overall China’s foreign trade. Thus, the $2.5 billion decrease was due to Turkey’s overall financial situation, but probably did not have much to do with Turkish-Chinese trade. This is important to note because 2009 was the year when the Urumqi incident occurred and a lot of people

---

in Turkey, including the Trade and Industry Minister,\textsuperscript{872} called for a boycott of Chinese goods. Again, we can see that these reactions were more or less symbolic and did not affect trade.

Table 8: Difference between Chinese and Turkish Data on Bilateral Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Turkish exports to China</th>
<th>Chinese exports to Turkey</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Deficit/Surplus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-37</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-38</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-18</td>
<td>-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td>-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-23</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, I would like to draw attention to the significant difference between official Turkish statistical data and Chinese statistical data. The two national statistical institutions have non-matching numbers, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. China’s data is only available until 2014.

There is consistent disagreement between their numbers, as shown in Table 8. The Chinese data’s difference from Turkish data in terms of percentage is compared in Table 8.

Chinese statistics suggest that Turkish exports to China are at least 6%, at most 51% more than what Turkish statistics say. Additionally, with some exceptions, China shows Turkish exports to be around 25-30% more than the data that Turkey have given in the last decade. Moreover, when we look at the Chinese exports to Turkey, Chinese data is consistently shown as less than what Turkish data shows. The difference is as much as 20% for some years and 30% for the rest. As the majority share of Turkish-Chinese bilateral trade is China’s exports to Turkey, the difference shows itself in trade volumes as well. According to China, the trade volume is around 20% lower than it is for Turkey. As a result, according to Chinese statistics the trade deficit is also lower than it is for Turkey. According to Table 8, the Chinese deficit is around 25% lower than Turkish data for a few years, and around 30% lower in 2014, and between 35-45% lower the rest of the time.

The difference between the two countries’ national statistical institution data is an intriguing phenomenon worth studying. It is not only an interesting issue to study but it is also a part of an important problem. As it will be discussed in the Chapter 6, trade asymmetry between the two is a major trouble they are having in their relations. That is why how to get those numbers does matter for them.

To get to the heart of the issue, we need to look into their methods, data analysis and detailed number systems. Analyzing the data in Table 8 and the trends given in the above paragraph, we can summarize that Chinese data are always in favor
of showing deficit as lower and in favor of showing more balanced bilateral trade. As it could be funny to think any manipulation in national statistics for showing a more or less balanced trade with a certain country we can only think of some methodological difference should be there. Nevertheless, a discrepancy of 30% is a lot talking about Turkish-Chinese trade. This trade deficit will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, as it is an important issue. Such inconsistency between two countries’ data is not helping them solve their related problems.

In fact Turkish-Chinese is not the only countries that cannot agree on the trade numbers. We can see similar trends in US-Chinese numbers and Turkish-German numbers. For example, the trade deficit of US bilateral trade with China is $342.6 billion according to the US, and $237.0 billion according to China. The difference is more than a hundred billion US dollars, which is 45% of what Chinese statistics show. When we look at Turkey’s imports to Germany, we can see similar results. For the year 2012, Turkish statistics showed $13.1 billion exports to Germany, while German statistics showed $15.5 billion imports from Turkey. The difference is $2.4 billion, or 18.3 points.

There are technical explanations for these differences in exports, imports, territories and exchange rates. There are also non-technical reasons: value differences of certain goods, due to mid-shipment goods transfers; under-invoicing for tariff, tax and regulations reasons; and intermediation of a third party.

---

party such as Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{876} For China’s third party issues, Hong Kong is an important factor for creating disparity between its numbers on foreign trade partners. For Turkey especially, these additional reasons are effective.\textsuperscript{877} The important factors that are valid for both of them are the numbers between imports and exports. In fact, both countries calculate their imports to the foreign country by F.O.B. (freight on board) prices, while they calculate their exports by C.I.F. (cost, insurance and freight) prices. If we consider that both countries do the same with their customs, we can better understand why Turkish exports to China are always shown as greater in Chinese data than they are in Turkish data, and vice versa.

It is possible to make a few more notes about Turkish-Chinese trade trends, when considering the data in Tables 3 and 4. From 2009 to 2014, the total volume almost doubled, from $14–$27 billion (according to Table 6) to $10–$23 billion (according to Table 7). The volumes from 2013, 2014, and 2015 were stuck around 28 billion according to Turkish data. Although there was a slight decrease in the bilateral trade volume in 2015 compared to 2014, the share of Chinese trade in Turkey’s overall foreign trade in 2015 increased from 6.9% to 7.8%. China became Turkey’s largest import source, exceeding Germany in 2013 and Russia in 2015.\textsuperscript{878}

Though China has become Turkey’s second trade partner as of 2015, it may take a few more years for China to become the country’s number one trade partner. The

\textsuperscript{876} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{878} TurkStat, “Main Statistics, Foreign Trade.”
reason is that, among the largest three trading countries, China is by far the least significant importer of Turkish goods while Germany is first. Russia is Turkey’s third trade partner and eleventh for Turkish exports, and China is Turkey’s eighteenth export destination. Analyzing Table 6, it is clear that Turkish export shares are struggling in China, with around 10% in overall trade. It can also clearly be seen that the trade deficit is growing exponentially with trade volume growth.

Table 9: Share of Turkish-Chinese Trade in Overall Turkish Foreign Trade Based on Turkish Statistics\textsuperscript{879}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Export</th>
<th>Import</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In view of Turkey’s foreign trade trends in the last decade, China will likely surpass Germany, as it has already surpassed Russia in 2015. Not to mention that the Russian trade has been damaged a lot during the first half of 2016 due to the\textsuperscript{879} Ibid.
fighter jet incident. When we look to statistical data for Germany and Russia, we cannot see a consistent increase in Germany and Russia’s shares in Turkey’s total foreign trade volume.\footnote{Ibid.} Table 9, however, clearly shows that trade with China increased considerably in the last fifteen years, and that it continues to grow. When comparing this with the 2005, 2010 and 2015 data Table 2 in order to see Turkey’s trade with Russia, Germany and China in 2015, it is possible to see how China’s trade volume has caught up with Russia and Germany in the last decade.

Table 10: Share of Turkish-Chinese Trade in Overall Chinese Foreign Trade

Based on Chinese Statistics\footnote{NBS of China, “Annual Data.”}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Export</th>
<th>Import</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nevertheless, from the previous experience that the goal of bilateral trade target set by Erdoğan and Wen in 2010 for 2015 as 50 billion was not reached and stayed almost half of it with 27.3 billion, it should be safe to assume that the target for 2020 would be also kind of mission impossible as it was set at 100 billion in the same meeting. However, given the consistently increasing trend of their trade, Turkish-Chinese trade will likely continue to increase.

For China, however, things are a little different than for Turkey. Table 10 shows that Turkey has a very small portion of China’s overall foreign trade. The volume’s share increased considerably overall in China’s foreign trade around a decade ago, but it has remained where it is with almost a 0.5 percent share for a long time. While China’s importance is growing, as we can see from Table 9, the importance of Turkey is relatively small for China, almost none, and this is reflected by its trade figures. This fact is also important to bear in mind for the following chapter, which discusses measures or reactions taken by the Turkish government and business circles.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is also imbalanced as the bilateral trade and this is also another point proving the asymmetry between the two countries. FDI numbers are pretty small when compared to total values. The total Chinese FDI inflow to Turkey was only $640 million, whereas Turkey’s total inflow, in billions, was $16.1, $13.3, $12.4, $12.2 and $16.5 for the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. China’s outflows, in billions, were $74.7, $87.8,

---

$107.8, $123.1 and $127.6 billions for the same years.\textsuperscript{884} On the other hand, the Turkish FDI outflow to China remained at the $91 million mark,\textsuperscript{885} while Turkey’s outflow was $4.8 billion in 2015 and $21.4 billion from 2011 to 2015.\textsuperscript{886}

It can be assumed that a new Free Trade Zone, exclusive to China, for trade and manufacture in Turkey, most likely in İzmir,\textsuperscript{887} will help to increase such investments. The following purchase in the second half of 2015 is quite remarkable in that regard: a Chinese consortium of China Merchants Holdings, an affiliate with the China Investment Corporation and COSCO Pacific, announced that they would buy a 64.5% share of the Fina Liman Company, which owns and operates a port (Kumport) in Istanbul, at a price of close to a billion US dollars.\textsuperscript{888} Such investments have obvious meanings, particularly for İzmir and Istanbul. İzmir is on the coast of the Aegean Sea. The location, therefore, is significant in that it is directly linked with Europe, which could help facilitate Chinese trade to Europe.

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{885} Atlı, “ICBC Brings Chinese Money to Turkey.”
\end{flushleft}
The two countries also agreed to open an industrial development zone for Turkey in Xinjiang. In 2011, Chinese and Turkish officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding about the Establishment of a Joint Workgroup for the Preparations of the Turkish Industrial Park in Xinjiang, which increased the possibility for more Turkish investments in China. Just like the port in Istanbul and trade zone in İzmir, this industrial base was also very significant for Turkish-Chinese relations. It also has a political meaning for the Turkish government in the sense that it is caring about Uyghurs. Nevertheless, existing problems about China’s sensitivity to the Uyghur problem still played a role in China’s reluctance to further accelerate the project. A Turkish trade zone in Xinjiang may allow Turkish access to the region more than China wanted. In fact it was just a few years after the infamous July incident of Xinjiang. Since then, there had not been much news about the development of the industrial park – to date it is waiting to be developed. The Turkey Erdaoqiao Trade Center, selling Turkish products in central Urumqi, opened in 2012 and Turkish products were widely welcomed by the Uyghurs considering their cultural affinity.

In 2014, a Turkish Commerce Center was opened in Xining, Qinghai as well. The center with 3 floors and totally over 2,000 square meters, is expected to serve the local people with diverse Turkish brands. Besides, the Asia Pacific Committee of the DTİK (World Turkish Business Council) is working on establishing a

889 Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği (TÜSİAD), “Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region - Turkish Industrial Park.”
890 “Çin Gezi Raporu [China Travel Report]” (Girişimci İşadamları Vakfı [Entrepreneur Businessmen Association], April 12, 2013).
Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China as well as a Turkish Logistics Center in Shanghai’s Waigaoqiao Free Trade Zone.\(^{892}\)

In order to realize the aforementioned bilateral trade targets and to increase the low of FDIs, a few business forums were organized by both governmental and non-governmental agencies. The most important of these in their contribution to the increase of FDIs in the last decade are: the Turkish-Chinese Economy Trade Cooperation Forum (2008 and 2009), the Turkish-Chinese Business Forum (2011 and 2012) organized by TÜÇSİAD, the Turkey China Trade and Investment Forum (2011) hosted by TUSKON,\(^{893}\) and the Turkish China Business Forum (2015) organized by the Turkish Ministry of Economy and DEİK.\(^{894}\) In addition to these, the TÜSİAD office and MÜSİAD representatives in China are also trying to reconnect two countries’ businesses.

It was visible that Chinese investors started to be more attracted by opportunities in the Turkish market especially after 2010.\(^{895}\) However, one Turkish NGO representative says, “Working as an NGO with China is not easy. With the bureaucracy from the two sides it is becoming very hard to attract FDI to Turkey. Recent events in Turkey affected the investors to some extent as well.”\(^{896}\)

---


\(^{895}\) Personal Observation, Turkey China Business Forum in Istanbul; Personal Observation, Turkey China Business Forum in Shanghai.

\(^{896}\) AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
There are other relatively less influential and smaller associations in Turkey, such as the Turkish Chinese Businessmen Friendship and Solidarity Association (TÜÇİAD), 897 the Turkish-Chinese Business Development and Friendship Association (TÜRK-ÇİN İŞ DER), 898 the Turkish Chinese Business Matching Center (TUCEM), 899 and the Guangdong Turkey Businessmen’s Association (GUTİAD). 900 The latter also has a representative office in Guangzhou. All of these institutions often use Silk Road discourse to describe their endeavors in building a business bridge between the two countries, and the influence from all of these institutions could be considered the dramatic increment of bilateral trade volume in the last decade.

Moreover, the Turkish Banks of Garanti Bankası and İş Bankası have set representative offices to China in 1999 and 2006. 901 The Bank of China also set a representative office to Istanbul in 2012. 902 More recently and importantly for 2015, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) has bought the majority of the Tekstil Bank, making it the first Chinese bank to operate in Turkey. Furthermore, the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan stated his will for Turkish banks to be operative in China and told Chinese officials during the

901 Atlı, “ICBC Brings Chinese Money to Turkey.”
opening ceremony of the ICBC’s Turkey branch. After the ICBC’s establishment, another Chinese bank, the Bank of China’s, officials met Turkey’s Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency’s president in order to talk about the bank’s further possibilities for operation in Turkey. It is expected that the Bank of China widens its operations and invests in Turkey.

Another important development for 2015 in the banking and finance sectors is Turkey’s decision to join the AIIB. Turkey was the eleventh largest stakeholder of the bank, among fifty-seven others, with a 2.66% stake, enjoying 2.52% of the voting share. Financial cooperation means that Turkey and China will use their own national currencies, namely the Turkish Lira and Chinese Yuan, instead of US dollars. This decision had been made during Wen’s 2010 visit to Turkey, and Erdoğan discussed the issue again with Xi Jinping in 2015. A $12 billion worth currency swap deal was signed in 2015 in addition to the $10 billion that was signed in 2010.

The Turkish Under Secretariat of the Treasury and the China Development Bank have also signed a deal to allow Chinese banks to fund large-scale projects in

---

903 Atlı, “ICBC Brings Chinese Money to Turkey.”
Turkey.\footnote{Mehmet Ali Berber, “Turkish-Chinese Trade to Grow Free from Exchange Rate Pressure,” \textit{Daily Sabah}, July 31, 2015, sec. Economy, http://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2015/07/31/turkish-chinese-trade-to-grow-free-from-exchange-rate-pressure.} China is apparently looking forward to being involved in ten railway projects and the third nuclear power plant that has been planned for Turkey.\footnote{Melih Altınoğlu, “Çin Demiryolu ve Nükleere Talip [China Interested in Railway and Nuclear],” \textit{Sabah}, July 31, 2015, sec. Columns, http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/melihaltinok/2015/07/31/cin-demiryolu-ve-nukleere-talip.} These agreements, along with the ICBC’s existence in Turkey, are expected to financially support many other projects such as the Canal Istanbul Project and a new airport in Istanbul, as well as general infrastructure and defense industry projects.\footnote{Hüsamettin Aslan, “Doğu Türkistan ve Çinli Banka [East Turkestan and Chinese Bank],” \textit{Milat}, July 3, 2015, sec. Columns, http://www.milatgazetesi.com/dogu-turkistan-ve-cincl-banka/70908#.Vceaw3gVflI.} There are also plans for strategic and technological projects, in addition to those that have already been mentioned, such as the earth satellite station and the nuclear power plant. Plans for the hydroelectric power plant, thermic power plant and transportation projects were also discussed during Wen’s 2010 visit to Turkey.\footnote{Ekrem, “Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinin 40 Yılı (1971-2011) [40 years of Turkey-China Relations (1971-2011)],” 29.} This cooperation on high-tech projects continues with China’s construction of the Ankara-Istanbul high-speed railway; the first Chinese project of this kind out of its country borders.\footnote{Amy Qin, “China Exports High-Speed Rail Technology to Turkey,” \textit{International New York Times Sinosphere Blog}, July 28, 2014, http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/28/china-exports-high-speed-rail-technology-to-turkey/.} Additionally, the Turkish Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) operator, Turkcell, and the Chinese tech giant, Huawei, have both agreed to work on 5G technologies together.\footnote{“Turkcell ve Huawei 5G’yı ve Pazarını Birlikte Araştıracak [Turkcell and Huawei Will Jointly Research 5G and Its Market],” \textit{Habertürk}, August 1, 2015, sec. Teknoloji, http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/teknoloji/haber/1109985-turkcell-ve-huawei-5gyi-ve-pazarini-birlikte-arastiracak?utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=tavsiye_et.}
Another dimension of the Turkish-Chinese cooperation on these issues is relevant to the New Silk Road or the One Belt, One Road initiatives. A number of issues are connected to the initiatives. For example, all of the aforementioned projects regarding transportation, energy transfer, trade routes, and other infrastructure cooperation on financing and investments, are key elements of the so-called Silk Road prospectus for Turkey. It is historically evident that countries on the critical intersections of these trade ways like Turkey would benefit from the revival of the route. 915 And Turkey attracts China’s special attention as a natural part of this new project. 916 “Revival of a new Silk Road between China and Turkey would be a great opportunity for the two to reconnect to each other in every aspects” says a senior Chinese journalist watching international relations. 917 She claims that it will also boost cultural relations as well as trade relations.

Those projects are going to be connected to other transitional projects, which will eventually connect Turkey to China. In that sense, projects are not only important for Turkish-Chinese trade and cooperation, but also significant for Turkey’s trade with Caucasian and Central Asian countries. 918 “Even existent Chinese and Turkish firms in Africa and Middle East can find ways to cooperate within the framework of these projects. It will bring a variety of opportunities to companies.

916 Zou Zhiqiang (邹志强), “丝绸之路经济带与中土经贸关系 [Silk Road Economic Belt and Sino-Turkish Economic and Trade Relations],” 回族研究 2, no. 94 (2014): 128.
917 AX, Interview (Senior Chinese Journalist).
doing business in the regions around Turkey,” says a businessman Öpçin, whose company has trade relations with these regions as well as China.\footnote{öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).}

A few projects that are important for Turkey as a part of the new Silk Road are: the “third Eurasian Continental Bridge” that is expected to link China from Yunnan to Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and the Netherlands with a 15,000 km railway; the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia since 2010; the RMB’s internalization with regards to a BRICS Bank or the AIIB; and any number of tourism, cultural and educational projects,\footnote{liu zuokui, “the role of central and eastern europe in the building of silk road economic belt” (china-ceec think tanks network, january 11, 2016); kadılar and leung, “possible turkish-chinese partnership on a new silk road renaissance by 2023,” 135–36.} as Turkey is either in it or could be easily linked to them.

Figure 1: Map of One Belt, One Road Plans\footnote{moritz rudolf, “one belt, one road: the silk road,” infographic (mercury institute for china studies, n.d.), https://www.merics.org/en/merics-analysis/infographicchina-mapping/china-mapping/.}
Whether under Silk Road initiatives or China’s direct trade relations with the EU, it is clear that China has two important goals: to reach the European market and any resources and markets on the way. When we talk about the European market, Turkey is in a very good position to the EU with its Customs Union agreement, due to its associate membership.\(^\text{922}\) That gives Turkey the status of a European country when it comes to trades. This status is important for China, as China has special tariffs and quotas for the EU market. Therefore, investing in Turkey could be a gateway for Chinese firms and this is what they are thinking when big scale investors come to Turkey from China.\(^\text{923}\)

Apparently, most of these projects are also related to other countries. Apart from the agreement on “infrastructure and technology consulting cooperation in the third country” signed in 2010 as part of the strategic partnership agreement,\(^\text{924}\) Erdoğan reinstated in his speech during the business forum in Beijing in 2015 that “we should give importance to expanding our cooperation with joint projects in third countries”.\(^\text{925}\) In fact, it is not only two countries’ leaders who share the vision of China and Turkey cooperating in terms of third country trade and

\(^{922}\) Lü Yanan (吕亚楠), “新丝绸之路背景下中土贸易的现状分析与建议 [An Analysis and Recommendation on the Situation of the China-Turkey Trade under the New Silk Road],” 47.

\(^{923}\) Salih Gültekin, Interview (Turkish Businessman), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Phone Conversation, March 15, 2016.

\(^{924}\) “Wen Jiabao Attends Signing Ceremony of Eight Cooperation Documents.”

\(^{925}\) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye ile Çin Milli Parayla Ticarette Geçiyor [Turkey and China are going to trade with national currencies], Speech (Beijing, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vap7iS-JE4M&feature=youtu.be&a.
investments, but there are also many in business circles who share the same view.926

Military and Security Cooperation

Although Turkey and China set up their military relations relatively early, relations remained at an insignificantly low-level for years. However, especially since 2010, their bilateral military relations have started to draw attention from all over the world. There have been surprising developments since then, as will soon be elaborated. It could be said that Turkey’s recent military relations with China is one of the most important aspects of its “strategic partnership” with it. Alkan confirms it in saying “Recent military activity with China became possible only with the establishment of a strategic partnership.”927

For now, it should be borne in mind while reading this section that, as a long-standing NATO member, Turkey’s actions are relevant to NATO and mainly the US, its traditional ally. Points relevant to this aspect of their military relations are also made in Chapter 3 and 4. Turkey’s increasing interest in fostering military cooperation with China could be read as a Turkish interest to create a national and independent military capability.928 This shifting interest from NATO also has meaning for Turkey’s NATO and US alignment. Therefore, after a certain level of agreement, military relations between Turkey and China became very controversial for the West.

927 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
928 Wayne McLean and James Dwyer, “Nuclear Deterrence, Missile Systems and the Security of Turkey in the ‘New’ Middle East,” Insight Turkey 17, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 150.
“There will be room for further improvement but we will face a lot of resistance on the military side, unless Turkish-NATO really breaks in the aftermath of the coup. Yet it still sounds unlikely at this moment,” says Charlie commenting on the extent of the partnership.\textsuperscript{929} A major Turkey-China trade figure also claims: “When military and other key cooperation projects are on the table I believe there will be a great resistance in Turkey,” pointing to the NATO axis.\textsuperscript{930} In addition, Alperen believes that it is theoretically hard for Turkey and China to cooperate in military aspect, as “they do not have a common threat”. He adds: “Instead, they have conflicting areas, and Turkey is kind of perceived as a source of security threat to China.”\textsuperscript{931}

Thus, this section will be helpful in understanding how Turkey’s military relations have evolved over time. Now, we will look at each significant event on military relations.

Turkey and China exchanged military attachés as early as 1973 and 1977 respectively.\textsuperscript{932} Contact between high-ranking members of the Turkish and Chinese militaries were also initiated in 1983 with the Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff (who would be Chief four years later), General Necip Torumtay’s visit to China. Top People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officers, Yang Dezhi and Zhang Wannian visited Turkey in 1985 and 1995 respectively, and their Turkish counterparts Necdet Üruğ and Doğan Güreş visited China in 1986 and 1993 respectively.

\textsuperscript{929} Chau, Interview (Chinese Journalist).
\textsuperscript{930} AH, Interview (Major Turkish Businessman).
\textsuperscript{931} Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\textsuperscript{932} Ersoy, “An Analysis of Turkish-Chinese (Military) Relations,” 92.
Table 11: Reciprocal High Level Military Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of the General Staff (Chief-to-be) General Necip Torumtay</td>
<td>Chief of General Staff Yang Dezhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Chief of the General Staff Necdet Ürüş</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Chief of the General Staff Doğan Güreş</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Chief of the General Staff Zhang Wannian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Chief of the General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of General Staff Qian Shugen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chief of General Staff Liang Guanglie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Land Forces Commander, (Chief of General Staff-to-be) İlker Başbuğ</td>
<td>Chief of General Staff Zhang Li</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of the General Staff Aslan Güner</td>
<td>Chief of General Staff Chen Bingde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Gendarmerie Commander (Chief of General Staff-to-be) Necdet Özel</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of the General Staff Ma Xiaotian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These visits were the most important in military relations between Turkey and China in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{933} Having said that, just like other government officials’ visits at the time, these visits were far from having any immediate impact. However, the early exchange of the military attaches can also be understood as the two sides having long been watching each other.

Since 2000, important visits from Turkey to China were as follows: Chief of the General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu in 2001; Land Forces Commander, Chief of General Staff-to-be in the following year İlker Başbuğ in 2007; Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff Aslan Güner in 2010; and Gendarmerie Commander,

\textsuperscript{933} Ibid., 97.
Chief of General Staff-to-be in the same year, Necdet Özel in 2011. Significant visitors from China to Turkey include Deputy Chief of General Staff Qian Shugen in 2001, Chief of General Staff Liang Guanglie in 2005, Deputy President of the Chinese Central Military Commission Xu Caihou in 2005, Deputy Chief Zhang Li in 2007, Vice President of the Chinese Military Commission Guo Boxiong in 2009, Chief of Chinese General Staff Chen Bingde in 2010, and Deputy Chief of the Chinese General Staff Ma Xiaotian in 2011. During those visits it could be noted that officials used a particular rhetoric that favored the development of military exchanges and friendship.

Naval visits started to take place in the bilateral relations only in the last 15 years of the relations. The first such visits were carried out by three warships; from Turkey Turgutreis to Shanghai in 2000, and from China Taicang to Muğla and Çanakkale and Qingdao to Muğla in 2002. All of these were recreational, unofficial visits. Turkey sent its Gemlik frigate to Shanghai and Hong Kong in 2011 in order to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations.

More interestingly, two naval officers made two reciprocal visits in May 2015. The Turkish Gediz frigate visited Hong Kong and Qingdao on a commemoration

936 Ersoy, “An Analysis of Turkish-Chinese (Military) Relations,” 98.
941 Ersoy, “An Analysis of Turkish-Chinese (Military) Relations,” 103.
mission, following the same ports of the sunken Ertuğrul Frigate’s voyage to Japan 125 years ago. From the Chinese side, the 19th naval escort taskforce of the Chinese Navy, consisting of Weifang, Linyi and Weishanhu warships, arrived in Istanbul for a friendly mission and official visits to the Turkish Navy.

There are additionally agreements made for military training and cooperation between the two countries, which were signed in 1999 and 2003 as a consequence of developing military contacts since the mid-1990s. Although most of these programs were under discretion, there were reports that Turkish military staff trained in China in 1998, and two Chinese personnel joined a Turkish-conducted military education in the 2004–2005 academic year.

Nevertheless, for years most of these agreements remained only symbolic, as there had been no significant record of military exchange until 2009. In 2009, during an official visit, the two countries’ military officials agreed to upgrade the level of military cooperation. As a result, Chinese jets were invited to do their first joint military exercise with a NATO country (Turkey) in 2010. In the absence of traditional allies and consistent attendees, the US and Israel, Turkey’s invitation to China for the annual “Anatolian Eagle” military training marked a new era for their military relations. Just a few weeks later, the land forces of the

946 Ersoy, “An Analysis of Turkish-Chinese (Military) Relations,” 95, 100.
People’s Liberation Army (PLA) carried out a military drill with Turkey in Eğirdir, a mountainous area of Turkey, focusing on counterterrorism missions, marking China’s first military drill in a NATO country.

After an agreement on defense industry cooperation in the mid-1990s, Turkey started to produce Chinese WS-1 multi launch rocket systems and TR-3000 rockets in 1997. Following this joint production, China agreed to manufacture the B611 short-range ballistic missile for Turkey in 1999. YJ-63, YJ-83, YJ-82, CM 802AKG, C-705, C602 anti ship cruise missiles and WJ-600 unmanned combat aerial vehicles were other military transactions that were made to Turkey from China. It was also reported that China helped Turkey to produce indigenous defense equipment, like GPS-guided glide bombs.

Leaving all symbolic meaning aside, the volume of the transaction was nothing compared to Turkey’s overall arms imports. Chinese transactions were about $43 million, only making 0.2% of Turkey’s total arms transfers in the last twenty years (1995–2014). Taking the two key three-year periods from when Chinese goods were imported to Turkey, and compare it to overall imports for Turkey in the same time period, we would discover that its share was 0.3% for the years

---

950 Li and Shah, “The Dynamics of Sino Turkish Relations in the New Century Viewed from a Diplomatic Perspective,” 24.
951 Zambelis, “Sino-Turkish Strategic Partnership.”
953 Ibid.
955 Ibid.
1998–2000 and 1% for the years 2005–2007.\textsuperscript{956} In any case, Chinese military imports remained a minor figure in Turkey’s overall military purchases.

Nonetheless, Turkey’s endeavors in building an independent military capability make its leaders consider making bigger deals with China. These endeavors have more than symbolic meanings. In September 2013, after six years of issuing the request for information (RIF) on the Turkish Long Range Air and Missile Defense System (T-LORAMIDS) project, the Under Secretariat for Defense Industries (SSM) announced that the Chinese Precision Machinery Import-Export Corporation (CPMIEC) had been selected with its $3.4 billion offer.\textsuperscript{957}

As early as in 2008, Turkey had been interested in Russian missile systems.\textsuperscript{958} In fact, when bidders first announced this in 2011, NATO had already warned Turkey that if a Chinese or Russian purchase were to be made, then the Turkish system would have to operate outside of the NATO system.\textsuperscript{959} As Turkey refused to exclude Chinese and Russian firms, it could be said that Turkey had been in search of an independent military capability for long time, despite NATO pressure.\textsuperscript{960} However, when finally Turkey announced its eligible bidders in 2011, apart from Chinese firm above, Russia’s Rosoboronexport (S-300 system), the United States’ Patriot PAC-3, and the Italian-French Eurosam (SAMP/T Aster 30)

\textsuperscript{956} “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.”
\textsuperscript{958} Kemal, “Turkey, Russia Begin to Overcome Military Distrust.”
were among the bids for the project.\textsuperscript{961} While China joined the bid with $3.4 billion, the Italian-French offer was $1 billion more, the American was $1.2 billion more and the Russian was $4 billion more than the Chinese offer, which was an important factor in Turkey’s eventual choice according to Erdoğan.\textsuperscript{962}

After Turkey’s selection of the Chinese firm in September 2013, NATO and the US reacted to the decision as had been anticipated.\textsuperscript{963} The deal was controversial for them for several reasons: first, the Chinese company had been under US sanctions because of its business with Iran, North Korea and Syria; second, the deal may generate NATO intelligence vulnerability as the Chinese would have the opportunity to access Turkish operators, which are a part of NATO;\textsuperscript{964} third, the interoperability of systems that Turkey uses within NATO. Therefore, Turkey is threatened with not receiving NATO signals to the system. Moreover, US firms also indicated that they would stop working with relevant Turkish companies.\textsuperscript{965}

Under US-NATO pressure, Turkey had to postpone its finalization of the agreement because of its concerns about interoperability with NATO’s radar shield, which is deployed in Turkey.\textsuperscript{966} As a result, the bid has been reopened five

\textsuperscript{962} “Erdoğan Says Turkey Open to Other Missile Bids Only If China Backs out,” Today’s Zaman, October 25, 2013, http://www.todayszaman.com/national_erdogan-says-turkey-open-to-other-missile-bids-only-if-china-backs-out_329712.html.
\textsuperscript{964} Meick, “China’s Potential Air Defense System Sale to Turkey and Implications for the United States,” 3–4.
\textsuperscript{965} Ibid., 4.
times in January, April, June, August, and December of 2014. Although the re-openings were never announced, there had been rumors in early 2015 that Turkey was reconsidering its decision and was now close to the Italian-French Eurosam. Immediately after these rumors, something surprising happened: a representative of CPMIEC told Chinese state TV that the deal had been confirmed. Immediately after this, an executive of the company clarified to the Global Times that the deal was yet to be finalized. Meanwhile, in early 2015 the Turkish Minister of Defense claimed that the system would be integrated into the national system, and not to the NATO system. In July 2015, Turkey declared that there would be no change in the agreement, as the other parties did not satisfy Turkey’s expectations. Yet during the 2015 G20 summit, an official source claimed that Turkey would drop the deal due to dissatisfaction from the Chinese company on technology share. The source said that the whole project had been cancelled, thus, no other company would be selected.

971 Özer, “İddialara Cevap: Türkiye Nato’dan Çıkıyor Mu? [Repsonse to the Claims: Is Turkey Leaving NATO?].”
Turkey initially welcomed China’s offer for two reasons. First, it was the cheapest offer. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it came with a technology transfer, which was part of Turkey’s intention to build its indigenous capability. Despite a lot of problems remaining – such as even if it were to be integrated into the national system, how would Turkey continue to use the NATO system alongside it – the deal tried to be enforced. This was discussed during Erdoğan’s late July 2015 visit to China, but was cancelled only a few months later. Turkey’s missile defense system had been a controversial topic for some time. An interviewee claims, “It is the military aspect that would really make a difference in the relationship. If that missile deal were concluded, it would have boosted Turkey-China relations to the top level for maybe 20 years.”

Nevertheless, apart from Turkey’s search for an independent capability, it was also significant to make clear that Chinese military capabilities were good enough for a NATO country. Even if it was not actualized, the deal promoted Chinese systems to the rest of the world. Back in 2013, the first reactions to the announcement showed that, regardless of the final result, this was a victory for China in its major deal with a NATO country. For the Chinese, it also showed that Turkey would seek benefits with China even if it meant exchanging or upsetting its traditional allies. As mentioned before, some Chinese observers

975 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
977 Sun and Li, “Turkey-China Missile Deal Shows Divergences between Ankara and NATO.”
believe that NATO membership is the attractive part of Turkey for China. However, we could also argue that Turkey is using the Chinese in order to get what it wants from American or European bidders. In other words, Turkey is trying to convince its allies to share technology or it will seek knowledge from elsewhere. One thing is certain: Turkey’s military is trying to become more independent.

Turkey’s recent war against the PKK and ISIS, and its “realignment” with the US and NATO might change the situation. What could make Turkish-Chinese transactions more than symbolic ones would be Turkey’s choice of the Chinese company Shenyang Aircraft Corporation for its F-X fighter jet project; the Shenyang Aircraft Corporation has already responded to Turkey’s request for information (RIF) from the Under Secretariat for Defense Industries (SSM).

Meanwhile, Turkey asked a big favor of the PLA, presumably without purpose. After making the purchase of the Varyag, the old and dysfunctional Ukraine-made aircraft carrier, and promising to convert it into a floating casino in Macao, China convinced Turkey to allow it to pass through the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus and Dardanelles) in 2001. Nevertheless, skeptics were right in claiming that China may use it for military purposes. China modernized the ship, and Varyag became the Chinese Navy’s first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, in 2011. China now says that the Varyag is being used for “scientific research, experiment and training”.

---

978 Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
979 “Chinese Shenyang Responds to Turkish RFI for F-X Fighter Contest.”
At the organizational level, Turkey and China were on opposing sides during the Cold War, given Turkey’s NATO membership. Now, Turkey is a dialogue partner of the SCO. The SCO has no Warsaw Pact, but it still brings with it a dimension of security. As has been previously discussed, the latest enlargement of the organization might evolve its nature. Turkey, however, has little contact with China in international security organizations. However, Turkey’s potential membership to the SCO might make Turkey more active in Central Asia in terms of its security cooperation with China.

In fact, the trend of Turkish-Chinese relations is changing into a more cooperative one in the areas of security, separatism and terrorism. We should not forget Turkey and China’s enhanced partnership after they signed the Agreement to Cooperate against Cross Border Crimes. In 2015, Turkey decided to go to war against ISIS, and questions were asked from China whether or not Turkey and China would be partners in countering terrorism. There was an expectation that China would fight against extremist Uyghur militants who planned to use Turkey as a passage for joining the war in Syria.

There have been reports of Uyghurs using fake Turkish passports to flee from China and join ISIS or ISIS-like groups, as it will be detailed in Chapter 6. Turkey and China have also shown examples of collaboration on the issue as well. Although fake passport creators have been that Turkish authorities tolerate Uyghur entry with fake passports into Turkey, one 2013 case shows that

---

982 CCTV News, Turkey and China: Partners against Terror?
Turkey has expelled a Chinese citizen (a Hui ethnic) who was fighting in Syria and then came to Turkey. Moreover, in 2015 the General Staff of Turkey twice claimed that Chinese nationals had been caught while trying to illegally cross the Turkish-Syrian border. Seven nationals were detained in the first case and fifteen in the second. The original statement said that the seven detainees from the first case were Uyghurs.

Moreover, Turkish authorities also claimed that two ISIS member Chinese nationals were also detained while they were trying to travel to Turkey from Syria in 2015. Following this statement, the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s spokesperson stated that China was looking forward to working with Turkey on counterterrorism. As mentioned in chapter 5, two foreign ministries established joint study groups recently, which are regularly convening for meetings in Ankara and Beijing. It seems Turkey has been collaborating with China on security issues, and that it will continue to do so.

**Cultural, Educational and Touristic Cooperation**

---


Unlike other aspects of cooperation, a few major legacies have been made in cultural, educational and touristic cooperation between Turkey and China in the 20th century. Perhaps the Sinology Department of Ankara University and the Turkish program in Luoyang PLA University’s Foreign Language School were the only courses that consistently taught Turkish and Chinese citizens the language of the other country. Another important channel at the time for developing relations was the Turkish Department of China Radio International (CRI) and those who have got relevant education for the radio.\textsuperscript{989} In addition to these unique institutions, it can also be said that Turkish-Chinese cultural, educational and tourism relations have recently had a fresh start. In what follows, we will look at them one by one.

Cultural

The two countries have had great civilizations, and a long history of relations between each other, but they are far from having any enhanced cultural interaction. Recently, there have been some sister-city relations between Chinese and Turkish provinces, and districts have emerged to become bridges for cultural or people-to-people relations. Among these connections are Beijing-Ankara, Shanghai-Istanbul and Guangzhou-Istanbul. However, it would not be incorrect to say that they are mostly symbolic. Ankara and Shanghai became perhaps the only major examples of there being an active city-to-city example. In 2006, “Chinese Week” was

organized in Ankara to present Chinese culture and the arts to Ankara’s people, and in 2010, the Shanghai municipality hosted a delegate from the Ankara municipality and its artists to introduce Turkish culture and the arts to the Shanghai people.

Table 12: Sister Cities between Turkey and China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkish city</th>
<th>Chinese city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Izmir</td>
<td>Tianjin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trabzon</td>
<td>Rizhao, Shandong Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konya</td>
<td>Xi’an, Shaanxi Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Izmit</td>
<td>Zhangjiang, Jiangsu Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekirdağ</td>
<td>Shantou, Guangdong Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kütahya</td>
<td>Anqing, Anhui Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eskişehir</td>
<td>Changzhou, Jiangsu Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erzurum</td>
<td>Harbin, Heilongjiang Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmaris</td>
<td>Jinan, Shandong Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>Guangzhou, Guandong Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kırklareli</td>
<td>Suining, Sichuan Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pertek</td>
<td>Zhangzhou, Fujian Province</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2010 Shanghai Expo was an important turning point and catalyzer for intercultural relations in that it connected the people of the two countries.

---

through their cultural history, for example, the Silk Road. Since people of these two countries are very distant from each other, this kind of big event is very effective to introduce cultures. Usually after attending such events the majority of the people totally changed their perceptions about the other country.

During the Turkish Culture and Tourism Minister’s visit to Shanghai, he signed an agreement with his counterpart to declare 2012 as the “Year of China” in Turkey and 2013 as the “Year of Turkey” in China, in order to celebrate the forty-year anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2011. Turkish Culture Minister thought highly of the relations with China as the two countries had very old historic relations.

The two countries demonstrated their music, dance, drama, ballet, painting, and virtual arts scenes during their respective culture years. Under the theme of “Source of Silk Road: Charming China”, China organized eighty-seven groups and activities for the Chinese year in forty different locations of Turkey, including the major cities of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Antalya, Mersin, Samsun and Trabzon. China organized events that underscored the theme “Silk


994 Personal Observation, Ankara Culture Week in Shanghai, Host to the Turkish delegates for Shanghai Government Foreign Affairs Bureau, November 11, 2010; Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.


996 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.

997 Lirong, “Sino-Turkish Cultural Ties under the Framework of Silk Road Strategy,” 52.

Road”. 1,700 Chinese visitors came to Turkey for these organizations. In total, there were some 400 programs focused on “acrobatics, film, education, dancing, music, theater, exhibitions, youth exchanges, food, book publishing, media, religion, think tanks and animation” that were held in Turkey.\(^{999}\) Approximately 240,000 people from Turkey participated in the activities for China’s Culture Year in Turkey. Moreover, a Chinese film week and Chinese orchestral performances were organized.\(^{1000}\)

An interviewee who took part in those events claimed: “These are the events that have the most important meanings of the bilateral relations. Through these events not only did the people get to know each other, delegates from both countries also get to learn how to deal with each other. We certainly need more events like them”.\(^{1001}\) A Chinese actress also claimed that these events were very meaningful. “I think Turkey is alien to most of people in China. They know little about Turkish cultures, religions and people. Turkey needs to hold more of these events in China so that people would dare to develop their relations.”\(^{1002}\)

Furthermore, the China Scholarship Council has organized a ten-day long Higher Education Exhibition under this framework. Twenty-seven institutions, including Peking University, Tongji University, the Harbin Institute of Technology, the Beijing Institute of Technology, Central South University, the South China University of Technology, the Ocean University of China, and Northeastern

\(^{999}\) Lirong, “Sino-Turkish Cultural Ties under the Framework of Silk Road Strategy,” 52.

\(^{1000}\) “2012 Chinese Culture Year in Turkey Closes on a High Note.”

\(^{1001}\) Zemheri, Interview (Expo 2010 Turkish Pavillion Events and Staff Supervisor).

\(^{1002}\) AZ, Interview (Chinese Actress), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, November 22, 2010.
University took part in the exhibition. A Turkish-Chinese President Seminar organized the exhibition. Speeches on the topics about “student exchange, talent cultivation mechanism and higher education under globalization” were given by Presidents of the University Council of Shanghai’s Foreign Language University and Northeastern University, Presidents of Anhui Agricultural University and the Hubei University of Chinese Medicine from the Chinese side, and Presidents of Ankara University and METU, Vice Presidents of Başkent University and Erciyes University from the Turkish side.

The Turkish side performed and arranged thirty activities under the theme “Turkey is right here, 2013”. Turkish artists from the fields of theater, film, ballet, folk dancing, handicrafts, painting, traditional and classical music, cinema, literature, opera and so on visited and performed in some fifteen Chinese cities, including the major cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Xian, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Nanjing, and Chengdu, as well as some cities of Xinjiang.

The Sound of Anatolia Concerts, Presidential Symphony Orchestra Concerts, Turkish Film Festival, Ottoman Janissary Band Performances, Harem Concerts, Exhibition of Turkish Painting from the Collection of the Central Bank of Turkey and Exhibition of Anatolian Civilization are the major organizations held during the year. The Turkish Culture and Food Festival, held in Shanghai in the same year, also attracted a great deal of media attention. Furthermore the famous Fire of

---

1004 Ibid.
1006 Ibid.
1007 Ibid.
Anatolia dance group of Turkey performed in the 2013 Chinese New Year Gala on China Central Television (CCTV).\textsuperscript{1008}

Meanwhile, during the Year of Turkey in China, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and TÜÇSİAD managed to bring Mo Yan, Kong Qingdong, Tang Shizeng, Bai Yansong, Yang Rui and other famous people to Turkey under the banner of “100 Intellectuals from China to Turkey”. The trip increased Turkish knowledge of Chinese society since all of these intellectuals shared their views in China through the media and social media outlets.\textsuperscript{1009} A staff that was present at some of those trips claimed: “The trips were very fruitful, except for that sometimes we had to deal with the arrogance of some elites from the Turkish side. Chinese intellectuals looked like very happy and gave very nice feedbacks.”\textsuperscript{1010}

In accordance with these years of culture came a decision to start a religious dialogue, which was finalized in 2011 by a cooperation agreement between Turkey’s Religious Affairs Directorate and the Islamic Association of China. In accordance with the 2012 cultural year, a Chinese religious delegation including imams, artists, scholars visited Turkey and attended the “China-Turkey Islamic Cultural Pageant”. During the pageant, they exhibited Islamic photos, cultural relics, Muslims’ living supplies, Islamic calligraphy, Islamic scriptures and also held meetings for information exchanges and readings of the Koran.\textsuperscript{1011} In 2013,

\textsuperscript{1010} AT, Interview (Turkish Bilateral Event Staff), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, via Email, August 25, 2015.
\textsuperscript{1011} Lirong, “Sino-Turkish Cultural Ties under the Framework of Silk Road Strategy,” 55.
another China-Turkey Islamic Culture Exhibition was held in Turkey, which has changed Turkey’s perception of religion in China according to the Turkish Director of Religious Affairs.1012

According to some observers, these kinds of events are contributing to the propaganda of ethnic and religious policies of the Chinese government, thus they are beneficial for the bilateral relations of these two countries.1013 One Chinese Muslim religious figure that had participated such events claims: “The events are very crucial for Chinese Muslims, and we expect more liaison with Turkey through official channels.”1014

Turkey is also not shy to show its concern about Chinese Muslims. For instance, then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu kindly asked about the situation of Chinese Muslims during his trip in 2010.1015 In addition, Erdoğan conducted a short meeting with China’s Islamic religious representatives during his visit in 2015.

Moreover, in June 2015 Beijing hosted Turkey’s General Directorate of State Archives of the Turkish Republic’s Prime Ministry. The delegation not only visited the relevant institutions in China but also opened an exhibition there: the exhibition of Turkish-Chinese relations with documents. The exhibition included ninety archival documents, from the 17th century to the end of the 20th century,
including bilateral relations agreements and the first document after bilateral relations were established.\footnote{Belgelerle Türk-Çin İlişkileri Sergisi [Exhibition of Turkco-Chinese Relations with Documents],” Official, T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü [General Directorate of State Archives of the Prime Ministry of T. R.], (June 2015), http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/icerik/3124/belgelerle-turk-cin-iliskileri-sergisi/.

Çağdaş Üngör, “China Reaches Turkey? Radio Peking’s Turkish Language Broadcasts During the Cold War,” \textit{All Azimuth} 1, no. 2 (July 2012): 31.


In terms of cultural promotion, the relevant media channels were very crucial in increasing bilateral interest and sharing knowledge about the other country. The pioneer of these interactions is the aforementioned Chinese Radio International, which began a Turkish language radio broadcast in more than half a century.\footnote{Çağdaş Üngör, “China Reaches Turkey? Radio Peking’s Turkish Language Broadcasts During the Cold War,” \textit{All Azimuth} 1, no. 2 (July 2012): 31.}

Less than a decade ago, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) set up a Chinese language news website, along with twenty-nine other websites all of which were in other languages.\footnote{“TRT’nin 30 Dildeki Web Yayıını Başladi [TRT’s Web Broadcast in 30 Languages Started],” \textit{Zaman}, November 21, 2008, http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/tv-rehberi_trtnin-30-dildeki-web-yayini-basladi_762441.html.}


The Chinese web portal, china.com, was also translated into Turkish in 2014.

The popular Taiwanese singer Jay Chou’s 2000 debut album included a song named “Istanbul” (伊斯坦堡) and a music video (MV) shot with a heavily Turkish theme. Despite Jay Chou’s later popularity in China, the song was not as successful as another Taiwanese singer’s song “Blue Turkey” (藍色土耳其), which was released by Zhou Chuanxiong in a 2007 album of the same name. This song gained some popularity in China, and the MV was also shot in Turkey.

Recently in June 2016 Jay Chou released another album including a song named
“Turkish Ice Cream” (土耳其冰淇淋), with an MV in which Jay Chou and the NBA star Jeremy Lin are playing the lead role.

In addition, in the last few years there has been more Chinese TV shows and programs shooting in and around Turkey. “Falling in Love with Turkey” (爱上土耳其) an episodic documentary organized by TÜSİAD and broadcast on Shanghai TV in 2012 started the latest “shooting in Turkey trend” for Chinese TV companies. Moreover, China’s famous entertainment television stations, Dragon TV, and Hunan TV’s “Sisters over flowers” (花样姐姐) and “Divas hit the road” (花儿与少年) reality shows containing famous Chinese stars, shot three episodes of each show in Turkey and attracted a great deal of interest from Chinese people in 2015. In 2015, the Chinese movie “The Queens” (我是女王) included parts that were shot in Istanbul and Cappadocia.

A Chinese actor claimed that “Turkey has a great potential in terms of the entertainment industry since it is a mystical country for China. People would love its food and tourism spots.”1020 Another Chinese actress said that she “would be very happy to take part in a joint production as Turkey sounds very interesting and is still undiscovered by Chinese people.”1021 A Chinese director also said that he is looking for opportunities to produce a joint production with Turkey, because he believed that Turkey and China would be a good match to do romantic and action movies.1022

1020 Huang Hao, Interview (Chinese Actor), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, 2011.
1021 AZ, Interview (Chinese Actress).
1022 Pan Xia, Interview (Chinese Film Director), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, 2012.
In the meantime, following a few successful transfers of Turkish national team players like Burak Yılmaz and Ersan Gülüm to Chinese clubs, Chinese fans started to be more aware of Turkish football.\textsuperscript{1023} At the same time, with these profitable deals Turkish football clubs have showed an interest in China’s football industry. For example, Beşiktaş, one of the three biggest clubs in Turkey, has already declared that they are heading toward Chinese social media within a few years.\textsuperscript{1024}

\textit{Education}

For higher education, in addition to the Sinology Department in Ankara University, there are also four other Chinese-language programs in Turkish universities, namely Erciyes University, Okan University, Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University, and Istanbul University.\textsuperscript{1025} Fatih University, which used to have such programs, was shut down in 2016 after the failed coup. There are also two graduate programs of Asia Studies with a concentration on China in Boğaziçi University and the Middle East Technic University (METU). Moreover, Boğaziçi also has an Asian Studies Center (established 2012), the first of its kind in Turkey.\textsuperscript{1026} Gedik University followed suit by opening an Asian Studies Center in 2013.\textsuperscript{1027} In addition to the aforementioned universities, there are more than ten universities and fifteen secondary schools offering Chinese as a foreign language.


\textsuperscript{1026} Atlı, “Questioning Turkey’s China Trade,” 115; Atlı, “The Future of Turkey’s Relations with China,” 100.

\textsuperscript{1027} Ergenç, “Can Two Ends of Asia Meet?,” 306.
in Turkey. In 2014, a pilot high school of TÜBİTAK became the first of its kind in Turkey to set Chinese as its first foreign language. It is important to note here that Turkish universities start accepting Chinese college examination results for Chinese students.

A few of think tanks in Turkey have Asia Pacific sections such as the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), the Wise Men Strategic Research Center (BİLGESAM). They had employed relevant scholars and produced works with a specific focus on China until mid 2016. The government shut down USAK after the failed coup attempt. Besides, Institution of Social and Political Researches, a short-lived Ankara think tank, also employed Asia studies experts in 2015.

On China’s side, in addition to the PLA University until recently there had otherwise been only Beijing Foreign Studies University that had a Turkish language class. Before 2010s, Turkish Studies have suffered several problems and it was relatively weak in China. In the following years a few more institutions

opened programs of Turkish Studies in Chinese universities. Prof. H. K. Chang, a prominent Turkey watcher in China, claimed that he has kept telling Chinese universities how it is important to open programs of Turkish Studies for China and has been trying to convince them.\textsuperscript{1034} Finally Beijing University set up a Turkish Studies program under its history department and Shanghai University recently founded a Turkish Studies Center. Moreover Shanghai International Studies University and Xian International Studies University started a Turkish language program in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Istanbul Aydın University and South China Normal University also planned to jointly launch a Turkish and Chinese language program.\textsuperscript{1035} Xinjiang University is also preparing to establish a Turkish Studies Center in the near future.\textsuperscript{1036} At the same time, the University of Hong Kong’s associate institution, the School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE), has launched Turkish Language courses for the 2015 Autumn Semester.\textsuperscript{1037}

According to some official records, there were 1,400 Turkish students studying in China in 2014,\textsuperscript{1038} however according to some earlier estimates it might be more than two-three thousands\textsuperscript{1039} as not all the students are registering to the diplomatic missions. In any case, the figures of more than a thousand Turkish students to China in recent years are something new for Turkey. Most Turkish

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Personal Observation, Turquoise Turkish Culture and Food Festival in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{1034}
\item Guo, “Turkey: An Increasing Interest for Chinese Academia.”\textsuperscript{1036}
\item “Beginners’ Turkish,” University, \textit{HKU SPACE}, (2015), http://hkuspace.hku.hk/prog/beginners-turkish#programme-detail.\textsuperscript{1037}
\item “2014 Türk-Çin İlişkileri Böyle Geçti [2014 Turko-Chinese Relations Passed like This],”\textsuperscript{1038}
\item Atlı, “The Future of Turkey’s Relations with China,” 100.\textsuperscript{1039}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
students previously tended to choose the UK and the US for undergraduate, graduate and language studies programs. In the past, China had not been on the top of the list, but recent years have shown a visible increase. In 2014 after the UK (30,000), the US (25,000), Germany (10,000), France (4,000), Canada (3,000), Australia (3,500), and Russia (1,500), China was the eighth top destination for Turkish students, with around a thousand students. In total, there were 90,000 students from Turkey studying abroad in 2014, while China received almost 600,000 students from other countries. A great majority of the students who went to China from Turkey are studying Chinese language, and most of them are in China to learn some language so as to start their own business with China as soon as possible. In a sense China’s developing economy and increasing opportunities is the major force driving them to there. Those who are getting a degree (bachelors or masters or even PhD) there usually happen to choose Social Sciences or Humanities rather than Natural Sciences.

Meanwhile, China is the number one source country for international students in other countries, with an annual number of 600,000 students in 2014. The number of international students studying in Turkey was about 44,000 in 2013 and 54,000 in 2014 according to different datasets. In the past, the number of Chinese students coming to Turkey had been quite low. Although there is an
increase in Chinese student interest in Turkey, the total number of Chinese students studying in Turkey is recorded as 240 (2010–2011), 276 (2011–2012), and 346 (2012–2013), while the total number of international students in Turkey was approximately 26,000, 32,000 and 44,000 in the same academic years. The first few countries that top the list for Turkey are from Turkic countries and territories, with 3,000-4,000 students each from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Turkic Cyprus and so on. Additional data also shows that there are a total of 700 Chinese students recorded to have been studying in Turkey as of 2014. The latest number tops 1,088 for the 2014–2015 academic year, making China the thirteenth top country sending students to Turkey.

The China Scholarship Council has visited Turkey with other universities for their exhibition. Moreover, the council also gives scholarships to Turkish students who want to study in China. In recent years, the quotas for Turkish students in China are increasing: five research or masters degree students for the academic year 2013–2014; thirteen research, masters, or PhD degree students for the academic year 2014–2015; and seventeen research, masters, PhD degree, general academician programs or senior academic programs for the academic year 2015–2016.

1047 “2014 Türk-Çin İlişkileri Böyle Geçti [2014 Turko-Chinese Relations Passed like This].”
The applications and selections are conducted through the Turkish Ministry of Education.

The Turkish government also provides scholarships for foreign students for all levels of studies; however, no special quota has been arranged for a specific country. Students apply and are selected from a pool of candidates. Applications are made directly on the relevant website. As is has been impossible to find data for different nationalities, we can only guess that the number is at least the same as those Turkish scholarship recipients for China, as twenty Chinese students studying in Turkey under the scheme joined a meeting in 2014. Meanwhile, what is understood through Chinese forums and personal networks is that there are a number of Uyghur students from China applying and going to Turkey under the scholarship scheme, as well as some (Muslim) Hui minorities, as Turkey attracts them with its ethnic and religious setting. Ma, who has been studying in Turkey, claims that most of the students coming to study in Turkey are either Muslim minorities or exchange students from Turkish study programs in China. Despite all the existing Uyghur-related problems between Turkey and China, some Uyghurs can also make it to Turkey under this program. There are also some Uyghurs who have migrated to Turkey via studying in Turkey.

1055 Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
An increasing number of students have also developed educational dialog. Apart from institutional cooperation and dialog, students from Turkey and China have started to come together. In 2015, ten students from Beijing, Ankara and Istanbul gathered in a forum organized by the PRC Embassy, China Radio International and Ankara University in Ankara under the Silk Road theme. On a relevant note about educational cooperation, we should note that in 2015, during Erdoğan’s visit, the two sides agreed to set up a joint university. The Minister of Health, who accompanied Erdoğan on his tour, said that the university would be a Chinese Medicine University. In fact, increasing reciprocal academic and intellectual interest is also influential among these governmental figures. There is a growing tendency for studying Chinese-related graduate programs among Turkish bureaucrats and an increasing positive image of China can be found among them.

For the first time, a writer delegation from China visited Turkey in 2008 to exchange with its counterparts. Turkey joined the Beijing International Book Fair as its honorary guest in 2014. In fact, intellectual interest has recently come to grow from both sides. The total number of Confucius Institutions in Turkey grew to five after the opening of the first two Confucius Institutions in

---


1058 Ünver, “Iran, Turkey and China’s Middle Eastern Pivot.”


1060 “2014 Türk-Çin İlişkileri Böyle Geçti [2014 Turko-Chinese Relations Passed like This].”
Turkish universities, which in recent years have opened another institution in a university and two Confucius Classrooms in high schools. Turkey also has been willing to open the Yunus Emre Institute in Beijing, the Turkish version of a government-built culture and language center, for a considerable period of time.\textsuperscript{1061}

\textit{Tourism}

In 2009, Turkey and China made a joint visa commission to discuss possible ways for easing visa regulations. Turkey offered e-visa applications for Chinese citizens in 2013. In 2015, the Turkish FM stated that the two countries were working to abandon visas bilaterally.\textsuperscript{1062} However, there are some problems with this. For example, Turkey’s visa regulations were a bit more stringent than Chinese regulation, especially for working visas. Furthermore, due to the fact that many Uyghurs have been trying to flee China with fake Turkish passports in the last few years, the Chinese have become hesitant to deal with the cumbersome procedures of Turkish customs and passports.\textsuperscript{1063} Along with this, China also has made visa procedures harder for Turkish citizens as of early 2016.\textsuperscript{1064} It would likely affect the number of Turkish tourists and businessmen visiting China. Meanwhile, following several terrorist attacks in the central areas of Ankara and Istanbul, China has released a travel warning to its citizens in March 2016, to urge them to


\textsuperscript{1063} Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).

avoid travelling to Turkey. Although the ban was downgraded to the level of “being cautious” two months later, the new statement said that the decision should be revisited in November 2016.\textsuperscript{1065}

For the tourism industry, China agreed to send Turkey two million tourists in exchange for the freedom of the aircraft carrier Varyag to go through the Turkish Straits. As military aspects of the issue have already been mentioned, the other part will be analyzed only. China has two million tourists to Turkey annually,\textsuperscript{1066} let alone the two million tourists promised at the beginning of the century. In fact, annual figures for Chinese tourists number just two hundred thousand.\textsuperscript{1067} Considering Chinese outbound tourist numbers in 2014 hit a record of over 100 million, and Turkey was one of the top tourist destinations in the world, the numbers of Chinese tourists to Turkey sound more ironic. In fact, a Chinese businessman who has investments in Turkish tourism says: “Turkey has a great tourism potential for China, and it is even a virgin market.”\textsuperscript{1068} Abdülkadir Emin Önen, head of the Turkish-Chinese friendship group at the Turkish Parliament, pointed out that tourism could be one of the solutions to the Turkish-Chinese trade deficit.\textsuperscript{1069}

Obviously, the reasons for Chinese tourists not favoring Turkey are related to the country’s negative image for the Chinese. Those negative perceptions will be

\textsuperscript{1068}AY, Interview (Senior Chinese Businessman).
\textsuperscript{1069}Personal Observation, Turkey China Business Forum in Shanghai.
discussed in the next chapter. In addition to this, Chinese tourists do not consider Turkey safe,\(^{1070}\) especially during those sensitive times when there had been a great deal of discussion about the Uyghurs. As mentioned before in chapter 5, following the 2015 anti-China Ramadan protests in Turkey, almost 90% of the survey respondents in China said they would drop Turkey from their travel list.\(^{1071}\) It can be also anticipated that increasing safety concerns about Turkey is likely to affect their fears for a few years.

Despite relatively low initial numbers of Chinese tourists, there has been a 25–50% increase in the numbers of Chinese tourists to Turkey in recent years. In 2012, approximately 112,000 Chinese tourists visited Turkey. In 2013, this increased by 28,000, leaving a total of 140,000 Chinese tourists coming to Turkey. In 2014, this number hit 200,000, almost a 50% increase. For 2015, there were more than 310,000 Chinese tourists coming to Turkey.\(^{1072}\) Turkey had made it easier then before for a Chinese passport holder to visit Turkey with the introduction of its e-visa system.\(^{1073}\) If the aforementioned visa agreement had been put into effect, then a further increase would be expected.

Although tourist numbers were far from expected, there has been an increase in the number of flights between the two countries in recent years, together with a relative increase in tourist numbers until 2016 when Turkey’s tourism industry was affected by domestic instability as a whole. There are direct flights between

\(^{1070}\) Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\(^{1071}\) 郭鹏飞 (Guo Pengfei), “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM].”
\(^{1072}\) Ünal, “Chinese Envoy to Ankara Sees Improved Economic, Political Ties.”
\(^{1073}\) “60 Dolar Ödeyen Türkiye’ye Girebilecek [The One Who Pay 60 Dollars Will Be Able to Enter Turkey].”
the two countries six days a week from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong; to Istanbul operated by Turkish Airlines. Moreover, there had once been Hainan Airlines Urumqi-Istanbul direct flights, which were later abandoned by the company. Nevertheless, after Hainan Airlines cancelled, Chinese Southern Airlines have been flying directly from Urumqi to Istanbul three times a week from 2011. In 2015, Turkey’s Atlasjet Airlines also launched two direct flights per week to Urumqi, this time from Antalya, Turkey’s coastal city on the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

I have cast light on the features of Turkish-Chinese relations in since 2000 under the titles of political and strategic dialogue, party-to party dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, military and security cooperation and cultural and educational cooperation. The vital developments of this era were mostly given in Chapter 3, while parenthetical details were given in this chapter. Therefore, Turkey’s enhanced partnership commitment, strategic partnership agreement, SCO bid, space cooperation, increase in fruitful top-level reciprocal visits, skyrocketing trade volume, investment projects, financial opportunities, high-tech investments, tourism industry, military contacts and cooperation, military exercises, port visits, military purchases, security cooperation, cultural events including the Shanghai Expo and Culture Years of Turkey and China, religious dialogue, media attention, academic interest, academic projects, and current academic situation have all been highlighted in their relevant sections. As a result of mentioning so many aspects of their relations this chapter has mostly adopted

1074 “China Southern Launches Beijing-Urumqi-Istanbul Flight.”
1075 “Ürümçi-Antalya Uçuşları Başıyor [Urumqi-Antalya Flights Starting].”
the eclectic analytical approach. It has made use the realist and constructionist explanations in every aspect where they are relevant such as the realist explanations of balance of power (independent policy making) when we discussed military relations, or constructivist approaches when it was about the cultural relations.
**Chapter 6: Major Irritants for Relations**

Turkish-Chinese relations were not significant before the turn of the 21st century. However, in 2000 Turkey and China signed an “enhanced partnership” declaration and a “strategic partnership” agreement in 2010. The former prepared for normalization in their relations and the latter made it possible to go beyond traditional relations. Nevertheless, Turkish-Chinese relations are not completely free from problems or constraints. Some of these constraints have been more influential in the past but still remain critical to understanding bilateral relations. Some emerged on and after the year 2000, due to the increase in bilateral relations.

**Historical Burden and Current Perceptions**

According to the survey data in Table 13, Turkish people do not look very kindly on China. In a survey conducted on 20-40 countries, Turkey was the country with the least favorability towards China four times, second to last four times, and third to last one time. Moreover, unfavorable views of China were so high that they put Turkey into the top five of the league table for most years. The number of countries in the table indicates the number of countries in which the survey was conducted for each individual year.

In 2015, Turkey became the bottom second country to have a favorable view towards China, while it became top fifth country to have an unfavorable view towards China. Here, it should be explained that not having a favorable view does not necessarily mean having an unfavorable view. With that in mind, 18% held a favorable view about China for 2015, while 59% held an unfavorable view, meaning there are 23% who have neither of those views, in other words, who are neutral.
Table 13: Turkish Perceptions of China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable %</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable Standing (bottom)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of countries</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstention %</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable Standing (top)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable %</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Turkish Perceptions of Other Countries and Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>NATO</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Iran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at Turkish perceptions of other countries and organizations, we can see that people from Turkey tend not to greatly like other countries. In Table 14, we can clearly see that in 2014, the Turkish public did not have very favorable views of the US, NATO, and the EU either. For other years, we had more or less similar results for each country or organization. However, the fact that Turkish people dislike everyone equally does not mean that they will like China. That is why we should still focus on Turkey’s negative perceptions of China.

---


1078 Poushter, “The Turkish People Don’t Look Favorably upon the U.S., or Any Other Country, Really.”
Leaving the question of why Turkish people seem to dislike a number of countries and organizations, almost everyone, to psychologists and sociologists, I would like to focus instead on Turkish sentiments towards China. As we can see from the above table, Turkish people do not have good feelings about China. What actually make this table more meaningful for our study are Chinese perceptions of Turkey. According to a study carried out by the Chinese Global Times (环球时报) in 2012, 67.5% of respondents had an unfavorable view and 17.7% had a favorable view of Turkey. In fact, those who had an unfavorable view had more or less similar, if not better views of Japan according to a few other surveys. In a more recent survey by the Global Times in 2015, 64.4% of the some 11,000 respondents had an unfavorable view of Turkey and 71% believed that Turkey is not friendly towards China.

No matter what the particular reasons for this kind of reciprocal negative perceptions are, those perceptions is the biggest issue is to tackle for the two countries for a healthier relationship. This mutual respect has to have foundations; it cannot happen by chance. In fact, some of the reasons behind this picture are the two countries’ historical background and certain contemporary matters. Furthermore, the causes of this reciprocal perception are as important as its consequences. The consequence obviously, is the problematic relationship, while the reasons also generate unstable relations. For example, one major factor shaping Turkey’s perceptions about China is the Uyghur issue. The issue itself is

---

1080 Ibid., 231.
1081 郭鹏飞 (Guo Pengfei), “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM].”
a traditionally problematic area of bilateral relations between the countries. Further, with the negative perceptions it generates over time, the issue escalates and becomes another obstacle against the two societies uniting. As this issue is both important and unique to this thesis’ argument, it will be discussed separately in the next section. For now, noting that it is one of the most remarkable reasons for Turkish perceptions of China is enough. Here, other reasons for China’s image in Turkey will be elaborated.

The first reason is prejudice. This prejudice is sometimes rooted in ignorance, sometimes based on stereotypes. What is clear is that the two countries have little knowledge about each other.\(^{1082}\) It is easy to feel that the Turkish diplomats or Turkish artists who are engaged with China have prejudice against the Chinese.\(^{1083}\) Even among Turkish and Chinese intellectuals there is a lack of knowledge about each other.\(^{1084}\) Turkish intelligentsia and politicians are still far from simply being able to distinguish the Chinese from other East Asians. For example, in an unfortunate and politically incorrect interview the Nationalist Action Party leader Bahçeli asked whether the difference between the Chinese and the Koreans mattered, seeing as both have slanted eyes. He was referring to a

\(^{1082}\) Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman); Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar); Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).

\(^{1083}\) AD, Interview (Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, February 2011; Zemheri, Interview (Expo 2010 Turkish Pavillion Events and Staff Supervisor); Personal Observation, Turkey Pavillion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai; Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.

\(^{1084}\) Çolakoğlu, “Turkish Perceptions of China’s Rise,” 34; Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
nationalist group’s attack on South Korean people, confusing them for Chinese during an anti-China protest.\textsuperscript{1085}

In another case, a columnist in a Turkish newspaper called for Turkey “to read China properly” and gave the trade volume of almost a decade ago as today’s volume.\textsuperscript{1086} A journalist, who accompanied Erdoğan during his China visit in 2015, claimed that Bangkok was a headache for China in terms of the country’s unity with Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{1087} She might have confused Thailand for Taiwan, but even if she meant Taiwan, that was totally another case. One of the most remarkable examples of this kind came from a well-established professor of Economics and columnist’s comments about the SCO, who satirically criticized Erdoğan’s wish to join the group. He was critical of Erdoğan, saying that Erdoğan wanted us to join an organization, after only hearing its name thanks to Erdoğan’s statement.\textsuperscript{1088} It is also common to see a leading Turkish newspaper calling the Chinese Ambassador by his first name during an interview or one of the rare scholars on East Asia calling presidents of the PRC by their first names, confusing with their surnames.\textsuperscript{1089}

For the Chinese, we cannot claim that the situation is significantly different to Turkey. Many Chinese have no information or knowledge about Turkey. Some Chinese intellectuals admitted that, after visiting Turkey through the “100

\textsuperscript{1086} Oğuz, “Çin’i Iyi Okumalı [China Should Be Read Properly].”
\textsuperscript{1089} Ünal, “Chinese Envoy to Ankara Sees Improved Economic, Political Ties.”
intellectuals” project, they realized the perception in China about Turkey is very superficial. Similar statements have also been heard from Turkish intellectuals and bureaucrats after they visited China for the first time.

Lack of direct interaction is one of the reasons of these problems. It is believed that Turkey and China need to improve their mutual understanding and knowledge for the sake of the future of their relationship. One Turkish-speaking Chinese journalist claimed that there are only a few key people like journalists, bureaucrats, diplomats and academics who can speak the other country’s language fluently, which is a great setback for deepening the relations. What is not a secret is that just a few years ago Turkey’s China desks—if they existed—were suffering from a lack of Chinese-speaking staff in every ministry. China is not well understood in Turkey and this is a big obstacle to nurturing really good relations. I have personally witnessed how the lack of understanding of each other created crisis in so many cases even in very important ministerial level events, but then how they were solved by the people who had the skills of communication of the other side.

1090 Türk Çin Sanayici İş Adamları Derneği (TÜÇSİAD), Çin’den Türkiye’ye 100 Entellektüel [100 Intellectuals from China to Turkey], 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP8E90qYH5E.
1091 Shao Ning (邵宇), “土耳其馆高级运营主管认为——上海世博会：新丝绸之路的起点 [Turkish Pavillion Senior Supervisor Thinks ‘Shanghai Expo: Starting Point of the New Silk Road’].”
1092 Wang Yong (王勇), Umut Ergünsu (希望), and Luo Yang (罗洋), “‘一带一路’倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作 [China - Turkey Strategic Cooperation through ‘the Belt and Road ’ Initiative],” 西亚非洲, no. 6 (2015): 83.
1093 AO, Interview (Turkish Scholar and Paper Columnist).
1094 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
1095 Ibid.
1096 Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
1097 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
As mentioned earlier in chapter 4 and 5, bilateral perceptions have been changed dramatically when the key people of both sides visit each other, or at least somehow mutually engage with each other.\textsuperscript{1098} One senior police officer claims that despite all the problematic perceptions, knowing about each other improves the relations, as referring to his experience in working with Turkish counterparts in a UN peacekeeping mission.\textsuperscript{1099} “We can get along very well if we get to know each other better. What we need is to break the prejudice barrier”, he says.

This ignorance creates misperception. For example, perceptions about how the Chinese eat “unacceptable” food are rife in Turkey.\textsuperscript{1100} One can easily find reports on the Chinese eating dogs. Leaving aside the cultural settings of a society, having the perception that all of the Chinese are the same is simply very naïve when one considers that the Chinese population numbers almost a billion and a half. These kinds of perceptions could also be linked to Turkey’s association with the West. It could also be said that the Turkish public to some extent sees China with “orientalist” eyes. This exoticism creates interesting questions and answers in Turkish minds about the Chinese. For example, on August 13, 2015, when one types “Chinese” and hits the “space” button (çinliler ) in the Google (google.com.tr) search engine, four auto-fill options appear: “Chinese eating babies” (çinliler bebek yiyor), “Chinese [and] dog[s]” (çinliler köpek), “Chinese eat what” (çinliler ne yerler), and “Chinese wear what” (çinliler ne giyerler) in their respective order. Although results can change from time to time and

\textsuperscript{1098} Ibid.; Personal Observation, Ankara Culture Week in Shanghai.
\textsuperscript{1099} AV, Interview (Senior Chinese Police Officer), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, May 21, 2010.
\textsuperscript{1100} Çolakoğlu, “Turkish Perceptions of China’s Rise,” 36.
according to the location, still it is telling what Turkish-language users are searching for on China and it says a lot about what they think about China.

Another issue is the perception of the “made in China” label being connected with low quality. Many Turkish people ignore that many of the world’s leading brands have factories in China. In addition, both Turkish and Chinese citizens perceive the other country to be an uncivilized or undeveloped country.\(^\text{1101}\) The Chinese also have a common misperception in thinking pan-Turkism is a foreign policy for the Turkish state, or that many Turkish have such a vision.\(^\text{1102}\) On a related issue, even a Chinese scholar has made generalized comments about the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey being “terrorists”, while ironically drawing attention to Turkish-Chinese misperceptions in his article.\(^\text{1103}\) Here, we should note the level of ignorance rather than the content, as the issue will be dealt with separately.

In general it is striking that before 2010, with a few exceptions, the academia from both sides did not seriously studied the other side. We had to wait until the establishment of the “strategic partnership” to see such studies taking shape. Online database search in Turkish, Chinese or English confirms this. It is problematic because academics only started to learn about each other when both countries already had to deal with each other at a high level. Instead healthier relations could have been maintained if only they already have had enough studies about the other side.

\(^\text{1101}\) Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar); Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.


\(^\text{1103}\) Liu, “Perceptions and Misperceptions between Chinese and Turkish People - A Preliminary and Tentative Research,” 236–37.
The historical legacy of the effects of the Korean War has already been mentioned. Not only the Korean War but also the overall legacy of the Cold War, have contributed to the two countries holding inaccurate views of the other. For example, even today Turkish media usually exclusively view China through an anti-Communist lens.\(^{1104}\) Obviously, the most important misunderstanding throughout history and today has been based on the plight of the Uyghur people. Another important area for creating misperception is bilateral trade.

As a last note, there is also a lack of relevant mechanisms for tackling consequences. The lack of such a mechanism on the Uyghur question is an example of this and will be discussed in depth in the following section.\(^{1105}\) A similar problem on a state level is also relevant here: China and Turkey have very different views of the events going on in Syria. Turkey and China are both aware of the problems in the region but they do not show any will to solve these troubles together. Investing sincerely in the institutions that may help is not apparent in Turkish-Chinese relations.

“Distant” Relatives: The Uyghur Issue

The Uyghur issue constituted a very important dimension of Turkish-Chinese relations before the 21st century as was explained in Chapter 2. It was detailed that interactions between Turkey and China either directly or indirectly concerned the Uyghurs from the late 19th century until the Korean and Cold Wars. Even during the Cold War, Uyghur migrations took place from Xinjiang to Turkey, which

\(^{1104}\) Üngör, “Perceptions of China in the Turkish Korean War Narratives,” 416.

brought the main figures of “Uyghur independence” into Turkey. Moreover, the
dominance of the Uyghurs in Turkish-Chinese bilateral relations became
especially problematic after the end of the Cold War, with the dissolution of the
Soviet Union. At the time, there was a moment that showed Turkey expected
there to be an independent Uyghur state, just like other Turkic republics in Central
Asia. The issue remains important, even though it has evolved a great deal from
that time, and for diplomacy in the 2010s it may not be as crucial as before when
it was almost the only major issue between the two. Culturally speaking it still has
it is own place therefore it needs certain attention.

Turkey had long been the home for the Uyghur diaspora, and it had once even
been a central support base for the Uyghurs’ political activism. However, after it
realized its own capabilities in the late 1990s, Turkey adjusted its policy on the
Uyghurs so that it was in accordance with China’s position. As a consequence, the
center of Uyghur political activism moved to Germany and the US. Although
Turkey still hosts some Uyghur associations, it seems as though Turkey is giving
up in its fight for Uyghur human rights. Furthermore, Turkish claims about human
rights in China are motivated by kinship rather than on purely humanitarian
grounds.

The evolution of this change in policy began in the late 1990s. Due to this new
alignment from 1996 to 2000, though not kowtowed to China, Turkey
finally acknowledged the Chinese position on the issue, that is to say, that Turkey
would no longer support the “East Turkestan cause” but rather accept “Xinjiang

\[\text{Ekrem, “Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinde Doğu Türkistan [East Turkestan in Turkey-China}
\text{Relations].”}
\[\text{Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy,” 2–3.}\]
reality”. The aforementioned security cooperation agreement in 2000 marked a new era in bilateral relations and enhanced relations for a “strategic” partnership—a milestone for Turkish-Chinese relations. However, the Uyghur issue could become a headache for bilateral relations if Turkey revises its policy again in favor of Uyghur independence, or if it uses the issue as a diplomatic card. It is clear that Uyghur related issues easily become problem for the relations during crisis times. Nonetheless, it has currently only been a “potential” and not a “concrete” problem for the majority of the first decade and a half of the 21st century.

Taking into consideration the interests of the two countries, the issue has little impact for current governmental relations. A diplomat, who is influential in Turkey’s China policy, claims that the Turkish government has lost its trust in the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. He thinks that the Uyghur diaspora has often exaggerated the Xinjiang issue in order to get support from Turkey, but it has harmed the bilateral relations; the Turkish government therefore does not fall into the “ethnic trap” as easily as before. Therefore, we can safely argue that Turkey and China’s governments have moved beyond the limits of ethno-diplomacy. It may not seem the same as the societal and domestic politics from Turkey’s perspective, and that is the main reason why we are still seeing strong anti China protests in Turkey even in 2015, but that is part of the cultural aspect as mentioned in the beginning of the section.

---

1108 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
1109 Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).
1111 AB, Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat).
1112 Zihan Qin, “From Ethnicity to Realpolitik The Changing Turkish-Chinese Relations” (MA, University of Macau, 2013), 6.
In that sense, one should never forget that Uyghur nationalism has its base in Turkey and would hardly be diminished in the short and middle term due to the following reasons. First, nationalism has always played an important part in Turkish domestic politics. Therefore, ethnic relations with the Uyghurs, who speak a similar language and share historical kinship, always attract nationalists in discussions about China. Political parties and nationalist groups use this topic for their own causes. Second, Turkey’s Islamist groups deplore China’s restrictions for the Uyghurs. In recent years, the Uyghur issue has come into play in the Turkish public sphere with the Ramadan bans that were allegedly enforced by the Chinese government on the Uyghurs. Therefore, it became very easy to attract the attention of religious groups. Third, the existence of the Uyghur diaspora itself and China’s treatment of them is deplored by Turkish citizens. Although there are no certain statistics about the numbers of Uyghurs in the diaspora, according to the then vice prime minister of Turkey, there were three hundred thousand Uyghurs living in Turkey in 2009. Whenever the topic falls to the Uyghurs and Turkish-Chinese relations, there are enough opportunities for Turkish citizens to make their individual voices heard, for example, through social media campaigns. Many photos are spread of the Chinese allegedly torturing the Uyghurs photos. Consequently, protests are also an easy way of attracting many religious and/or nationalististic people in support of the Uyghur diaspora.

The aforementioned potential of the Uyghur problem was significant in showing itself during the new era of Turkish-Chinese relations. The first was the 2009

---

Urumqi riots and subsequent Turkish reactions. After these deadly events, protests were organized in Turkey, calls for boycotting Chinese products had been made, and, more importantly, the then PM Erdoğan famously likened the events to a kind of “genocide”. As I have mentioned before, there were initially ministers calling for a boycott of Chinese goods. Turkey became angry at what China was doing and China became angry in response.\(^{1115}\) It did not take long for an article to be published in the *Global Times* asking if Turkey would stop being an axis of evil.\(^{1116}\) Turkey’s “apologetic foreign ministry officials” sought to calm tensions,\(^{1117}\) and Turkey had already apologized to China before on a related issue, when Turkish nationalists burned a Chinese flag in 1997 during an anti-China protest in front of the PRC Consulate in Istanbul because of the events in Xinjiang.\(^{1118}\)

Another protest occurred during the Muslim’s holy month of Ramadan. There were reports about Chinese “slaughter” of Uyghurs who did not obey the fasting ban. A social media campaign and subsequent protests spread quickly\(^{1119}\) and leaders of Turkey’s nationalistic and conservative parties did not make any comments for more than a week after the protest started. Meanwhile, the Turkish Foreign Ministry shared its concerns over allegations in various reports, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry shared its own concerns over Turkey, asking Turkey to

\(^{1115}\) Liu, “Perceptions and Misperceptions between Chinese and Turkish People - A Preliminary and Tentative Research,” 237–38.

\(^{1116}\) Mo, “Turkey, Another Axis of Evil??”

\(^{1117}\) Israeli, “China’s Uyghur Problem,” 93.

\(^{1118}\) Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy,” 33.

\(^{1119}\) Söylemez, “Uygurlar ve ‘Çin Zulmü’ [Uyghurs and ‘China’s Slaughter’].”
prove the allegations. Chinese flags were burned once again during a protest near the Chinese Consulate in Istanbul. A survey conducted after the protests showed that 86% of the Chinese Internet users believed Turkey is substantially supporting the ETIM.

At the cusp of a crisis, President Erdoğan claimed that news reports about the “Chinese oppression of Uyghurs” had either been “exaggerated” or “fabricated”, and that they had the central aim of provocation just before his trip to China.

What made the situation especially embarrassing was that the media channels that had first reported this “news” were mostly pro-government. Less than a month later, Erdoğan went to China and told Xi Jinping that Turkey was against ETIM and supports China’s unity, failing to ask if there were any restrictions on the Uyghurs about fasting on Ramadan.

In the above cases, what is common is that even statesmen make remarks that are motivated by their ideologies but quickly remember that it is undiplomatic and not conducive to their bilateral goals. Therefore, diplomatic channels have again begun to open up and support the other side so as not to harm relations in the long term. It is even sometimes the case that diplomats who personally have sympathy towards the Uyghur cause would work for the rehabilitation of the relation during

---


1121 Guo Pengfei, “六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM],” 6.

those times. Over the last two decades, these channels have been successful, even during the aftermath of short-term crises.

The Chinese side has always wondered how real is the society’ support for the Uyghur cause in today’s Turkey and what is Turkish people’s stance over the issue. China’s Foreign Ministry is always suspicious and cautious over the issue despite the changes in the Turkish stance, according to a Chinese diplomat. On the one hand, sometimes Chinese suspicion even grows to the degree of paranoia of imagining every Turkish citizen as a militant fighting for the Uyghur cause, or asking Turkish students to work as informants in Uyghur groups—in Turkey or China. On the other hand, their suspicion has some grounds. For instance, not only are Turkish flag and posters of Turkish stars very popular in Xinjiang, but also Turkish passport are pretty attractive to Uyghurs living there. Asking for a Turkish passport or declaring the wish to possess one is not something that Uyghurs there are shy of. Nevertheless, it should not be exaggerated, as similarly Han Chinese would also say that they wish they had a foreign passport.

---

1123 AD, Interview (Turkish Diplomat).
1124 AP, Interview (Senior Chinese Security Officer); AQ, Interview (Chinese Security Officer); AR, Interview (Chinese Security Officer), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 30, 2012.
1125 AW, Interview (Chinese Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 20, 2010.
1126 Personal Observation, Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai.
1127 Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.
1128 Personal Observation, Xinjiang Field Trip, June 2012.
1129 Personal Observation, Xinjiang Restaurants, Nine years until 2015; Personal Observation, Xinjiang Field Trip.
1130 Personal Observation, Turkish Students Society in Shanghai.
For a long time, the Chinese linked Turkey with Uyghur “terrorism” and Uyghur separatism, especially the ETIM. The issue widened with the rise of ISIS in the Middle East. Recently, Chinese have started to draw attention to Uyghurs who have joined the civil war in Syria through Turkey. In fact, there have been reports in the Turkish media, claiming that a network in Istanbul has been providing Turkish passports to Uyghurs in order to flee from China with the specific purpose of joining Syrian War. Even more, according to the Chinese Embassy in Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Ministry has confirmed that Uyghur militants go to Syria through Turkey. More recent reports claim that there are approximately 2,000 to 2,500 Uyghur fighters under ETIM–allied with Al-Nusra front–and 500 to 1,000 of them are under ISIS, fighting in Northern Syria.

In May 2016 an extremist publishing house Beyaz Minare in Turkey has unveiled a book named “Stories of migration from Turkestan to the martyrdom – 1”, which tells the real life stories of the Uyghur jihadists who have been killed in

---

1133 “ISİD’e Türk Pasaportu [Turkish Passports to ISIS].”
Afghanistan and Syria. The book penned by “Turkestan Islam Association”, an organization that does not seem to officially exist. However, this name is used for Turkestan Islamic Party (another name for ETIM) that publishes the “East Turkestan Bulletin”, a news website founded in 2015.\footnote{Eastern Turkestan Bulletin, “Hakkımızda [About Us],” News Agency, Doğu Türkistan Bülteni [Eastern Turkestan Bulletin], (August 4, 2015), http://www.doguturkistanbulteni.com/hakkimizda/} Besides, in the cross party Democracy and Martyrs' Rally held on August 7, 2016, while top Turkish state figures were giving their speech, the blue flag of East Turkistan Islamic Republic (ETIR, 1933–1934), which is still the symbol of the Uyghur independence, was brandished along with other Turkic flags. It would likely increase Chinese distaste of Turkey’s mixed signals over the issue.\footnote{AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).}

Despite all of these developments, in the last few years, the reality of Turkish support to the mobilization of these people going into Syria is not clear. What we can predict is that the Turkish decision on fighting ISIS would likely ease Chinese tensions over the issue. With terrorist attacks in 2015 from both from ISIS and the PKK, Turkey has finally decided to join the anti-ISIS coalition. This change was welcomed in the West as well as in China. Immediately after the Turkish decision, Chinese state TV showed an interest in developing a possible Turkish-Chinese cooperation in the fight against terrorism.\footnote{CCTV News, Turkey and China: Partners against Terror?} In the end, the evolution and future developments of this issue may complicate Turkey’s relations with China, especially in terms of the Uyghurs, and may bring about new tensions. Recent signals from Turkey that it will change its Syria policy might be helpful in this regard.

1138 AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative).
1139 CCTV News, Turkey and China: Partners against Terror?}
It would be useful to mention China’s concerns about the PKK. The aforementioned security cooperation agreement, signed in 2000, envisions Turkey and China opposing ETIM and PKK-like terrorist groups. There are voices inside China asking Beijing use to the Kurdish card against Turkey’s support to Uyghurs. Furthermore, after 2015 anti-China protests, 66.4% Chinese netizens believed that China should support Kurds in Turkey as a response. In fact, not only China’s fast developing relations with Iraqi Kurdistan after its foundation as mentioned there, but also claims that China’s secret service was secretly supporting the PKK and Barzani-Talabani movements in Northern Iraq since 1980s until the American invasion of Iraq was worrying for Turkey. In fact, before the security cooperation agreement, in 1998 Chinese media were quoting the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan as the leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, without labeling it a “terrorist or separatist organization” or something along those lines. Some in Turkish Foreign Ministry also believed that Chinese has supported PKK with weaponry.

Yet the Chinese never officially adopted a policy of supporting Kurdish independence; that would contradict its own Uyghur issue. No financial or military support from China to the PKK, or its versions in Syria, Iraq or Iran, has

---

1140 郭鹏飞 (Guo Pengfei), “超六成网民对土耳其持负面印象 认为土为东突提供实质支持 [Over 60% Netizen Held Negative Impression of Turkey, Believe Turkey Substantially Supports ETIM].”
1143 AU, Interview (Turkish Diplomat), interview by Mehmet Söylemez, Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.
been proved. It is known that the PKK owns Chinese-made weaponry, yet it is hard to prove that China is actively supporting them merely by looking at where the weapons are made. The same can be said for ISIS-like groups. It is also known that the same groups posses Chinese arms yet believing that China is providing them is not quite realistic. What is remarkable is that in May 2015 a British citizen with Chinese origins joined the People’s Defense Units (YPG), an armed Kurdish group in Syria, to fight against ISIS, followed by a Chinese citizen joining in July of the same year. However, those seem to be individual cases motivated by ISIS’ inhumane violence. In any case, China’s support of armed Kurdish groups would violate the security cooperation agreement. Although China is also worried about ISIS, it seems hard for China to take any proactive action as far as supporting the Kurdish rebels in Syria. Thus, on this issue, China is being quite careful in its responses, either by distancing itself entirely or by taking action very secretly.

Looking to the Uyghur diaspora issue from the Chinese side, Chinese citizens should understand that the Uyghur diaspora do not automatically mean terrorists. Quite a significant number of the Uyghur diaspora would probably be happy to see an independent Uyghur state but only a tiny minority can be called terrorists. Uyghur militants fighting in Syria are coming all the way from China and Central Asia. Only a number of them are from the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey. Even

---


assuming all of them are from the Uyghur diaspora living in Turkey, that does not mean much when compared with the size of the diaspora.

Additionally, after the change in its policy towards the Uyghurs, Turkey not only officially stopped supporting Uyghur nationalism but also started to use “bridge” discourse about the Uyghurs, especially with regard to rising trade relations. First, the PM Ecevit mentioned the “friendship bridge” role that Xinjiang was playing among countries during the Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji’s 2002 visit to Turkey.\footnote{1147} Turkish Nationalist leader and vice PM Bahçeli shared a similar view on the issue during his visit to Urumqi and Beijing in the same year.\footnote{1148} More recently, President Abdullah Gül has stated that the Uyghurs and Xinjiang are the bridge that connects China to Turkey during his visit to the region and Beijing in 2009, just a week before the deadly Urumqi events.\footnote{1149} Therefore, we can see that trade interests are much more important than the Uyghurs’ problems for the Turkish government. In fact, the opening of the Industrial Park for Turkish business in Xinjiang is a good step for realizing the Xinjiang bridge between the two countries. Again, the initiation of direct flights from Urumqi to Istanbul is also very important in order to facilitate this link between the two countries. In terms of the new Silk Road projects, Xinjiang has the role of being a gateway for China to Central Asia and beyond, as the region literally lies in between Turkey and China. Hence, the use of such “bridge” discourse and the emergence of relevant projects fit well with the new Silk Road projects.

\footnote{1147} Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy,” 47.  
\footnote{1148} Ibid., 48.  
Overall, we can say that there has been a significant change regarding Turkey’s Uyghur policy in the last two decades that have enabled current relations. Nevertheless, sentiments about the Uyghurs have been deeply embedded in Turkish society and their deep and long-lasting effect is especially evident whenever there is tension in the region. Therefore, the two countries should face the situation head on in order to tackle the problem. Turkey should not escape from its Uyghur sentiments in front of China and should demand a dialogue from China on the topic. Likewise, China should understand the domestic infrastructure of Turkey on the issue and open the topic up for discussion.

China has responded after Turkey’s change of policy in the late 1990s. As mentioned in the political and party-to-party dialogue in previous chapter, starting from the early 21st century, China allowed and even encouraged Turkish statesmen to visit the region in order to witness the situation firsthand. Not only did ministers, premiers or presidents but also other political party leaders and delegations travelled to the region. Sometimes Kashgar; a southern and less developed and more Uyghur dominated Xinjiang city comparing to Urumqi; the most developed, provincial capital, also included into the itinerary as well as Urumqi. Therefore, there are some positive developments in enabling mutual trust on the issue. Are these developments, however, enough? Considering what could be done, the answer would be “not really”.

What is interesting at this point is that despite the importance of this topic in bilateral relations, there has been no mechanism to tackle the problems,

---

Misperceptions and mishandlings that are rooted in this issue,\footnote{Çolakoğlu, “Türkiye Çin İlişkilerinin Son On Yılı (2000-2010): Fırsatlar Ülkesi Çin’den Türkiye Pazarına Dönüşüm [Last Decade of the Turkey China Relations (2000-2010): Transformation from Country of Opportunities China to the Turkish Market’s Evolution],” 250.} and it was China that first brought the issue into the bilateral agenda.\footnote{Kılıç Buğra Kanat, “The Securitization of the Uyghur Question and Its Challenges,” \textit{Insight Turkey} 18, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 198–99.} Therefore, the European way of dealing with these kinds of issues – namely, by establishing relevant constructive dialogs –\footnote{Wai, “China’s Strategy towards the EU: A Strategic Partner of No Strategic Significance?,” 25–26.} might be a good example for Turkey to apply, in order to bring about cooperation and urge China to take action on the issue. At the strategic level, Turkey, with its independent and non-complex foreign policy-making process compared with the EU, has more space to further develop relations with China, while the EU seems to be restricted with its complexity. The EU should also set an example to Turkey: that a good, even strategic, relationship with China does not mean abandoning historic alliances or commitment to democratic values. EU-Chinese relations could thus be considered a model for Turkish-Chinese relations, with their similar features of “cooperation and conflict”. For instance, granting Turkey permission to set up a consulate in Urumqi\footnote{Altay Atlı, “What to Expect from Erdoğan’s China Visit,” \textit{Asia Times}, July 29, 2015, http://atimes.com/2015/07/what-to-expect-from-erdogans-visit-to-china/.} and developing other trust building mechanisms\footnote{Temiz, “Türkiye-Çin: İlişkilerde yeni dönem mı? [Turkey-China: A new era in the relations?]”} would be appropriate steps for improving Turkish ties with the region.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Turkey and China have recently come together with their mutual concerns about security issues, even though they are not directly related to Uyghur-rooted issues. Nevertheless, the lack of a mechanism that is
drawn attention to here is not such a mechanism. That particular one is a product of Syrian conflict, ISIS militant Uighurs and fake Turkish passports. These kinds of problems engender other troubles. For example, before China hosted the G20 in Hangzhou, Guangzhou police ordered hotels not to accept Turkish customers due to security concerns. The establishment of that mechanism in Ankara, which will be also coordinated from there, is helpful. Yet what is really needed is a mechanism that would care for Uyghur human rights. Less transparency on the issue will become understandable from the reasons given below, but at least informing the relevant parties of the existence of such an institution would be helpful in fostering hopes to solve long-term issues.

Having said that, the two countries should acknowledge the problem and handle it accordingly – transparent dialogue on the matter is likely to make the two to face their internal problems. For Turkey, the question of the Kurds and Armenians will come into play; for China, not only the Uyghurs but also its policies on minorities as a whole will be questioned. Turkey has to face its own human rights record and take the EU’s criteria as a guide for itself before it can speak out for the Uyghurs. In fact, whenever Turkey raises questions about China’s handling of the Uyghurs, criticisms from the Chinese and other international parties about Turkey’s own human rights record are levied against them. That is probably why concerns that have been raised by the two governments on these issues do not sound quite

---


sincere and that there are suspicions they are raising reciprocal concerns about the issue for bargaining chips against the other.\textsuperscript{1158} If it is the case that China will ask Turkey to readjust its relevant policies, then China will get what it wants and put Turkey on the back foot.

There have been some claims about Turkey’s exemplary attitude on the topic of Uyghur diaspora. These voices claim that the Turkish approach is helping the Uyghurs to cooperate with China. However, that seems to be wishful thinking if we only analyze Turkish-Chinese relations with regards to their related tensions.\textsuperscript{1159} For instance, Erdoğan himself signed the “strategic partnership” agreement just a year after his genocide claims, and declared his support for the Chinese fighting against terrorism (implying the Uyghurs) during his visit right after the anti-Chinese protests had happened in Turkey.

The following remarks are quite useful for understanding this paradox. When the WUC president Rebia Kadeer was asked about the Uyghurs, she defined Erdoğan’s 2012 visit to Xinjiang “as if sun had risen on the Uyghur people”. Yet whenever critics ask why she cannot go to Turkey, she says she “holds in (her breath) and cries”.\textsuperscript{1160} In a TV interview, Kadeer explained that Turkey’s embassy in Washington denied granting her a visa twice, once in 2006 and the second time in 2007. According to her, the embassy’s personnel told her that she was listed as a “persona non grata” in Turkey.\textsuperscript{1161} Immediately after this interview and in the

\textsuperscript{1158} Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy,” 51.
\textsuperscript{1159} Mackerras, “Xinjiang in China’s Foreign Relations,” 38.
\textsuperscript{1161} “Rabiya Kadir: Artık Çinlilerle Yaşayamayız [Rebia Kadeer: We Can No Longer Live Together with the Chinese],” \textit{News, NTV}, (July 8, 2009),
wake of the 2009 events, Erdoğan said that he was not aware of the fact and that Turkey would grant Kadeer a visa if she wished to reapply. Yet this was another statement made without foreseeing Chinese pressure. As a result, Kadeer did not gain access to Turkey and, in 2012, the deputy president of WUC, Seyit Tümtürk, said Kadeer had been refused once again that year.

Turkey cannot talk about the Uyghur issue with China, nor can it make any promise to improve conditions for the Uyghur people or give them more rights. The fact that some diaspora members still continue to flatter the Turkish government on the issue is surprising and most possibly due to two reasons: 1) Their ideological affinity to the current AKP government and background movement, and 2) Greater support from the Turkish government without disappointing the Turkish government with additional pressure. For example, their reaction to Erdoğan’s visit to China in 2012 was that he was “the savior of the Uyghurs”, and when the HDP visited China, the rhetoric became “collaborator of the suppresser China”. There is also a question mark over whose interests they are trying to protect; that is something the diaspora should consider, as it is beyond the topic of Turkish-Chinese relations no more discussion will be made.

http://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/rabiya-kadir-artik-cinlilerle-yasayamayiz,FBgY09XBLEiZYUWj8BTgLw.
1164 Kadir and Elveren, “Türkiye’ye Niye Gidemiyorsun Diye Sorduklarda, Boğazım Düğümleniyor, Ağlıyorum [Whenever They Ask Why I Cannot Go to Turkey, I Hold in and Cry].”
about it. No support for the Uyghur people’s right can now be heard from either party from Turkey when meeting with their Chinese counterparts, except when condemning terrorism.

When it comes to political parties, the most vocal party about the plight of the Uyghur people is the MHP. With its nationalist base, the MHP is not shy in criticizing China on the issue. For example, they claim that if they became the governing party in Turkey, then they would make Turkey the central base for the Uyghurs.\footnote{Kadir and Elveren, “Türkiye’ye Niye Gidemiyorsun Diye Sorduklara, Boğazım Düğümleniyor, Ağlıyorum [Whenever They Ask Why I Cannot Go to Turkey, I Hold in and Cry].”} However, we should not forget that the MHP leader was the first to visit Xinjiang as statesman back in 2002 and, at the time, could not do much for them let alone making Turkey their center. That means that if the MHP were ever to come into power they would act diplomatically, just as the AKP has been doing for years. We also see that, from time to time, the AKP has also been vocal about the Uyghurs, not surprising considering its similarly strong nationalistic and conservative support base. Nevertheless, when commentary is about state-to-state relations, Erdoğan does not refrain from opposing Uyghur violence and independence, even supporting Chinese claims that all the clashes in Xinjiang are due to terrorism. This approach has upset some Uyghur diaspora leaders.\footnote{"Uygurlardan Erdoğan’a Kinama: Bir Tek Türkiye Bize ‘Terörist’ Damgası Vurdu [Uyghurs Condemn Erdoğan: ‘Only Turkey Stigmatize Us As ’terrorists’"],” News, Diken, (August 4, 2015), http://www.diken.com.tr/uygurlardan-erdogana-kinama-bir-tek-turkiye-bize-terorist-damgasi-vurdu/.

Moreover, it has also made opposition parties, especially the MHP, critical of the AKP and Erdoğan.\footnote{Hasan Önal, “MHP’li Vural, Erdoğan’ın Çin’deki Sözleri Sert Bir Şekilde Eleştirdi [MHP’s Vural Harshly Criticized Erdoğan’s Words in China],” Bugün, August 1, 2015,} While the HDP remains mostly silent about the issue, the
CHP has a balanced approach. For example, the party pressures and criticizes the Turkish government about its policy on Uyghur refugees in Thailand, rather than directly targeting China as the source of the issue.\textsuperscript{1169}

One point should be clarified at this point: although all of these parties have their own views, which are mostly negative about China, the situation would not be an obstacle against fostering relations with China if the MHP were ever to come into power. The majority of the years that are being looked at here are dominated by the AKP and, in those years, Turkey and China have sought fast-developing relations. Yet in the pre-AKP years 2000–2002 when the MHP was in the coalition government, we can see that Turkish-Chinese relations were already beginning to be bolstered due to policy adjustments made between 1996 and 2000. Therefore, the Uyghur issue is managed in the government as being one of strategic and foreign policy, despite the contradictory views each party holds on the issue.

If there are any governmental negotiations between Turkey and China on helping the Uyghurs, they are taking place secretly. Nevertheless, looking at the worsening human rights records in Xinjiang and seeing China’s tightening grip on the Uyghurs’ freedom, we might say that those “secret meetings” are a failure if they were to exist.

One last topic that should be addressed here is the rising nationalism in both countries. The reason for this is that whenever nationalistic sentiments are raised, the two countries’ citizens remember only enmities from ancient history, the Korean War or the Uyghur issue. These kinds of negative perceptions are not constructive for Turkish-Chinese relations. In fact, the two countries were managed by authoritarian regimes during the most of the 2000–2015 period. Hence, exacerbating nationalism is sometimes a method that governments use in order to get the support of their people. The question is how much these nationalist sentiments are real and how much they are just a bargaining chip in larger discussions.

China, for instance, sometimes uses these sentiments against Japan or the USA. Turkish politicians usually use it during pre-election times as a means to consolidate votes. In Turkish-Chinese relations, we could say that nationalism is generally not a serious factor although following the events in Xinjiang Turkish nationalist approaches have come into play against China. Even so, their effects are relatively weak when compared with end of the 20th century, as the two have reached a consensus on the issue, at least on the governmental level. Therefore, it could be concluded that nationalism is a threat for the two countries peoples but not as much for their political relations.

**Trade Asymmetry and Competition**

Turning to the Turkish and Chinese economies, the first issue is obviously the unstoppable bilateral trade deficit. The trade deficit in the last decade has increased, however, due to the increase of the overall volume. Looking back at Table 6, it is clear that the deficit has increased. In the same table, the share of
Chinese imports to Turkey in annual bilateral volume changed to around 92% from 2004–2008 and around 88% since 2009, less than 90% in 2015. For a share of the deficit, we can conclude that the trend in the last five years has been positive when compared with the trend of the five-year period before it. Nevertheless, there are two other issues: The first is that if we compare five-year periods to each other then we will reach a better outcome, while if we take the last decade as a whole, that is, year by year, then no consistent systematic improvement to overcome the deficit problem can be seen. The second issue is the increase in overall bilateral volume. Turkey has to increase its export as much as possible, even more than China’s import increase, so that a relative balance can be reached in the long term.\textsuperscript{1170}

Nonetheless, Turkey’s reaction was to blame China rather than try to increase export value.\textsuperscript{1171} The root of the problem was not only embedded in the asymmetry of the bilateral relations but also embedded in the size and share of these countries’ global productions and exportations.\textsuperscript{1172} Conducting a simple comparison of the two countries’ exports, we find that approximately for every 1 US dollar of Turkish exports, there are 12.5 US dollars of Chinese exports being made every year. There are two significant points here: firstly, it is a problem for Turkey rather than China; secondly, it is rooted in the lack of qualified Turkish brands and products.\textsuperscript{1173} And Chinese consumers are not familiar with Turkish

\textsuperscript{1170} Atlı, “Questioning Turkey’s China Trade,” 111.
\textsuperscript{1173} Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
Therefore, Turkey should try to tackle the deficit as much as possible, but should also be realistic enough to see that the current situation likely will persist as the nature of trade relations with China in the short and middle term.

The answer as to what alternatives can be given for enhancing Turkish-Chinese relations lies in other economic cooperation areas, such as investment, tourism, construction and finance. China has agreed to recommend that its citizens visit Turkey, promised two million tourists in exchange for the Varyag warship. Turkey allowed the warship to pass the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus and Dardanelles) in 2001 under the promise that China would make the Varyag a floating casino and not a warship. There is great potential to increase the number of Chinese tourists as the number as been between 100,000-200,000 in the last few years, and overtook 310,000 in 2015. Other areas in which China and Turkey are trying to work are mass investment projects, such as the railway project, nuclear project and some additional construction projects. But recently, just like the tourism, the flow of investments has been badly affected by several...
unfortunate events in Turkey such as Syrian migration crisis, the terror attacks and the failed coup.\textsuperscript{1180}

The timing of China’s WTO accession (2001), coinciding right after the readjustment of Turkish-Chinese relations (1996-2000), skyrocketed Turkish-Chinese trade. However, increasing imports as volumes increased started to become a problem for Turkish producers soon afterwards.\textsuperscript{1181} This issue closely relates to the above discussion on the “China threat” and blame mongering. This market competition resulted in extra trade barriers such as anti-dumping taxes and occasional quotas for Chinese products.\textsuperscript{1182}

For instance, China was not happy to see the 2005 Turkish proposal at the WTO about textile quotas. In the early 2000s, there have been many Turkish business chambers making cautionary claims about Chinese goods coming into Turkey. As a result, the official stance was firm and protectionist with quotas and tough inspections on Chinese goods.\textsuperscript{1183} Turkey maintained this way of dealing with Chinese products even in 2015. For example, in 2015 a 50% extra tax was imposed for furniture imports from China.\textsuperscript{1184} Although the tax was not only

\textsuperscript{1180} AJ, Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative); Wang Yong (王勇), Umut Ergünsu (埃果), and Luo Yang (罗洋), “‘一带一路’倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作 [China - Turkey Strategic Cooperation through ‘the Belt and Road ’ Initiative],” 84.
\textsuperscript{1181} Yurdakul, “Türkiye-Çin Ekonomik ve Ticari İlişkileri [Turkish-Chinese Economic and Trade Relations],” 233.
\textsuperscript{1182} Jiang Mingxin (姜明新), “土耳其对华实施反倾销等贸易救济措施的特点及其成因 [The Features and Cause of Turkey’s Anti Dumping Trade Relief Pollicy towards China],” 西亚非洲, no. 6 (2009): 32–35; Shichor, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick: Non-Traditional Chinese Threats and Middle Eastern Instability,” 114.
\textsuperscript{1183} Atlı and Ünal, “Küreselleşme Sürecinde Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri [Turkey-China Relations in the Globalization Process],” 23.
aimed at Chinese exports, in reality, it only affects China. Turkey’s free trade agreements are also exempted from extra tax, and China is by far the largest exporter to Turkey. There are even cases suggesting some more marginal methods that Turkey has applied, such as refusing entry to Turkey for some Chinese businessmen, in spite of the existence of a bilateral visa deal.\footnote{Zan Tao (昝涛), “中土关系及土耳其对中国崛起的看法 [Sino-Turkish Relations and Turkey’s Perception About the Rise of China],” 阿拉伯世界研究 [Arab World Studies], no. 4 (July 2010): 62.}

It is obvious that these precautionary methods would make China uncomfortable. The attitude of the Turkish government against Chinese firms is uneven and unfair.\footnote{Shichor, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick: Non-Traditional Chinese Threats and Middle Eastern Instability,” 114.} As explained earlier, the restrictions on Chinese products are not helping solve the deficit problem, nor does it help solve the problem of market competition, since firms often find other ways, for example bringing in product parts and setting them up in Turkey instead of producing them in Turkey or buying the product directly from a Turkish manufacturer. As a result, these restrictions on Chinese trade only anger Turkish importers, of which the government should also take care, as well as Chinese trade partners. It could be said that the Turkish government is lacking strategy on how to deal with Chinese trade, which is partly rooted in lack of knowledge of the Chinese market.\footnote{Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).}

Given the fact that the commercial mindset of both nations is very different from each other, it becomes harder to implement a healthy policy.\footnote{AY, Interview (Senior Chinese Businessman); Personal Observation, Turkish businessmen’s business trips in China.} Different
mindsets and trust issues are also crucial barriers to investments, especially for the medium size businesses.1189

There are also a number of other problems in Turkey’s business with China. According to the Turkish Ministry of Economy, which is responsible for foreign trade, China’s structural problems constitute a part of the problem in bilateral trade. In fact, these issues such as exchange rate policy, copyright issues, and protectionism in some sectors are mostly those issues that relevant international organizations about China also often draw attention to. There are also some products, like tobacco, chicken feet and copper, that Turkey cannot export to China or that have some restrictions, which in turn create an unfair situation where just like China blames Turkey for textile.1190

Another problem is in visa procedures for Turkish and Chinese labor forces. Unlike some other countries, the Chinese are allowed to apply for working visa in Turkey. Nevertheless, there are additional requirements – that China should be willing to bring cheaper labor to those investments, and procedures can be quite long and bureaucratic. In 2010, the Minister of Labor and Social Security said that Turkey already was hosting some 20,000 Chinese workers, and that was the reasons why they could not approve of all the applications that were being made.1191 According to him, there are already too many Chinese workers in

1189 Gültekin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
Turkey and they only want to accept applications from those who have skills that are not available in Turkey. Most of these workers are in construction, the textile industry and mining. The Chinese labor share in Turkey’s foreign labor numbers was boosted from 5% in 2008 to 18% in 2009.\textsuperscript{1192} Although there are high quality or skilled Chinese workforce in Turkey as well, there are still many investments willing to work with the cheap Chinese workforce as well.

The main reason behind bilateral restrictions is rooted in trade competition in the domestic markets. Actually, the competition does not only constitute a problem in the domestic markets. Moreover, the third market competition of some sectors makes the existing problematic situation more complex. For example, the Turkish textile industry’s unease with China is also about the EU market as much as it is about the Turkish market.\textsuperscript{1193}

In that sense, third markets have the potential to become an arena for competition between the two. This situation started to emerge because Turkey has recently started to move into those markets. In regions like Middle East, Central Asia and Africa, Turkey has had a historic and growing influence and they are becoming areas of rivalry for China and Turkey.\textsuperscript{1194} There are even several cases reported that some companies used their local connections to prevent the other side from being successful in the third market.\textsuperscript{1195} Frequent calls for joint ventures and cooperation in the third markets can be understood as preventing further rivalry as well as cementing a win-win situation for both. For instance, according to a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1192} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1193} Yurdakul, “Türkiye-Çin Ekonomik ve Ticari İlişkileri [Turkey-China Economic and Trade Relations],” 233.
\item \textsuperscript{1194} Kaya, “Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners,” 9–10.
\item \textsuperscript{1195} Öpçin, Interview (Turkish Businessman).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Chinese diplomat, China is well aware of relative Turkish influence in Africa as well as the Middle East and Central Asia, and is looking for cooperation rather than rivalry with Turkey in these regions.1196

In addition, not only have leaders from both countries shared their vision on cooperation in third markets,1197 but also an agreement about “third market cooperation on construction” was made when the “strategic partnership” was declared.1198

The competition between the two in third markets is not limited to the points mentioned above. Turkey and China, along with a few other countries, have been seen as competitors regarding Caucasia, Central Asia and Africa’s energy potential.1199 Gas and other resources are increasingly becoming an area of competition, two developing countries, which need energy extremely looks these regions. In the last decade, there has been competition for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan’s gas deals.1200

There is also the possibility of cooperation between Turkey and China, due to the Silk Road projects. Political meanings or consequences about these and other strategic competitions will be discussed separately; therefore, no further explanation is included in this part. Yet it should be borne in mind that Turkey also attaches great importance to the Silk Road projects.

1198 “Wen Jiabao Attends Signing Ceremony of Eight Cooperation Documents.”
1200 Daly, “Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road.”
International Divergences

Turkish-Chinese relations have been analyzed by an increasing number of scholars. However, most of them have focused on three topics in recent history as being the source of problems between relations. Nevertheless, there are increasingly other stakeholders that should be discussed when talking about Turkey and China’s bilateral relations. One may even argue that the limitations they have been bringing to the relations undermined as a source of problem. In fact, some of the topics mentioned above also relate to other actors, such as: the Uyghur issue for Central Asia and even Russia and the Middle East; trade issues to third market regions like the EU, Africa, Central Asia and the Caucasus; and energy issues in the Caucasus and Central Asia. What is more is that Turkish-Chinese relations have started to become more important in terms of global politics than ever before. Therefore, it is not only these issues that relate to external figures but also Turkish-Chinese relations have overall become increasingly more relevant to other stakeholders. Furthermore, Turkey and China’s divergence on certain topics regarding international issues are also creating problems in their relations. These issues will be considered in what follows:

Third Parties

As Turkish-Chinese relations develop, their relationship becomes more and more relevant, sometimes controversial, to other countries and regions. The first that I will discuss here is the West. The US is unhappy about the developing Turkish-Chinese military relations. For example, after Turkey announced that it would purchase Chinese missiles, there was some visible tension in Turkish-US
relations. Due to this tension, Turkey’s F35 plan became uncertain. Turkey’s will to develop a multi-dimensional policy, and the decision to join the SCO also attracted US attention. At the same time, NATO was not happy to see Turkey aligning with the East, particularly China. Turkey’s sincerity in NATO has been increasingly questioned. This seems to become one of the most important issues in the near future to decide whether Turkey will go very serious and strategic in its relations with China as well as Russia or not.

Obviously, Turkey and the US alliance is an obstacle for Turkish-Chinese relations. While Turkey’s strategic steps towards China makes the US uneasy, at the same time, Turkey’s commitment to its ally has made Turkey less flexible on relations with China. It appears that Turkey is trying to find its limits with China without totally jeopardizing its US alliance. In order to do that, Ankara sometimes pushes the limits to see what happens with taking its Western alliances as an advantage. In the end, however, Turkey would not easily sacrifice its alliance with its US easily, which would make the Turkish-Chinese friendship limited.

Another figure here is the EU. The developing Turkish-Chinese relations and Turkey’s realignment with the East has not only made the EU question Turkey’s

\[1204 \text{ Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar); Ma, Interview (Chinese Young Scholar).}\]
motive but also made them concerned. The allegation of Turkey’s increasing authoritarian tendency is also troubling, which has recently attracted EU criticism. These allegations also relate to Turkey’s relations with other authoritarian countries such as China. Turkish will to keep its relations with EU will be as crucial as it is with NATO in deciding the future of its China relations.

Another dimension is Turkey’s regional politics. As the Middle East and Central Asia become more important in new Turkish foreign policy, developing Turkish-Chinese relations have started to become more relevant to these regions. Turkey’s existing cultural, ethnic and religious proximity to Central Asia makes China uncomfortable and convinces it to find ways to take its precautions against Turkish influence in the region.

Moreover, in the wake of Iran’s nuclear deal, relations between Iran and China are to be expected to further develop. What would make Turkish-Chinese relations relevant here, even problematic, is Turkey’s direct competition with Iran. As China already favors Iran over Turkey in Central Asia and the Middle East, Iran’s deepening relations with China will bolster Iranian influence in the region.

1207 Wang Yong (王勇), Umut Ergünsu (希望), and Luo Yang (罗洋), ““一带一路’倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作 [China - Turkey Strategic Cooperation through ‘the Belt and Road ’ Initiative],” 84.
especially with regards to the Silk Road project.\textsuperscript{1209} Compared to Iran’s proxy power over the Shia dominated countries, Turkey lacks proxy power in the Middle East where it is not the dominant Sunni power, which can make itself more valuable in the eyes of Chinese.\textsuperscript{1210}

Considering that Turkey has attached great importance to the Silk Road projects, it should expect to be challenged by Iran. Some commentators have concluded that Turkey has already lost against Iran in terms of China’s pivot to the region.\textsuperscript{1211} There are also views that Turley and Iran would not be in a position to force China to choose, and that China would make use both of them as much as possible.\textsuperscript{1212}

At the same time, some CA countries are skeptical of Turkey’s pursuit of SCO membership, as Turkey has been alleged as being a Trojan horse for NATO and the US.\textsuperscript{1213} Therefore, it is highly likely that some Central Asian countries might veto Turkey’s accession to the SCO, which in turn would affect Turkish-Chinese relations, as the vetoes would not be made without China’s knowledge.

\textit{Bilateral Differences}

Some topics are directly linked to relations between Turkey and China in terms of their global and regional politics. As many issues also relate to third parties, they often create problems, not necessarily because of the issue itself but because of Turkey and China’s different views on them. First of all, Turkey is an ally of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1209} Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\textsuperscript{1210} Doğru, Interview (Turkish Scholar).
\textsuperscript{1211} Ünver, “Iran, Turkey and China’s Middle Eastern Pivot.”
\textsuperscript{1212} Alperen, Interview (Turkish Scholar); Chau, Interview (Chinese Journalist).
\end{footnotesize}
US, a member of NATO, and has been trying to join the EU for more than half a century. With that in mind, Turkey’s increasing rhetoric about growing closer to the East and developing a strategic partnership with China may not easily convince Beijing of its good intentions, even though relations have developed between China and Turkey. China has criticized Turkey as “two feet (stepping) two boats”, which implies it is impossible to be both East and West facing; that Turkey would eventually have to align itself with one side. Skeptics think that Turkey’s Western alignment in recent history might outweigh the country’s will to deepen strategic relations with China.

Moreover, it is not only some Central Asian countries that are uncomfortable with the increasing level of Turkish activism in the region but China also does not seem entirely happy. We can speculate that China’s negative feeling about Turkey’s accession to the SCO is rooted in this issue. Previously, not only have Chinese experts stated that Turkey should not be accepted by the organization but there have also been reports that it was China who rejected the Turkish application to the organization, while Russia was in favor of expansion.

1215 Mustafa Artuç, “Soğuk Savaş Dönemi Sonrası Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinde Yeni Açılımlar [After the Cold War Period New Views in Turkey-China Relations]” (Master’s, Gebze Yükse Teknoloji Enstitüsü, 2007), 50.
Reasons for this could be: Turkey is a NATO member and its US ally would likely jeopardize the SCO’s “mission to surpass NATO and US influence in the region”; Ankara, being friendlier towards Moscow than Beijing, would make Russia more influential in the SCO; Chinese suspicions about pan-Turkish policies relating to the Uyghur people in the region as well as Xinjiang; and the potential empowerment of Turkey being a potential trading and political rival to China in the CA region’s third markets. Although Erdoğan remarked that both Russia and China had welcomed Turkey’s membership to the SCO in 2013, no further steps were taken on the accession, even while other members were joining the club. Yet we should note that there have been increasingly positive views on Turkey’s accession in Chinese academia, envisioning that Turkey’s inclusion would benefit the SCO and China.  

A point that should be added here is Turkey’s response to Russia-related crises, such as in Georgia and the Ukraine, were more similar to China’s responses than those from the EU or the US until recently. Neither Turkey nor China wanted to disturb Russia with criticism, but rather tried to gain something in exchange. As explained in the Chapter 3, the recent jet downing is a big issue to be tackled between Turkey and Russia, However we can talk about the nature of the Turkish-Russian bilateral relations in another way until this issue for a long time during AKP era. What Turkey did after the Ukraine crisis was similar to what China did:

1220 Zhang Bo (章波), “中国与土耳其关系的历史与未来 [A Study on Turkey’s Relations with Shanghai Cooperation Organization],” 81.
they both sought an opportunistic gas deal. Improved cooperation between Russia and China is not something that would trouble Turkey; on the contrary, it is something from which Turkey may even benefit.

Firstly, improved relations between Russia and China would empower Turkey’s multi-polar world rhetoric. Moreover, Turkey may expect to be a significant part of building an Asian community through its friendship with Russia and China. Turkey would want to be a large part of such a project given its potential influence with its coexisting “democracy”, and both Turkic and Muslim identities. It is actually due to Turkey’s enthusiasm for being a regional or influential power that it sought accession to the EU, emphasizing the same identities as being potentially beneficial for the organization. Obviously, competition from the Russian-Chinese relationship is a factor that would make Turkey’s accession to the SCO even harder. Turkey’s relationship with Russia was better than its relationship with China until the end of the 2015. Moreover, with more members in the organization there is clear competition against Russia and China for dominating the SCO. In that regard, it is understandable that China would not be as willing as Russia to accept Turkey as a member in the SCO, considering Turkish-Russian relations are stronger than are Turkish-Chinese until recently.

Nevertheless, we should also be reminded once again that the SCO opted for a significant enlargement in 2015. According to the Ufa Summit, India and Pakistan are also set to be included as members in the organization. That will probably give more reason to Turkey to push for a better status in the group, as Iran will also

---

likely be a full member if everything goes smoothly with the P5+1 agreement. In that eventuality, it will be interesting to see what the Chinese position will be if, say, Russia and Pakistan back an offer for the Turkish lobby.

In addition to this, another topic making the Turkish-Chinese partnership strained is their different worldviews. The Cold War ended and Turkey and China no longer considered themselves as capitalist-communist rivals. However, there were new issues emerging in world politics in which they held divergent views. In the recent history, Turkey’s views conflicted with China’s on the crises in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nagorno-Karabakh and “Arab spring”. Those divergent worldviews seem problematic for the two countries’ relations bearing in mind that one of the reasons for Turkey deepening its relations with China has been to get support from the latter country on international politics and in the international organizations like the UNSC.

These different worldviews have been especially apparent in the Syria crisis. It is no secret that Erdoğan’s regime has been releasing firm statements that side with the Syrian opposition. The reason that Turkey has been so active on this issue is because a destructive civil war is happening directly at Turkey’s borders with Syria, and has directly implicated the country. Rumors, however, say that the Turkish army is not too enthusiastic about directly intervening in the Syrian conflict as it may jeopardize Turkey’s security interests, and the domestic and

1222 Alkan, Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar).
international risks of such an intervention would be very great. Even so, the Turkish government seems to have a different vision.

Contrary to Turkey’s position, China has stood with the Assad regime since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, and has rejected any kind of intervention. When Russia intervened in Syria, China did not directly reject the action, as Russia was in cooperation with the Assad regime. From China’s point of view, Russian action was counted as legitimate intervention. These advancements made Turkey uncomfortable, yet Turkey had to accept the reality of the situation. Although Turkish downing of the Russian plane signals Turkey’s non-tolerance for the Russia in Syria, the statements by the Turkish politicians shows that they are eventually accepting Russia’s position and has little to do to let Russia go out from Syria.

With allegations of Turkey helping some extreme groups in Syria, like the Al-Nusra front or ISIS, the situation became more complicated. Again the Chinese blamed Turkey for the involvement of some Uyghur militants in the Syrian civil war. Some Chinese reports stated that some Uyghurs had travelled to Syria through Turkey, while others had even received help from Turkish consulates by

---


way of fake Turkish passports and other identification papers.\textsuperscript{1227} This underlined the stark divergence of the two countries positions on the issue.\textsuperscript{1228}

In such a complicated environment, it is not even possible to talk about Turkey and China coming to a meeting point. The irony is that Erdoğan claimed he discussed the issue with Chinese leaders during his 2012 visit to the country and had been under the impression they agreed with his position.\textsuperscript{1229} Obviously these remarks, made after the visit, addressed the Turkish domestic audience. In reality, the Chinese position was never close to the Turkish position, and relations became more and more frayed as the days continued. The question became how they could, or would, cooperate despite the existence of such important conflicts. For Syria, the answer was simple: they would simply ignore their divergences – it would be the only way to avoid harming the cooperation. Turkey’s cooperation with Russia also had the same features, as has already been explained. Thus, Turkey’s approach to building relations with China and Russia simply have largely involved ignoring the problematic areas between them.

Finally Turkey’s own foreign policy issues are especially when considering China’s UNSC membership. China may be able to halt Turkey’s interests in its international relations programs, such as with Cyprus, Armenia and the Kurdish people, not only through China’s membership of the international community, but also as one of the veto power holders in any global matter in the UN. Turkey has

\textsuperscript{1227} Fu Yang (伏阳), “我国与‘丝绸之路经济带’沿线国家反恐合作策略研究 [A Study of the Strategy on the Counter Terrorism Cooperation between China and the Countries on the Silk Road Economic Belt],” 47.

\textsuperscript{1228} Galia Lavi and Gallia Lindenstrauss, “China and Turkey: Closer Relations Mixed with Suspicion,” \textit{Strategic Assessment} 19, no. 2 (July 2016): 125.

\textsuperscript{1229} Lee, “Turkey: The Odd Man in.”
in the past asked for Chinese support on Turkey’s problems with Cyprus and Armenia, but never received a positive reply.

Further, there were also concerns that China would use the Kurdish situation against Turkey’s interest in the Uyghur people in those sensitive times. China’s fast developing relations with Iraqi Kurdistan attracted Turkish observers, who started to feel uncomfortable with increasing Chinese influence in the area. What might complicate relations even further is not that China does not give support for Turkish claims on those matters; rather, it does entirely the opposite. When necessary, China always has the necessary cards for playing against Turkey, and with China’s increasing global power and enthusiasm for being more proactive, China’s standpoints could become a real concern for Turkey.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the problematic areas and conflict between Turkish-Chinese relations. Some of these issues are embedded in history, such as general ignorance and misperceptions about the other country and its people. Historical legacies, such as the Korean War and Communist China, have shaped Turkish perceptions of China for a long time. Another significant part of Turkish-Chinese history is the long-standing problem of the Uyghur people. The Turkish kinship with the Uyghurs is acute in light of Turkish nationalism, and was the major source of conflict for Turkish-Chinese relations in the 20th century. Even with Turkey’s amendment to its lobby for Uyghur independence, the Uyghur issue remains influential in terms of Turkish public perceptions and hostility.

---

1230 Yingwu Zhige (鶴鳴之歌), “库尔德族、土耳其与中国的战略利益 [Kurds, Turkey and China’s Strategic Interests].”
toward China. These issues so far could easily be explained by the constructivist approach as they touch upon the construction of contexts as well as identities over the time, and most importantly their –negative- effects on the bilateral relations.

The next obstacle for Turkish-Chinese relations is contemporary and has to do with the bilateral trade asymmetry, where Chinese business has boomed in Turkey in the last decade and a half. The issue here has started to become more widely discussed by its observers in the last decade. Indirect developments in trade asymmetry, like extra customs taxes, also generate problems. This is simply an example of the realist approach of asymmetrical powers. Turkey has also come into direct competition with China both in the Turkish market and third markets such as the EU, Central Asia and Africa. The final concern is to do with the global dimension of Turkish-Chinese relations. Turkish-Chinese relations have become more relevant than ever with regards to both countries’ relations with the US, NATO, the EU and Iran, among others. Therefore, finding a balance between those countries/regions and China can be crucial, even determinant, for Turkey’s ongoing relations with China. Again here the idea of balance of power is a major factor affecting these relations. Sometimes, other political figures have felt uncomfortable with Turkey developing relations with China in certain areas; other times, China has become uncomfortable with Turkey’s international actions, such as its policy on Syria and activism in Central Asia.
Conclusion

I will begin by summarizing the most important points in accordance with my research methodology. First, I will review the design itself in order to better follow the points below.

What we are trying to make sense of here is how relations develop between “states”. In the political sense of the word, states are arbitrary units, created by humans. Throughout the history of thought, there has been concern about how we, as academics, can deal with states as political and cultural entities. By observing international relations, we can make sense of how arbitrary units – in this instance, states – interact with each other. What is especially interacting about these processes of interaction? It is the humans who are in charge of states, interstate bodies and non-state organizations. Of course, states are distinct from human beings but the human factor is still essential to the state mechanism – humans provide the mechanisms and resources through which the states can run. That is to say, we have no way of analyzing states and their interactions without taking the humans shaping those events into consideration. The question of who administrates the state is very important in analyzing their contribution to a state’s evolution and actions toward its neighbors. Further, knowing the opposition is as important, seeing as they are an inseparable component for discourse in international relations, and attacking the idea of one’s opponent often legitimizes one’s own idea.

My methodological and theoretical stance, as explained in the introduction, clearly postulates that I am against any formulation of social sciences as a distinct subject, particularly international relations. That is why I did not simply take a
single established theory to explain Turkish-Chinese relations. Rather, I took a constructionist eclectic approach with combining realism and constructivism. In order to do that, I analyzed the background of Turkish and Chinese identities, sought to explain how these identities have come to be constructed over time, and examined cultural/political contexts and how they are shaped in different levels. By doing this, I attempt to make sense of relations, which we can also term interactions.

In Part I, I not only elaborated the Turkish and Chinese states’ domestic and foreign policy identities and transformations over the last two centuries but also overviewed how these two identities interacted with each other over time and what kind of reciprocal influences they had. In Part II, I analyzed the context of Turkish-Chinese relations and their various sources of influence, namely, Turkey’s domestic and multilateral environment, as well as the global environment from both Turkish and Chinese perspectives. In this part, context was not only constituted by rhetoric but also political actions. In Part III, I finally focused on the outcomes of these two countries’ interactions over the last sixteen years, in order to detail bilateral relations.

Instead of making chapter-by-chapter remarks here, I would like to provide a general picture of this thesis’ research, as understanding the general environment of Turkish-Chinese relations has been the main target of this study.

A few points need special attention or need to be kept in mind regarding Turkish-Chinese relations: first, both Turkey and China once had great empires. Both empires were put under insurmountable strain, and declined. What is more, no matter how greatly they suffered from those experiences, the two countries’
governments have been prone to dramatizing their imperial past as much as possible. In doing so, they aim to exacerbate nationalist sentiments in their society. Obviously nationalism and patriotism are important for these two countries and these sentiments, in the end, serve the interests of the government. Given the authoritarian natures of these states, their governments need these kinds of tools to gain legitimacy through votes or approval ratings. Now, both countries are making it back into the global arena, although not without controversy. After a period of weakness, they have both begun to claw back power. That is not only a concern for them bilaterally but is also an important regional and global game changer. Therefore, Turkish-Chinese relations and their future aspirations should not be read without historical context and how their identities constructed as told in constructivism.

Overall, we could say that despite all the changes the AKP has introduced to Turkey, I would argue that there has been a certain level of continuity in foreign policy-making, at least with regards to the topic of Turkish-Chinese relations. That might sound quite surprising for some, as many have been used to reading about Turkey under the AKP and the stark changes it has brought. However, the country’s political developments in the Middle East and Africa, though usually associated with the AKP, started long before their term in office. The same can be said for Turkey’s relations with China. Of course, taking advantage of the majority rule, the AKP has had a great opportunity to sustain its policies about any area, be it the health system or its policy on China, yet AKP is not necessarily the root cause of booming China relations of Turkey, as explained. Thus, I would say that the AKP’s policy on China bears some features of continuity, as will be explained further below.
There have also been allegations of Turkey’s axis shift, due to the country’s interest in CA, the ME and other regions outside the West and NATO, where it has historically held partnerships. These maneuvers, however, should not be counted as a complete axis shift for Turkey but rather as the consequence of a limited continuity. Apart from that, what are the other changes that the AKP has brought to Turkey? Turkish foreign policy-makers in the AKP’s four terms have brought new terminology into Turkey’s foreign policy discourse. Some of these, like “zero problems with neighbors”, were quite successful at first, but began to fail so terribly that they started to use “precious loneliness” to comfort themselves in an effort to describe Turkey’s international relations situation, especially with regards to its immediate neighborhood.

Furthermore, “central country”, “mediator”, “bridge”, and “multidimensional foreign policy-making” rhetoric became often used by some of Turkey’s administrators and scholars. Their opinion was that Turkey should seek good relations with the East or with the rest of the world, in addition to its current ties with the West. In short, East and West should not be considered in isolation. This way of thinking was also used in answer to “axis shift” allegations. This could be both understood in applying both the realist balance of power concept and the constructivist self-claimed identity (being independent, central etc.) approach.

Just how much Turkey has sought a balance in its foreign policy between different networks remains a question. Sometimes, there is the feeling that Turkey is very actively attempting to align with the “other”, and just using clever discourse so as not to attract harsh criticism by the West, its current ally. Nevertheless, no matter what discourses are in use, Turkey has been criticized on the issue of alignment. Its extraordinary relations with China in recent years, such as joint military
exercise and missiles projects, as well as Turkey being so passive toward Russia
on issues such as the Ukraine and Georgia help to fuel skepticism. I would like to
remind the reader at this point that my approach is not to conclude whether or not
Turkey is shifting toward the East, rather, showing how this transformation is
happening, if indeed it is.

We must now consider the domestic factors affecting Turkish-Chinese relations
for Turkey, especially with regards to the AKP and Erdoğan. As stated above, we
must not simply view Turkish-Chinese development through the eyes of the AKP
or Erdoğan and his authoritarian tendencies. In fact, the transformation of
Turkish-Chinese relations began once Erdoğan had become the major of the
Istanbul municipality, specifically, when İsa Yusuf Alptekin’s name was taken
down from a park in Istanbul despite his disapproval. Again, the security
agreement between Turkey and China that enabled an “enhanced partnership” in
2000 happened long before Erdoğan founded the AKP. This asks the question:
what would Turkish-Chinese relations be like if the AKP had never been founded?
Even though I am no fortuneteller and it is impossible to truly know if a scenario
will ever reoccur, yet we can make reasonable forecasts by looking at general
trends in the political sphere. Relations would, more or less, be boosted to a
similar degree, and again two countries would conclude “strategic relationship” as
in the lens of a realist person. In fact the ignorance of the ideological divergences
during the period of policy change was a realist move.

The only difference is, if there were another ruling party in Turkey, Turkish-
Chinese relations would likely be less intimidating for both the domestic audience
and international countries/regions/organizations. Where Erdoğan makes a
difference is his personal character. The world over knows his attitude, and from
his “one-minute” reaction in Davos, we know that he is not good at controlling his temper. So if someone else were to lead the country, for example, the former president Abdullah Gül, we might expect better relations with China, with convincing the public and with Western allies that there is nothing to worry about developing good relations with China. It is certainly true that Gül is also a part of his party until Erdoğan was elected as President in 2007. So, post-2007, Erdoğan has been the greatest, mostly sole, driving force for Turkish politics.

Another important personality in terms of relevant policy-making is the former PM Davutoğlu. He has an enthusiastic vision for Turkish foreign policy, and advised PM Erdoğan on the matter, particularly on independent foreign policy-making. However, what I have said above about the AKP and Erdoğan includes Davutoğlu. Without these figures, Turkish-Chinese relations would still be developing but arguably with one difference: they would be less intimidating. Therefore, if we had to guess the future of Turkish-Chinese relations, we could say that they will remain more or less on track regardless of who is in government, even the nationalist MHP.

Having said that, Erdoğan’s consolidating power through the AKP’s winning of new elections and his increasing grasp on state organs including the media, and judiciary, police and military forces is an important issue worth noting. The country is being driven into a more authoritarian path. It is clear that the EU does not welcome this kind of approach, although with regards to the Syrian refugee crisis, the EU has not been harsh on Turkey, as it needed Turkey’s help. We can, however, see that the future of EU-Turkish relations will not be particularly bright if Erdoğan does not change his style of government. Furthermore, it seems as though he has no intention of changing. In fact, relations have already been
damaged over the last few years because of issues relating to the country’s worsening democracy. How that relates to China is simple: whenever Turkey moves away from the EU and the West, Erdoğan starts to use China as his leverage.

If relations are damaged with the West, Turkey needs new partners, because it would feel a threat from the West according to realist explanations; they would be Russia and China. If Erdoğan ever wanted to fix Turkey’s relations with the West, he would threaten the West with Russia and China as a bargaining card. Either way, he would further develop relations with China. Thus, we should be prepared for new surprising statements from him, as he has done when cautioning against overvaluing the SCO, or carried out unexpected actions like the missile issue, despite the fiasco at the end. Although Turkey has started to realign itself with NATO and the US in 2015, we cannot say that Erdoğan would seek a consistent policy on relations with the West. However even at the and of 2015 first with the cancellation of China’s missile project and downing of the Russian jet shows Turkey suddenly do actions which might make the West happy like in the missile project or which would make Turkey to emphasize its priorities against Russia and China. When relations with the West worsen, Erdoğan starts using relations with Russia and China as a bargaining chip, just like what happened again in the post failed coup environment.

This is not an issue that is only relevant to Turkey; there is also China to consider. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, China first spent a great deal of effort in its own domestic politics, and then became relatively stable and started to look outside of its country borders, integrating into world politics. Some countries took China’s rise as a threat to the established system and their own powers. In
that sense, Turkey’s reaction to a rising China has been important. After ignoring almost two decades of China’s rise, Turkey has finally realized the importance of this new global power. Therefore, Turkey has started to acclimatize itself to the new world, starting with China. Some in Turkey saw China as a threat to Turkish economy, while others emphasized the Uyghur issue. Still others claimed that Turkey should develop further relations with China. It seems that many policymakers in Turkey have held the latter view, as Turkish-Chinese relations boomed in the first period of the 21st century. Not everyone was happy about this in Turkey. Some segments of the society, especially nationalist groups and individuals, tended to view China as a “murderer”, but it seems that this opinion is not very influential at the governmental level. This tends to give credit to the realist rather than the constructivist explanation.

Also relevant is the stance of the Turkish military on China. This is important for understanding the initiators of Turkey’s new approach to China at the end of the 20th century. We can see that the first strategic contacts were made from the military, rather than other organs in the Turkish state. Regarding the army’s influence in politics at the time, the change in Turkish policy about China before the 21st century was certainly made with the army’s full knowledge. What is more is that it is likely the army wanted it that way. Looking at the chronological order of the Turkish army’s contact with and first arm transfers from China, and finding that this was at a time when Turkish politicians were far from considering China as a discourse partner, I would say that bureaucracy and politics followed the army’s position on China, as had been the case for many other issues in those days. The fractions accused of being a part of Ergenekon, showed the existence of a special army clique that was in favor of Russia and China against the West.
From the rare sources, we could understand that even after the Ergenekon trails there is still a reasonable view in the Army that Turkey should strongly consider politically aligning with Eurasia. Recently these fractions in the political sphere have been gaining ground. In the post-failed coup environment in particular, they have started to dominate the discourse as anti-Westernism grows.

Turkish-Chinese relations have greatly transformed over the last few decades. It could be said that past relations were responsible for dominating the Uyghur and/or Chinese Muslim issues. This situation became especially problematic after Uyghur leaders fled to Turkey and Turkey provided support to Uyghur independence in the second half of the 20th century. However, shortly after the death of the last Uyghur leader, İsa Yusuf Alptekin, Turkey adjusted its foreign policy. Between 1996 and 2000, the adjustment resulted in a commitment for “enhanced relations” between Turkey and China at the beginning of the new century. Now and then, the Uyghur issue sometimes dominates news stories about Turkish-Chinese relations but these relations have still progressed even after problematic periods like the 2009 Urumqi incident and the 2015 anti-China protests in Turkey. That is why I suggested that the Uyghur issue lost ground over time in terms of its ability to affect Turkish-Chinese diplomatic relations. This transformation should be noted and Turkish-Chinese relations should be understood with this pre-2000 history in mind. For that period of time, it is conducive to conclude that, as constructivists claim, values and ideologies influenced policymaking. This is also valid in times of Uyghur crisis in the post-2000 era.

Turkish-Chinese relations went beyond what had been expected from them a decade or so earlier. So just how much are they benefiting from this relation? One
important expectation from the Chinese was cooperation on its most sensitive issue, the Uyghurs. As I have explained in the above paragraph, China got what it wanted from Turkey. After that amendment to Turkish policy, China became a major supplier for the Turkish market. Therefore, China should be quite happy about its relations with Turkey and should be seeking ways to further benefit from the country. These benefits might be, for instance, about integrating Turkey into the new Silk Road project and using the country as gateway to Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. China is also seeking to use Turkey’s influence in the Middle East as much as possible.

From Turkey’s perspective, it has developed its relations with China but has not yet received what it wants from them. One major disappointment so far has been China’s lack of support for Turkey on international issues. Turkey has almost never been successful in convincing China on individual international issues. Often, China has stood against Turkey on certain issues like the crisis in Syria. Furthermore, increasing trade from China has provided cheap supply to Turkey but this has been also damaging for some of Turkey’s own manufacturers. So, opening up trade with China is hard to put down as being an absolute gain. Also, while overall trade has been growing, this growth has occurred in favor of China. Not to mention, Turkish politicians have failed to satisfy their nationalistic bases on the Uyghur issue as Turkey’s official position has come to become one that no longer upsets China as much as before.

Including the aforementioned Uyghur issue and trade deficit, there are also some problematic areas for Turkish-Chinese relations, along with other historical legacies, misperceptions, international stakes and ideological divergences. The Uyghur issue is becoming a less influential problem area, while trade deficit is
becoming more crucial. Historical legacies and misperceptions, a result of ignorance of the other country’s culture and society, is an important obstacle for Turkey and China establishing healthy relations, which could be understood in constructivist terms. Additionally, as Turkish-Chinese relations deepen, third parties will become more worried and may try to stop the relations from developing if they believe that it may jeopardize their own interests. A good example of this is NATO and US pressure on Turkey about its missiles projects with China. It has been more than two years since the first agreement, and the bid was delayed five times before Turkey eventually dropped out of the project. That is why it is clear that international stakes are a significant influence in terms of Turkey and China’s bilateral relations. Another example could be China’s unwillingness to accept Turkey into the SCO, due to Turkey’s closer relations with other current members such as Russia (until the jet incident) and Turkic Republics, as well as it Western alignment. Yet ideological divergences are so far not considered as especially important, as we can see in Syria. Even in the worst days of the crisis despite their conflicting views on the issue, Turkey and China have still managed to ignore the issues when considering their relations with each other.

At this point, it is crucial to underline one fact: Turkish-Chinese relations have an asymmetric dimension. As mentioned before, it could be explained by realist approaches. A good example of this can be found in the Table 9 and Table 10 that show bilateral trade volume shares in their respective overall foreign trade volume. The numbers show us that China is becoming more and more vital for the Turkish economy, while Turkey, despite some increase in its share, is still a relatively minor partner for China. This asymmetry is also valid in other areas as well, as I
will later explain. Of course, when we talk about asymmetry, China has always had an asymmetrical dimension to the rest of the world, with a few exceptions. The population size, the size of the country and so on, number among these topics. These are important factors when dealing with certain issues like GDP per capita, buying power, workforce effective in a country’s economy and foreign trade in a globalized world.

Apart from this, there is also the asymmetry of capability and strategy to consider. For example, in terms of military capability and spending, China is vastly different to Turkey. Again, when talking about having a say on global issues, China has a special position in its UNSC permanent membership; this membership always makes China one step ahead of Turkey. This means that Turkey cannot do anything against China’s will. Again, Syria is the boldest example here. Perhaps Syria is not relevant to anyone more than it is for Turkey and yet Turkey has been less decisive on the issue than China in relevant international organizations. In a sense, we could say that Turkey needs China in 2016 and beyond for the sake of its say in global politics.

What fills – or what might fill – this disparity is Turkey’s unique geographical location: its proximity to Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey’s gateway to these regions in terms of cultural, religious, institutional or religious attachments is a benefit that Turkey could use to entice China. Thus, Turkey has an asymmetrical advantage over these regions compared to China, and China is aware of this. This shows that it is always important to bear both sides’ asymmetrical natures in mind when analyzing their bilateral relations. The nature of the asymmetric relations comes from realism assumptions, yet sometimes the content of this asymmetry could derive from constructivist assumptions such as
Turkey’s cultural and religious advantages in the Middle East and Central Asia compared to China, given the former more leverage. This is a way of explaining why choosing an eclectic approach is necessary for this topic.

The next step or sign for further cooperation would be Turkey’s admission to the SCO. Although it has seemed tricky, certain developments have shown that it is not entirely impossible. Given the fact that Turkey already has been granted dialogue partnership status, Turkey is now closer than ever to the organization. Turkey’s disappointing EU bid might be counted both as a cause and consequence of this SCO accession. The latest membership agreements show that the SCO is spreading throughout Asia. Russia and China have let their own friends into the organization in order to balance each other’s power. This has made for a more diversified SCO, and prepares room for Turkey’s own membership. Turkey’s admission could benefit Turkey in terms of its relations with the rest of greater Asia, where it has a good potential due to its historical, cultural and religious ties to the region. Even more, SCO membership would be a vital sign of China’s will to further cooperate with Turkey, given Turkey’s interest to join and China’s prior rejection of it.

Before underlining the importance of Turkish-Chinese relations, I want to say that “strategic partnership” is rather common in Chinese rhetoric and has defined its relations with numerous other countries. Even though “strategic partnership” does not have similar meanings for every partner, China has almost fifty strategic partners whose landmass covers more than a quarter of the world. Therefore, the “strategic partnership” banner did not enhance relations between China and Turkey in themselves, but strategic relations (or, cooperation areas) did emerge soon after that agreement. Those areas have provided Turkey with strategic
capabilities for making China a strategic partner to Turkey. China is a key political figure for Turkey that offers what the West cannot in terms of capabilities. Nevertheless, the factors that have made Turkey a strategic partner for China is different to what made China a strategic partner for Turkey. Turkey’s symbolic position and identity as a NATO member, its proximity to Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, and its emerging economy all contribute to leverage Turkey’s beneficial components for China. Despite its middling power/size when compared to other world powers, Turkey has still attracted a significant amount of Chinese attention for these reasons. This point underlining Turkey’s unique identity as a key component in its relations with China gives credit to the constructivist approach.

Last but not least, the most significant transformation that Turkish-Chinese relations have witnessed in the last five or six years have been their global concerns rather than their bilateral relations. Turkey even went beyond trilateral relations such as US-Turkish-Chinese or Iran-Turkish-Chinese, since there were overlapping matters with stakes relevant to multiple parties beyond Turkey and China. There have also been a few topics of Turkish-Chinese relations that drew a great deal of attention from NATO, the US, the EU, Russia and Central Asia.

I would like to draw attention to one comparison here: Turkey’s relations with Russia more or less have the same features as Turkey’s relations with China. In terms of strategy, they both take similar positions for the West; hence, Turkey’s moves toward either country are more or less perceived similarly: an axis shift as a potential threat. Again, Turkey has been quickly developing its relations with Russia since 2002, despite emerging crises such as relations with China. Even more, Turkey ignored the troubles that had either directly or indirectly been
caused by Russia just like on Syria, and keeps working with it. Same approach is valid for China as well. Currently Russia is Turkey’s number three partner while China is number two. More importantly, Turkey has tried to use both Russia and China against the West as a bargaining chip. It could be seen as taking advantage of the new balance of power between the countries or group of countries. Likewise, Turkey has presented its strategic position in NATO and the Western world to Russia and China, and has attempted to negotiate strategic agreements with both countries such as space cooperation, nuclear stations and missile projects. It is also a kind of continuation of Turkey’s identity politics in the sense that its policy makers tried to make use of a “Western” identity discourse against Russia and China, and its “independent” or “central country” identity discourse against the West.

One factor that makes Russia different from China for Turkey is the country’s proximity. China used to be an enemy for Turkey some time ago (except during the Korean War, where they both fought somebody else’s war), however, direct troubles with Russia are still a part of very recent history and even today. As Russia is a neighboring country of Turkey, it can also be a direct threat to Turkey. Therefore, Turkey is more vulnerable to Russia than China, and Turkey is thus understandably careful to improve relations with Russia. Russia is Turkey’s neighbor and will likely remain both a major friend and threat for the country. It is very well understood with the boosting relations with Russia until 2015 and a sudden crisis at the end of the year, and again going back to the “old friends” position after the failed coup attempt. Despite their bilateral threat and divergences in ideology they could make good friends even after shooting each other’s jet. This does not comply very well with the constructivist approach.
When we talk about Turkish-Chinese relations, we could say that they have created controversies. Other times, these relations have been considered as being a potential opportunity for the other country. No matter what the outcome may be, Turkish-Chinese relations have been designed to influence regional and global issues and will be debated accordingly. By having balanced relations with China, Turkey even could play a role in being a central country or mediator between the East and the West. However, what kind of shape these constructions and reconstructions will have after 2016 remains to be seen.

Although I have referred here and there I would like to add few more words regarding methodology and theory. As I have opted for a constructionist argument that states everything that is a part of the Social Sciences has been constructed and reconstructed over a period of time, I suggest it is the underlying principles behind constructionism that is happening to Turkish-Chinese relations as well. I already explained that I cannot fit this case or any other case exactly into a theory such as realism, liberalism, or constructivism as a package. Therefore, I am not concluding that, under these circumstances, a state like Turkey would behave “like so” when it faces a state like China. As each state is different, their actions and responses cannot be duplicated. There is no other Turkey or China in this world. Further, every state is different according to the time period that we are studying. The Turkey of 2010 is different to the Turkey of 2015, and the same can equally be said for China. Yet with the help of these theories we could analyze and understand their behaviors in certain time periods and environments.

Overall, we can talk about one important factor in terms of Turkish-Chinese relations: independence. Turkey has been showing great enthusiasm for an independent foreign policy, even a military capability. This was actually carried
out during the AKP’s terms, and these developments have sometimes concerned the West. Nevertheless, we should not forget that in the last two centuries Turkey has also made relatively autonomous, neutral, independent or even anti-Western foreign policy actions and orientations. In today’s Turkey, with an Atatürk type cult leadership, the AKP challenges Turkey’s settings. For AKP administrators, the West is a necessity rather than a deliberate and desirable choice. In that regard, we can understand some of the motivation behind developing strategic relations with China. At the same time, we should not oversimplify Turkey’s growing relations to China by only looking at the AKP’s responses. Of course, there is more to it than that. Perhaps in the future, when the AKP is no longer in charge of Turkey, the country could continue to develop strategic relations with China. That is embedded with the point from the above paragraph. I would say that the Turkish people are enthusiastic for independence, and that they are nationalistic and patriotic. They want to have a say in global politics and they believe that this can only be possible if Turkey were to develop an independent approach. There may be different views from the intelligentsia but Turkey seems to be far from a meritocratic rule, therefore, those views are destined to remain in journals.

Looking over recent Turkish history, some trends can be observed. From Atatürk to the Özal period, Turkey has tried to put itself in an independent, or even neutral, position in terms of international politics or alignments. Even during times of crisis as in, for example, WWII, Turkey reluctantly remained neutral. Therefore, we could say that this is likely Turkey’s default mode in terms of its self-identify and stance on foreign policy, only acting when issues directly become serious for Turkey.
The end of the Cold War gave this opportunity to Turkey. The post-Cold War environment gave all US allies the chance to act more flexibly. Turkey, an old US ally, took advantage of this. After this reshuffling of the international system, there was room for Turkey to redefine itself more than once. First, Turkey tried to become a regional powerhouse in Central Asia. Then 9/11 happened and again Turkey realigned itself. This time, it tried to become a regional powerhouse in the Middle East. Today, we are in a world that can still be counted as post-Cold War and post-9/11, therefore, Turkey’s self-identifications remain valid. Here, Turkey’s self-identification is in favor of independence. Yet I would not argue that by independence, it means that Turkey would leave NATO or end its US alliance. Even so, we can never know when the world will change dramatically once more. If and when there are global realignments, Turkey would need to redefine itself. This realignment could take place in accordance to realist premises, and Turkey’s new foreign policy could at the same time be in accordance with its new self-identification, which is based on constructivism, and even it could party develop through international institutions based on liberalism. We cannot predict it and cannot formulate it. This overall un-predictability and ongoing construction is what I mean by constructionism.

Regarding China, we would argue that China is increasingly aware of Turkey’s position. I would say that Turkey’s importance for China is due to the former country’s roles in several regions and organizations: the Middle East, the European Customs Union, Eurasia, Central Asia, NATO and its alliance with the US. All of these “roles” make Turkey more significant for the Chinese and have made China rethink its relations with Turkey, as many consider Turkey to be one of the major countries that supports Uyghur separatism. Although Turkey has
made relevant policy adjustments to the Uyghur issue, if China becomes no longer happy to develop relations with Turkey, then Turkey would see no reason to continue its agreement with China on the Uyghur people. In fact, Xinjiang is also the reason that China is in a good relationship with Turkey. With Turkey’s help, China is willing to contain Uyghur separatism and also make the Uyghurs more engaged with China. Although China does not consider Turkey a direct partner as it does for certain BRIC countries, it is still interested in Turkey’s unique position for collaboration in certain regions like Central Asia and Africa.

A good example of these changing circumstances is Turkey’s relations with Syria. Under the respective rule of Erdoğan and Assad, Turkey and Syria have had a stormy relationship, being at first hostile, then brotherly, and then enemies again. Now, Erdoğan is accepting a period of transition with Assad, meaning he is likely to abandon hostile attitude against Assad in order to cooperate in the fight against ISIS. What has changed over time cannot be explained by one example or theory; everything is changing and being constructed by time in a continuous and fluid loop. Another perfect example of this is the Turkish-Russian relations. As the relevant point made earlier it will be only mentioned that those relations have the potential to change all of a sudden with the change of a context.

Same logic goes for Turkish-Chinese relations. Under today’s circumstances and environment, the relations between Turkey and China have been shaped by the events that I have illustrated in my thesis. I do not mean to draw any formula from these relations that can be fruitful for other cases in the field of International Relations. Instead, I give exemplary approaches to suggest how we should look into, specifically, Turkey and China’s interactions with each other. My assumption that we cannot formulize these bilateral relations does not mean that
we should not study them. Studying them is crucial to understanding the political changes and upheaval that is happening in the world. I have elaborated how Turkish-Chinese relations have evolved in the 21st century and, through my own viewpoint, have shown how this transformation of their bilateral relations has become possible. Due to their fascinating and turbulent history, Turkish-Chinese relations deserve a great deal of attention from international relations observers and International Relations scholars alike.
Appendices

Appendix One: Joint Communiqué between the Republic of Turkey and the People’s Republic of China.

At the invitation of His Excellency Süleyman Demirel, President of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China, paid a state visit to the Republic of Turkey from 18 to 21 April 2000.

During the visit, President Jiang Zemin held talks with President Süleyman Demirel and met with the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Yıldırım Akbulut and Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. In a friendly and constructive atmosphere, the two sides had an extensive and in-depth exchange of views on further development of the bilateral relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest and reached a broad consensus.

In addition to this Joint Communiqué, the two sides signed the Agreed Minutes of the 13th Session of the Turco-Chinese Joint Economic and Trade Committee and the Framework Protocol of Economic and Technological Cooperation in the Energy Sector between the Republic of Turkey and the People's Republic of China, which are aimed at further strengthening the relations between the two countries at the dawn of the 21st century.

The two Heads of State expressed satisfaction with the marked progress made in friendly relations and cooperation between Turkey and China since the establishment of diplomatic ties 29 years ago and confirmed that this conforms with the common desire of the two sides and serves the fundamental interests of the two peoples. They also expressed their determination to constantly expand and
deepen the friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries and have decided to establish an enhanced partnership based on mutual respect, trust, benefit, equality and common development.

Noting that promotion of peace and development, commitment to universal principles and equal security for all countries have become essential features of contemporary international relations, the two sides expressed their determination to make vigorous and effective efforts to develop their friendly relations and cooperation. The two sides reiterate their respect to human rights. They further emphasized that the universally recognized principles such as mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence and the principle of pacta sund servanda will continue to govern their relations. The Turkish side reiterated its adherence to the One China policy and its continued recognition of the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal representative of China.

The two sides will continue to maintain high-level exchanges and contacts at all levels, develop and expand their existing friendly relations and cooperation in all fields and enrich and substantiate the contents of this relationship and bring it to a new level in the new Century. They will continue high level political consultations to develop and deepen overall bilateral relations and expand the consultations envisaged in the Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing Political Consultation Mechanism between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, signed on 13 November 1997.
The two sides will continue to attach importance to the links between the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the National People's Congress of China and expand inter-parliamentary contacts.

The two sides believe that there is considerable potential and a bright prospect for economic cooperation and trade between the two countries. They agree that the growth of economic and commercial relations will not only be to their mutual benefit, but also serve to strengthen their overall cooperation and mutual understanding. They will strive to constantly expand their commercial and economic cooperation, seek a balanced, diversified and growing trade, and explore new approaches and ways to enhance their economic and technical cooperation. They will encourage mutual investments and take necessary measures and develop new opportunities to increase markets shares in each other's country. To secure greater cooperation they will also encourage exchange of knowledge and experience in economy, science, technology, environment and other fields.

To these ends the two sides will continue to hold regular meetings of the Joint Economic Commission to ensure its effective functioning and implementation of its decisions. They will also support the work of the Turco-Chinese Business Council, encourage the business communities of the two countries to increase exchanges and cooperation.

Both being rapidly growing energy markets, the two sides will encourage and support joint exploration and cooperation in the field of energy.

Both sides believe that the restoration of the ancient Silk Road, which played an important role in promoting friendship between the two peoples and exchanges
between the civilizations of East and West Asia, will facilitate friendly exchanges and commercial, political and cultural cooperation among the countries along the Road.

They will strengthen cooperation in tourism and media and encourage broader communication using up-to-date technologies so as to bring the two peoples closer. They will also encourage increased contacts in the fields of culture, arts, science and education, sports and city twinning. They will support the activities related to the protection of historical and cultural heritage and facilitate contacts and cooperation between the regions, cities, local organizations and administrations.

For the achievement of these objectives, the two sides agree to complete the appropriate legal, economic, financial and commercial framework in line with their international responsibilities.

They will provide, on the basis of reciprocity, the greatest assistance in their respective countries to each other's diplomatic, consular, business and other official representative institutions to facilitate their operation.

The two sides hold the view that the world is undergoing profound changes with a growing trend towards political multipolarity and economic globalization while there are still many factors that might lead to instability and crisis. The two sides stand ready to make new contribution to peace, stability, confidence, mutual understanding and promotion of cooperation in bilateral and multilateral relations.

The two sides have confirmed that Turkey and China, both being major countries in their respective regions, share identical or similar views on a number of major
international and regional issues and are committed to regional and world peace. The two sides have decided to maintain and strengthen their existing political consultation mechanism and enhance coordination and cooperation in international affairs. They have also decided to monitor international economic and financial issues with a view to ensuring a stable environment for development.

The two sides confirm once again their commitment to advancing arms control and disarmament, and prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, conscious that these efforts contribute to the preservation and strengthening of international security.

Both sides confirm their resolute opposition to all kinds of terrorism regardless of its form, origin or motive. Under obligation emanating from bilateral and international agreements they have acceded to, the two sides will increase cooperation in this field and make joint efforts to combat transnational criminal activities, including organized crimes and smuggling. They will prohibit in their territories any illegal activities as defined by their national laws, including all forms of separatism and religious extremism.

The two sides stand for the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means and oppose use of force or threat of force in handling international relations. They support the United Nations and the Security Council in playing a significant role in safeguarding world peace and security and in other areas. Both sides have stressed the importance of strictly abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

In conclusion, the two sides believe that it is important for leaders of the two countries to keep in close contact and exchange visits frequently.
President Jiang Zemin has expressed his heartfelt thanks to President Süleyman Demirel, the Government and the people of the Republic of Turkey for their warm reception and generous hospitality accorded to him and his entourage.

April 19, 2000, Ankara
Appendix Two: Joint Statement about Establishing and Developing Strategic Partnership between the Republic Of Turkey and the People’s Republic of China.

Chinese original:

中华人民共和国和土耳其共和国关于建立和发展战略合作关系的联合声明

应土耳其共和国总理埃尔多安的邀请，中华人民共和国国务院总理温家宝于二 O 一 O 年十月七日至九日对土耳其共和国进行了正式访问。

访问期间，温家宝总理会见了居尔总统，与埃尔多安总理举行了会谈。两国领导人就坦诚友好和务实的气氛中进一步拓展和深化中土各领域互利合作及共同关心的地区和国际问题深入交流了意见，并达成广泛共识。双方全面回顾并高度评价双边关系发展历程，对双边关系发展成果表示满意。双方一致认为，中土同为新兴发展中国家，都处在各自发展的重要阶段，在国际形势发生深刻复杂变化的历史背景下，中土友好合作关系规模不断扩大，内涵日益丰富，不仅造福于两国人民，而且有利于地区乃至世界的和平、稳定与发展。

基于进一步提升中土关系水平、全面推进双方各领域友好合作的共同政治意愿，双方达成如下共识：

重申恪守一九七一年八月四日《中华人民共和国和土耳其共和国建立外交关系的联合公报》和二 O O O 年四月十九日《中华人民共和国与土耳其共和国联合公报》所确定的各项基本原则。

决定建立和发展战略合作关系。
保持高层互访势头，深化政治互信，在事关对方核心利益的问题上相互支持；在互利互惠的基础上，进一步拓展和深化经贸合作，实现共同发展。

扩大两国议会、政党、地方政府间的友好交流，推动投资、能源、教育、文化、体育、旅游、新闻、安全、国防和交通等领域的友好合作。

共同维护地区和平与稳定。

应对各种全球性挑战，推进世界多极化和国际关系民主化，为推动建设持久和平、共同繁荣的和谐世界不懈努力。

于二〇一一年正式启动“两国外交部联合工作组机制”，并将逐步充实机制内涵，扩大机制职能，使之成为双方战略对话与磋商的重要渠道。

全力办好二〇一二年在土耳其举办的“中国文化年”和二〇一三年在中国举办的“土耳其文化年”活动。

二〇一〇年十月八日于安卡拉

Translation:

Joint Statement about Establishing and Developing Strategic Partnership between the Republic Of Turkey and the People’s Republic of China

Prime Minister of the State Council People’s Republic of China Wen Jiabao’s official visit to the Republic of Turkey between October 7 to 9 in 2010 upon the invitation of Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

During the visit, Premier Wen Jiabao met with President Abdullah Gül, held talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The two leaders in a frank, friendly
and pragmatic atmosphere exchanged their in-depth views and reached broad consensus on to further expand and deepen Chinese-Turkish mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields and regional and international issues of common concern. The two sides comprehensively reviewed and spoke highly of the bilateral relations’ development process and expressed satisfaction with the results of the bilateral relations development. Both sides agreed that, China and Turkey, as emerging developing countries at an important stage of their development, continuous expanding and increasing rich connotation and friendly and cooperative bilateral relations not only benefit the peoples of the two sides but also contributing to the regional and global peace, stability and development under the historical background of profound and complex changes of the international situation.

The two sides have reached the following consensus in order to comprehensively promote bilateral friendly cooperation in various fields of common political will, based on further enhancement of the bilateral relations’ level:

Reaffirm the commitment to the basic set forth in the “Joint Communiqué of Establishing Diplomatic Relations Between the Republic of Turkey and the People’s Republic of China” of August 4, 1971 and “Joint Communiqué between the Republic of Turkey and the People’s Republic of China” of April 19, 2000.

Decide to establish and develop strategic partnership.

Maintain the momentum of high-level visits, deepen mutual political trust, support in the matter of the other side's core interests; further expand and deepen economic and trade cooperation and achieve common development on the basis of mutual benefit.
Expand friendly exchanges between the two parliaments, political parties, and local governments; promote friendship and cooperation on investment, energy, education, culture, sports, tourism, news, security, defense and transportation etc. areas.

Jointly maintain regional peace and stability.

Deal with various global challenges, promote multi-polarization of the world and democratization of international relations, and unremittingly make efforts for a prosperous and harmonious world in order to promote the building of lasting peace.

In 2011, officially launch "Joint Working Group Mechanism of the Two Ministry of Foreign Affairs", and progressively enrich the connotation of mechanism to make an important channel of the current bilateral strategic dialogue and consultations.

Fully run the activities of the "Culture Year of China" to be held in Turkey in 2012 and "Culture Year of Turkey" to be held in China in 2013.

October 8, 2010, Ankara
Appendix Three: List of cited interviews conducted by the researcher with an alphabetical order.

AA. Interview (Senior Turkish Politician). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.

AB. Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, October 16, 2012.

AC. Interview (Senior Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, October 16, 2012.

AD. Interview (Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, February 2011.

AE. Interview (Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.

AF. Interview (Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, June 13, 2016.

AG. Interview (Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Messenger, June 30, 2015.

AH. Interview (Major Turkish Businessman). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, October 11, 2014.

AI. Interview (Turkish NGO Representative). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, February 19, 2016.

AJ. Interview (Senior Turkish NGO Representative). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Wechat, August 22, 2016.


AL. Interview (Turkish Journalist). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, August 22, 2014.

Alkan, Abdulkadir. Interview (Turkish Journalist and Young Scholar). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Phone Conversation, August 25, 2016.

Alperen, Umit. Interview (Turkish Scholar). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Phone Conversation, August 24, 2016.

AM. Interview (Turkish Journalist). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, August 22, 2013.

AN. Interview (Officer at Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission in Ankara). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Phone Conversation, November 13, 2015.
AO. Interview (Turkish Scholar and Paper Columnist). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, April 3, 2016.


AT. Interview (Turkish Bilateral Event Staff). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Via Email, August 25, 2015.

AU. Interview (Turkish Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, June 3, 2013.

AV. Interview (Senior Chinese Police Officer). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, May 21, 2010.

AW. Interview (Chinese Diplomat). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, June 20, 2010.


AY. Interview (Senior Chinese Businessman). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, October 15, 2010.


Chien, Frederick. Interview (Senior Chinese Politician). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, February 5, 2015.


Ma, Jilian F. Interview (Chinese Young Scholar). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, August 10, 2015.

Pan Xia. Interview (Chinese Film Director). Interview by Mehmet Söylemez. Face-to-face, 2012.

Appendix Four: Sources of data and/or documents used for the research apart from interviews and secondary and tertiary data. (The details of each document can be found in the bibliography separately.)

Academic Freedom Monitor,
http://www.monitoring.academicfreedom.info/map/turkey.

African Union,


Amnesty International,

Anatolia Cultural & Dialog Center,

Bank of China,

Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi [BİLGESAM Think Tank],

Çin Kültür Merkezi [China Culture Center],

China Scholarship Council,

CHP Seçim Bildirgesi 2015 CHP [Republican People’s Party Election Manifesto 2015 CHP].

Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA),

Consulate General of the PRC in San Francisco,

Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States,

Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu [Foreign Economic Relations Board].

DTİK (World Turkish Business Council),

Doğu Türkistan Bülteni [Eastern Turkestan Bulletin],
http://www.doguturkistanbulteni.com/hakkimizda/.

Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Turkey,
http://tr.china-embassy.org/ur/ztgx/t1005419.htm,

European Union External Action,

European Commission,

Freedom House,


MHP 7 Haziran 2015 Seçim Beyannamesi [Nationalist Movement Party July 7, 2015 Election Election Declaration].


Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

412

Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği [Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association],
http://www.tusiad.org.tr/tusiad/representative-offices/tusiad-beijing-office/,


Türkiye Bursları [Turkey Scholarships], http://www.turkiyeburslari.org/.

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Genel Kurul Tutanağı [The Grand National Assembly of Turkey Minutes].


Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu [The Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey],

Türkiye-Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti İşadamları Dostluk ve Dayanışma Derneği [Turkish Chinese Businessmen Friendship and Solidarity Association],
http://www.tuciad.org.tr/.

Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırma Kurumunu,

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
United States Department of State,
http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2013/01/203360.htm.

World Nuclear Association,
Bibliography


Altan, Selda. “Sighting the Ottomans from the East: Chinese Intellectual Transition from Imperial to National Imagination through the Ottomans at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.” Master’s, Boğaziçi University, 2009.


417


Athl, Altay. “12 Mart Muhtırası ve Türkiye’nin Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti’ni Tanıması [12 March (Military) Memorandum and Turkey’s (Diplomatic) Recognition of People’s Republic of China].” In Türkiye’de Çin’in Düşünmek Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımlar, edited


———. “Questioning Turkey’s China Trade.” Turkish Policy Quarterly 10, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 107–16.


“Çın Gezi Raporu [China Travel Report].” Girişimci İşadamları Vakfı [Entrepreneur Businessmen Association], April 12, 2013.


Çufalı, Mustafa. “Lozan Sonrası Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası [Turkish Foreign Policy During the Atatürk Era after the Lausanne].” In Osmanlıdan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Foreign Politics], edited by Adem Çaylak, Mehmet Dikkaya, Cihat Göktepe, and Hüsnü Kapılı, 2nd ed. Savaş Yaynevi, 2010.

426


“Isa Yusuf Alptekin Meets Turkish Prime Minister and Party Leaders.” 


Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip. “Global Order and Justice in the 21th Century.” Unofficial Translation of the Speech by H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presented at the Seta Foundation at Washington DC, Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC, May 17, 2013.


Flanagan, Stephen J. “The United States and Turkey: A Model Partnership.” Statement CSIS presented at the Statement before the House Committee


Hafidell, Sofiia. “Turkey-NATO Relations at the 60th Anniversary.” Policy Update, Global Political Trends Center (GPoT), March 2012.


———. “中土关系的历史考察及评析 [Investigation and Comments on China Turkey Relations].” 西亚非洲, no. 5 (2003).


Jiang Mingxin (姜明新). “土耳其对华实施反倾销等贸易救济措施的特点及其成因 [The Features and Cause of Turkey’s Anti Dumping Trade Relief Policy towards China].” 西亚非洲, no. 6 (2009): 30–35.


———. “突厥游记 [Turkey Travel Notes].” 不忍, February 1913.


Karavit, Caner. “Eski Türk Sanatına Çin Kültürünün Etkileri [Influence of Chinese Culture to the Ancient Turkish Art].” In Türkiye’de Çin’i Düşünmek Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımalar, edited


Kawulich, Barbara B. “Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method.” Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research 6, no. 2 (May 31, 2005).


———. “Xinjiang Between the Globes: The Ottomans in the Making of Modern Xinjiang.” Master’s, Boğaziçi University, 2010.

Laçiner, Sedat. “Turgut Özal Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası [Turgut Özal Era Turkish Foreign Policy].” In *Osmanlı’dan İkibinli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi: İç ve Dış Politika [Turkey’s Political History from Ottomans to the 2000s: Domestic and Forreign Politics]*, edited by Adem


Ma Jilian (马积廉). “到麦加去：民国时期到中东去的旅行记述研究 (1911-1949) [Going to Mecca: Chinese Travel Accounts of the Middle East
From the Republican Period (1911-1949).” Master’s, National University of Singapore, 2012.


———. “Sharing Power: Turkey’s Democratization Challenge in the Age of the AKP Hegemony.” *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 103–22.


Özcan, Yurter. “Turkey as a NATO Partner: Reality vs. Rhetoric.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 105–12.


Personal Observation. Ankara Culture Week in Shanghai. Host to the Turkish delegates for Shanghai Government Foreign Affairs Bureau, November 11, 2010.


———. Turkey Pavilion at World Expo 2010 Shanghai. Senior Staff and Operation Supervisor, 2010.

———. Turkish businessmen’s business trips in China. Translator, Six years until 2013.

———. Turkish Students Society in Shanghai. Founding member and Moderator, Four years until 2012.
——. Turquoise Turkish Culture and Food Festival in Shanghai, October 10, 2013.
——. Xinjiang Field Trip, June 2012.
——. Xinjiang Restaurants, Nine years until 2015.


Taşgil, Ahmet. “Gök-Türk Ülkesine Gelen Çinli Elçilerin Raporlarına Göre Gök-Türk Çin İlişkileri (552-630) [Gök-Türk China Relations According to the


“TSK’dan Şangay Seçeneği [Shanghai (SCO) Option from TAF (Turkish Armed Forces)].” *Aydınlık*, Nisan 2013, sec. Manşet.


Tunçay, Mete. T.C.’nde tek-party yönetimi’nin kurulması (1923-1931) [Establishing the one party rule in Republic of Turkey (1923-1931)]. Yurt Yayınları, 1981.

Türk Çin Sanayici İş Adamları Derneği (TÜÇSİAD). Çin’den Türkiye’ye 100 Entellektüel [100 Intellectuals from China to Turkey], 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP8E90qYH5E.


Üngör, Çağdaş. “China Reaches Turkey? Radio Peking’s Turkish Language Broadcasts During the Cold War.” *All Azimuth* 1, no. 2 (July 2012): 19–33.


Uz, Mustafa Seçim. “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde İran’ın Küresel Güçlerle İlişkilerinin Türkiye Üzerindeki Etkileri [The Impact of Iran’s Relationship with Global Powers on Turkey During the Post-Cold War Period],” Master’s, Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, 2009.


Wang Yong (王勇), Umut Ergunsu (乌木特), and Luo Yang (罗洋). “‘一带一路’倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作 [China - Turkey Strategic Cooperation through ‘the Belt and Road ’ Initiative].” 西亚非洲, no. 6 (2015): 70–86.


Yaşlı, Fatih. “‘Üslere El Konacak, NATO’dan Çıkılacak’ [‘Military Bases Will Be Seized, NATO Will Be Abandoned’].” Birgün, July 31, 2016.


Zhang Bo (章波). “中国与土耳其关系的历史与未来 [A Study on Turkey’s Relations with Shanghai Cooperation Organization].” Arab World Studies [Arab World Studies], no. 6 (November 2014): 70–82.


Zou Zhiqiang (邹志强). “丝绸之路经济带与中土经贸关系 [Silk Road Economic Belt and Sino-Turkish Economic and Trade Relations].” 回族研究 2, no. 94 (2014): 128–34.


“中土大学生开展对话 畅谈‘一带一路’展望中土未来 [Chinese-Turkish Students Launch Dialog, Discuss ‘one Belt, One Road’ prospects for Sino-


CURRICULUM VITAE

Academic qualifications of the thesis author, Mr. SÖYLEMEZ Mehmet:

- Received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Shanghai Normal University, June 2009.
- Received the degree of Master of Law from East China University of Political Science and Law, June 2012.

June 2017