

# TOWARDS MULTIDIMENSIONAL SINO-TURKISH RELATIONS FROM THE PRE-MODERN ERA TO THE PRESENT<sup>1</sup>

*Esin Yurdagul*<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** In the early 21st century, relations between People's Republic of China and the Republic of Turkey were not a point of focus for international observers, but now one can observe a dramatic change in perception has. Multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations dates back as far as to the pre-modern era. This study attempts at filling the gap on multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations in official, diplomatic, military, economy and culture, political, and religious level from the pre-modern era to the present through a historical perspective narrative.

**Keywords:** China, Turkish, Pre-Modern Era, Diplomatic, Multidimensional

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 21st century, diplomatic relations between People's Republic of China (hereafter known as China) and the Republic of Turkey (hereafter known as Turkey) has become a point of focus in recent international relations scholarship.<sup>3</sup> There is a dramatic change in the diplomatic and academic landscape, with a remarkable increases<sup>4</sup> in numbers of symposiums, forums, panels, articles, columns, think tanks, and researchers paying particular attention to Sino-Turkish relations, especially with the current global focus on Sino-Turkish COVID-19 vaccination procurement, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)'s project in Turkey and the US-China trade war. There are more similarities in relations when present geopolitics as well as the past historic experiences dealing with the United States (US) and the West is taken into account.<sup>5</sup> Given the intensification of the recent International Relations (IR) debates on the changing nature of the international system and declining role of the US in the global order, it is fairly understandable for IR scholarship to consider the significance merits of the East Asian

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<sup>2</sup> First and Corresponding Author: Esin Yurdagul, academic advisor of the Commonwealth Vocational University and senior independent researcher. Email: [komorebi782019@gmail.com](mailto:komorebi782019@gmail.com).

<sup>3</sup> For emerging themes from China and Turkey, see also Carla P. Freeman, ed., *Handbook on China and Developing Countries*, (London, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016); Shaun Breslin, ed., *Handbook of China's International Relations*, (London, Routledge, 2010); Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, (London, Routledge, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Selçuk Çolakoğlu, *Turkey and China: Political, Economic and Strategic Aspects of the Relationship*, (Singapore, World Scientific, 2021): 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> For more debates on COVID-19, Turkey and China, emerging powers and the declining roles of the US in world politics, see Tana Johnson, "Ordinary Patterns in an Extraordinary Crisis: How International Relations Makes Sense of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Organization* 74, no. S1, (2020): 148-168; Rafael Vilasanjuan, "COVID-19: The Global Geopolitics of the Vaccine, a Weapon for Global Security," *Elcano Royal Institute of International and Strategic Studies*, 15 March 2021, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT); Ray Kiely, *The Rise and Fall of Emerging Powers: Globalisation, US Power and the Global North-South Divide*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

region, the rise of China and the enduring role of Turkey as an emerging power<sup>6</sup> in contemporary global politics.<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that multidimensional<sup>8</sup> Sino-Turkish relations between the two nations dates back as far as the ancient era.

In this article, the term, 'multidimensional' will be used to explore linkages and interactions between Turkey and China across time and space. This article attempts to retrospectively highlight a very important fact: while more recent and modern relations between China and Turkey are largely shaped by the contemporary geostrategic factors and encounters with the West (periods of colonialism, imperialism and the post-second world and cold wars of Western hegemony), we should never ignore the complexity of continuity and discontinuity of ancient history, anthropology and sociology accounts of the ancestral connections and ties between Turkish and Chinese societies.<sup>9</sup> In so doing, this article attempts to revisit the historical past as a very important factor that provides more instructive opportunities for present-day Turkish and China relations. In other words, one has to consider a broader inter-civilizational, cross-cultural and non-western foundations of modern day readings of historic relations between Turkey and China. The article utilized the historical fact of the Sino-Turkish civilizational and contemporary international relations as an object of study to underscore a very important argument made by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan.<sup>10</sup> Both scholars call for more nuances and critical reinterpretations of historical facts and contribution of non-western societies.<sup>11</sup> Rather than simply agreeing with a contested fact over the Eurocentric views of the Westphalian origins and evolutions of modern birth of the international relations, they argue for considering the current global power shift and focus towards the East Asia region, the rise of China, as well as emerging powers like Turkey as part of a cyclical pattern over the rise and fall of great powers over long periods in global history.

Understanding this is a crucial point to reconsider past historical encounters of Sino-Turkish relations as part of the non-western contributions in the making of truly global international relations, beyond Western and Eurocentric scholarships. Firstly, the discussion explores brief pre-historic encounters and migration between the ancient Chinese (mainland China) and Tu'jues (early settlers in modern-day Turkey) until the period 1200 BC.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, discussion considers the classical and

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<sup>6</sup> For a lengthy detailed discussion on the civilizational worldviews between China and Turkish empires, see Tao Zan, "Uncertainty and Ambiguity: Turkey's Perception on the Rise of China," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 3, no. 1, (2009): 66-79; Yuan Julian Chen, "Between Two Universal Empires: Ottoman-China Connections in the Sixteenth Century," *Yale InterAsia Connections Conference: Alternative Asias*, 2016, <https://www.academia.edu/32028698>.

<sup>7</sup> See also George Gabriel Sigmond, "Tea and China's Rise: Tea, Nationalism and Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 2, no. 3, (2015): 319-341; George Gabriel Sigmond, *Tea: Its Effects, Medicinal and Moral*, (London: Wentworth Press, 2019); Kenneth-Warren Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> In this article, the term, 'multidimensional' will be used to explore international relations across time and space (beyond a simple modern historical timeframe, as well as across sectors, including politics, economics, cultural and societal levels (multi-levels of interaction). For a similar usage of the term, see also Joseph Grieco, G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, *Introduction to International Relations: Enduring Questions and Contemporary Perspectives*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> See also Shogo Suzuki, Yongjin Zhang and Joel Quirk, eds., *International Orders in the Early Modern World: Before the Rise of the West*, (London, Routledge, 2014); Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, ed., *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia*, (London, Routledge, 2010); Alexei D. Voskressenski, ed., *Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Conceptualizing World Regional Studies*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017);

<sup>10</sup> Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Conceptualizing World Regional Studies*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019): 5-7;

<sup>11</sup> Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, "Why is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? Ten Years On," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 17, no. 3, (2017): 343; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015): 17-23;

<sup>12</sup> See Jennifer Gunner, "Historical Eras: List of Major Time Periods in History," *Yourdictionary*, 12 Jul 2021, <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/historical-eras-list-of-major-time-periods-in-history.html>

early modern period (1450-1750 AD) in which witnesses the important developments between the Chinese dynastic reigns and Ottoman rulers of Turkey. Finally, the discussion explores the modern and more contemporary years of encounters, starting from the demise of the Ottoman empire and the modern Republic of Turkey, as well as in the context of modern China (from the demise of the Manchu dynasty, the first republic as founded by Sun Yat-sen, and more recent periods under the Communist ruling of the People's Republic of China). However, the historical survey focuses more on how contemporary Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and China under President Xi Jinping have based past historical facts with more persuasive political reasons in dealing with the declining Western liberal order reigned by the US.

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL SINO-TURKISH RELATIONS IN PRE-MODERN ERA

Multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations dates back as far as the pre-modern era (ancient period). Pre-modern Chinese and the pre-modern nomadic Turks were neighbours. In Chinese historical records<sup>13</sup>, the pre-modern nomadic Turks were regarded as Tu'jues.<sup>14</sup> A considerable number of different facets had tremendous impact<sup>15</sup> on multidimensional relations between the pre-modern Sino dynasties and the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues. Both nations experienced peace and war. On one hand, the pre-modern Sino rulers granted titles and married their daughters to the rulers of the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues. On the other hand, their multidimensional relations were mostly affected and burdened by disagreements, conflicts, and terrible wars.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, the Great Wall of China was built across the historical northern borders of pre-modern Sino states during multiple dynasties as protection against Tu'jues and other nomadic tribes from the Eurasian Steppe. Wars between various pre-modern Chinese dynasties against various pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues' entities began from the pre-modern Han dynastic periods onwards. It should be mentioned that the wars led to (i) the push for the Silk Roads Initiative<sup>17</sup>; (ii) the extensive nature and posture of the People's Liberation Army; and (iii) People's Republic of China's distinct lack of naval capability.<sup>18</sup> Encounters between the ancient Chinese at the time of the Tang dynasty and Tu'jues intensified. Two war expeditions were launched by the pre-modern Tang dynasty.<sup>19</sup> The pre-modern Tang dynasty won both campaigns, yet failed to eliminate the resistance from the Tu'jues'. This was thought of as being detrimental to the pre-modern Tang dynasty and the pre-modern Sino power and led to the following historical events: (i) the [Battle of Talas](#) or the defeat at Talas (A.D. 751)<sup>20</sup> took place with the Tu'jues joining with the pre-modern Arabs. This weakened pre-modern

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<sup>13</sup> For a lengthy detailed discussion on the earliest archaeological and prehistorical evidence between Turkish and Chinese civilizational encounters, see Zhanar Kozhabekova, "Turkic Kaganate and China by Sources and the Latest Archaeological Research," *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences* 82, (2013): 117-121; Zhaojun Yang, "Sino-Turkish Cultural Interchange in Retrospect," 544; Resat Kasaba, "Open-Door Treaties: China and the Ottoman Empire Compared," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 7, (1992): 71-89.

<sup>14</sup> Tao Zan, "An overview of Turkish Studies in China," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi (TALID)* 8, no. 15, (2010): 281-290; Giray Fidan, "Sino-Turkish Relations: An Overview," Middle East Institute (MEI), 4 October 2013, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/sino-turkish-relations-overview>; Chaochun-Sadi Yang, "Historical Retrospection of the Cultural Exchange between China and Turkey," *Erdem* 5, no. 15, (1989): 725-748.

<sup>15</sup> Kozhabekova, "Turkic Kaganate and China by Sources and the Latest Archaeological Research," 118.

<sup>16</sup> See also Léonie Chao-Fong, "The 13 Dynasties that Ruled China in Order," *Historyhit*, 1 September 2020, <https://www.historyhit.com/the-dynasties-that-ruled-china-in-order/>

<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Doerfer, "Die Türken Mittler Kultureller und Sprachlicher Strömungen in Eurasien [The Turks' Middle Cultural and linguistic Streams in Eurasia]," *Politik und Wirtschaft* 7, no. 2-3, (1966): 27.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Lynn Cucchisi, "The Causes and Effects of the Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949," (Master Thesis, Seton Hall University, 2002), 36-48.

<sup>19</sup> Contents, Uliyeoganes, Contents.history.go, 2021; Pan, Yihong, 'Son of heaven and heavenly Qaghan: Sui-Tang China and its neighbors,' Western CEDAR, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Hoberman, B., 'Saudi aramco world: The battle of Talas,' Saudi Aramco World, pp: 26-31, 1982.

China's in the aftermath of the Battle of Talas<sup>21</sup> and the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763) when pre-modern Turkic-born [An Lushan](#) revolted against the pre-modern Tang dynasty.<sup>22</sup> Not only the royal empire but also the pre-modern Sino people under the rule of the pre-modern Tang dynasty were impacted due to this warfare. It took years before the wounds of the past were healed. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, in the aftermath of a series of wars with the Chinese, the pre-modern Tang dynasty defeated the pre-modern East and West Tu'jues<sup>23</sup> in the north and their influence expanded past the original frontier protected by the wall resulting in the Great Wall of People's Republic of China loosing its importance as a fortification<sup>24</sup>.

The collapse of the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues was followed by their unprecedented Western-forward movement<sup>25</sup> by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues were settling in what was then pre-modern Turkey<sup>26</sup>. This shows the length of the interactions between the two nations.<sup>27</sup> Multidimensional relations saw Sino culture infiltrating into the life of the pre-modern settled Turks and influenced the activities of the Turkish state. Vice versa, the pre-modern settled Turks' activities always appeared in Sino historical writings. They were referred to as Rumei<sup>28</sup> in the pre-modern Song dynasty<sup>29</sup> where Sino tea<sup>30</sup> and pre-modern Sino porcelain<sup>31</sup> were exported to the pre-modern settled Turks. During the pre-modern Yuan dynasty<sup>32</sup>, the pre-modern settled Turks carried Islam into the East, while Sino tea and pre-modern Sino porcelain were continually exported to the pre-modern settled Turks.<sup>33</sup> These exchanges continued to strengthen relations between the two nations.

## **MULTIDIMENSIONAL SINO-TURKISH RELATIONS IN EARLY MODERN ERA**

In the early modern era, the early modern [Ming dynasty](#)<sup>34</sup> and the early modern Ottoman Empire continually expanded their multidimensional relations. The early modern Ottoman Empire<sup>35</sup> Suleiman I (1522-1566) made friends with early modern China. Suleiman sent envoys to early modern China five times who were well received by the Emperors of the early modern Ming dynasty. For example,

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21 Hoberman, B., 'Saudi aramco world: The battle of Talas,' Saudi Aramco World, pp: 26-31, 1982.

22 Totally History, *An Lushan Rebellion-The devastating An-Shi Rebellion (755-763)*, Totally History, 2011.

23 Zongzheng, Xue, *History of Tu'jue (Tu'jue shi)*, The social science publisher of China, 1992; Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

24 <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-china/great-wall-of-china>

25 Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

26 Fidan, G., 'Sino-Turkish relations: An overview,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

27 Zongzheng, Xue, *History of Tu'jue (Tu'jue shi)*, The social science publisher of China, 1992.

Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

28 Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

29 Chao-Fong, Léonie, 'The 13 dynasties that ruled China in order,' *Historyhit*, 2020.

30 Sigley, G., 'Tea and China's rise: Tea, nationalism and culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,' *Int. Commun. Chin. Cult*, 2(3), pp: 319-341, 2015.

Sigmond, G.G., *Tea its effects, medicinal and moral*, London: Longman, 1839.

31 Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

32 Chao-Fong, Léonie, 'The 13 dynasties that ruled China in order,' *Historyhit*, 2020.

33 Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

34 Chao-Fong, Léonie, 'The 13 dynasties that ruled China in order,' *Historyhit*, 2020; Doerfer, G., 'Die Türken Mittler kultureller und sprachlicher Strömungen in Eurasien (In German),' *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft (Wien)*, 7. Jahrgang, Heft 2-3, pp: 24a-32b, 1966.

35 Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

the official history of the early modern [Ming dynasty](#) indicated that some self-proclaimed early modern Ottoman envoys paid a visit to Beijing in order to pay tribute to the early modern Ming Emperor in 1524<sup>36</sup>. Although the Ottoman Empire was far away from China, Sino historical records mentioned it quite frequently. Turkey was referred to as Rumi in the early modern Ming dynasty. Furthermore, as the early modern Ottoman Empire continually carried Islam into the east, Sino tea and early modern porcelain were exported to the early modern Ottoman Empire.<sup>37</sup> By the early 1700s, the Qing dynasty<sup>38</sup> appeared to be in a stronger position to confront western infiltration, the early modern Ottoman Empire appeared to be very fragile and on the verge of collapse.<sup>39</sup>

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MODERN CHINA AND THE MODERN OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The first Industrial Revolution (1750 and 1850)<sup>40</sup> and the second Industrial Revolution (1850 and 1914)<sup>41</sup> effectively introduced new-imperialism<sup>42</sup> weakened both the Qing dynasty and the Ottoman Empire into one of the weakest territories as they were unable to keep up with Western Europe. Eventually this led to the Europeans controlling them. The Qing dynasty and the Ottoman Empire shared several similarities whereby: (i) they were hurt by a rapidly shifting balance of global power; (ii) they still kept their independence; (iii) they attempted to modernize, but never truly succeeded; had no industrial economies and restoration of a strong state; (iv) they gave rise to new nationalist views of society; and (v) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>43</sup>, they became periphery or semi-colonies of the informal empires of Europe.<sup>44</sup> A certain amount of influence and stance of the Western colonizers was negative for both these semi-colonized nations.<sup>45</sup> The Western colonizers had a tremendous influence on modern China under the rule of the Qing dynasty and the Ottoman Empire. The Western colonizers' influence had a tremendous impact on both nations' suspicion of the West, and this manifested in their respective political systems and among large sections of their populations.<sup>46</sup> After the two nations had become periphery or semi-colony of the Western colonizers<sup>47</sup>, multidimensional relations between the two nations were not as close as before.

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<sup>36</sup> Chase, Kenneth-Warren, [Firearms: A global history to 1700](#) (illustrated, reprint ed.), Cambridge University Press, p. 141, 2003.

For more details, please see, Chen, Yuan-Julian, 'Between two universal empires: Ottoman-China connections in the sixteenth century,' *Yale InterAsia Connections Conference: Alternative Asias: Currents, Crossings, Connection*, 2016.

Doerfer, G., 'Die Türken Mittler kultureller und sprachlicher Strömungen in Eurasien (In German),' *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft (Wien)*, 7. Jahrgang, Heft 2-3, pp: 24a-32b, 1966.

<sup>37</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>38</sup> The early modern Qing dynasty (1644-1912) was known as the last imperial dynasty in early modern China and was established by the Mancus. (Chao-Fong, Léonie, 2020)

Chao-Fong, Léonie, 'The 13 dynasties that ruled China in order,' *Historyhit*, 2020.

<sup>39</sup>World History Unit IV 1750-1914, Chapter 26: Civilizations in crisis: The Ottoman Empire, the Islamic Heartlands, and Qing China.

<sup>40</sup> Thus, it is evident that the progress of the first Industrial Revolution influenced both colonizers and colonized nations.

<sup>41</sup> "By 1914, a large majority of the world's nations had been colonized by Europeans at some point." (Blakemore, 2019) Blakemore, E., 'What is colonialism?' *Nationalgeographic*, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Parvanova, D., 'The industrial revolution was the force behind the New Imperialism,' *ESSAI*, 15, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Pittsford schools, *Ottoman Empire*, Pittsford schools, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> For more details on colonialism, please see, Yurdagul, E., 'A new perspective on the colonized Korea: Japanese modern colonialism and American neo-colonialism,' Forthcoming.

<sup>46</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Yang, Zhaojun, 'Sino-Turkish cultural interchange in retrospect,' *In Zhou, Yiliang (Eds.), A history of cultural interchange between China and other countries*, Henan People's Press, pp: 526-544, 1987.

In 1845, Ma Dexing, the famous Sino Islamic scholar from Yunnan and his disciples Ma Anli and Ma Kaike made their annual holy pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. On their way, they paid a visit to Istanbul and were received by Sultan Abdulmejid I (1823-1861).<sup>48</sup> The modern Ottoman Empire continually attracted the attention of the Hui people in China under the rule of the Qing dynasty because significant changes occurred in the empire which coincided with the revolutions in modern China<sup>49</sup>. For instance, Kaiser Wilhelm II, was anxious about the involvement of the Sino Muslim troops in the Boxer Rebellion. Thus, as requested by him, to find a way to stop the Muslim troops from fighting, the Caliph Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) of Ottoman Empire sent Enver Pasha (1881-1922) to China in 1901. However, the rebellion had ended by the time the envoy was sent there.<sup>50</sup> In the last years of the Qing dynasty, Emperor Guangxu was still continually sending gifts to Abdul Hamid II on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his reign.<sup>51</sup> Personal collections of Abdul Hamid II includes albums containing portraits of celebrated foreigners such as Emperor Guangxu, President Lincoln, Nasir al-Din Shah, Queen Victoria, and Giuseppe Garibaldi.<sup>52</sup> The famous late-Qing reform leaders Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) noticed the evolution of the Ottoman Empire. Not surprisingly, modern Sino elites paid tremendous attention to the modern Ottoman Empire.<sup>53</sup> Both nations officially collapsed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> The late-Qing dynasty was succeeded by the Republic of China or the Republic of Nationalist (Kuomintang) China in 1912<sup>55</sup> after multiple revolutions under the rule of the late-Qing dynasty. Sino people, including the Hui minority, witnessed the transition of their country from a feudalistic monarchy into a modern republic.<sup>56</sup> Decades later, in 1923, the Republic of Turkey was successfully established under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>57</sup>

## **OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

In 1912, Wang Kuan<sup>58</sup> paid a visit to Istanbul. He was so deeply impressed by the Young Turk's reforms that he appealed for diplomatic and commercial exchanges between the (new) Republic of

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Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>49</sup> For more details, please see, Lei, Wan, 'The Chinese Islamic "Goodwill mission to the Middle East" during the Anti-Japanese War,' *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 15(29), 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Karpat, K.K., *The politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith, and community in the late Ottoman state*, Oxford University Press US, p. 237, 2001.

Craig-Harris, Lillian, *China Considers the Middle East (illustrated ed.)*, I.B. Tauris, p. 56, 1993.

Hartford Seminary Foundation, *The Moslem World*, 1-3, Hartford Seminary Foundation, p. 190, 1966.

<sup>51</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>52</sup> İÜK, Album 90899; Nolan, E.H., 'Two-faced: Translations of a portrait of Abdülhamid II,' In *E.M., Troelenberg, K., Schankweiler, & A.S., Messner, Reading objects in the contact zone*, Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality, 9, Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, pp: 35-41. 2021.

<sup>53</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Pittsford schools, *Ottoman Empire*, Pittsford schools, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Chao-Fong, Léonie, 'The 13 dynasties that ruled China in order,' *Historyhit*, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> For more details, please see, Lei, Wan, 'The Chinese Islamic "Goodwill mission to the Middle East" during the Anti-Japanese War,' *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 15(29), 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is also taught in Sino history textbooks on modernization reforms in world history. (China Radio International, 2013)

<sup>58</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

China and the modern Ottoman Empire as soon as he returned to his homeland.<sup>59</sup> At the end of World War I (1914-1918), the Turks and the Turkish Nationalist military forces defended their national independence and later established the Republic of Turkey in 1923. A great number of Sino intellectuals concerned themselves with the rise and development of the Republic of Turkey. The Sino intelligentsia began to draw close attention to Turkey since late 1918. The *Eastern Miscellany*<sup>60</sup> carried a series of articles<sup>61</sup> and all demonstrated indignation against the imperialist aggressors and hearty sympathy for Turks. Furthermore, the radicals and the liberals in the Republic of China were inspired by the final victory of Turkish independence war in September, 1922.<sup>62</sup> After Wang Kuan, Wang Jnigzhai<sup>63</sup> and his disciple Nimet Ma Hongdao paid a visit to Ankara in 1923<sup>64</sup> to make further understand Islamic theory in Istanbul University.<sup>65</sup> Between the years 1923 and 1947, long articles and short commentaries were published on modern Turkey and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in approximately every issue of the *Eastern Miscellany*.<sup>66</sup> Thus, despite the troubles in the two nations, official relations between the Republic of China and Turkey under the leadership of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk went ahead.<sup>67</sup> The 1930s<sup>68</sup> witnessed both nations continually developing official relations. In 1934, President Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China sent a picture of himself with his own signature to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This was interpreted as a symbol of friendly relationship and the picture is now kept in the Museum of Atatürk Mausoleum (Anitkabir).<sup>69</sup> What is worth pointing out here is that the Republic of Turkey was regarded as a model for modern Sino reformists, revolutionaries and even early Communists.<sup>70</sup> One of the characteristics of modern Sino's 'new historiography' that emerged out of Turkey's development in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the awareness of national progress and modernization. According to Dong, Zhenghua, several intellectuals like that of Liu Keshu and Zhao Jingyuan wrote much of the new Turkey and even introduced words like 'modernization' in their writings.

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<sup>59</sup> Yang, Zhaojun, 'Sino-Turkish cultural interchange in retrospect,' *In Zhou, Yiliang (Eds.), A history of cultural interchange between China and other countries*, Henan People's Press, pp: 526-544, 1987.

Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>60</sup> The Eastern Miscellany (Dongfang zazhi) was a famous magazine and was published in Shanghai in the years 1904-1948. (Dong, Zhenghua, 1999)

Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>61</sup> A series of articles from No. 8 of Vol. 15 (August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1918) to No. 24 of Vol. 18 (December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921)

Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>62</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999; Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>63</sup> Wang Jnigzhai was from Tienjing and was a well-known Islamic scholar. He also translated a lot of works.

Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>64</sup> Ankara is the new capital of the Republic of Turkey.

<sup>65</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

Yang, Zhaojun, 'Sino-Turkish cultural interchange in retrospect,' *In Zhou, Yiliang (Eds.), A history of cultural interchange between China and other countries*, Henan People's Press, pp: 526-544, 1987.

Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>66</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>67</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

Tao, Zan, 'An alternative partner to the West? Turkey's growing relations with China,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> For more details, please see on the 1930s, Lei, Wan, 'The Chinese Islamic "Goodwill mission to the Middle East" during the Anti-Japanese War,' *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 15(29), 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Tao, Zan, 'An overview of Turkish Studies in China,' *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 8(15), pp: 281-290, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009; Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999; Jun, Yu, 'The international significance of the Turkish Nationalist Victory,' *Guide*, 3, 1922.

In addition, in 1935, the Republic of China and the Republic of Turkey established diplomatic relations at the legation level.<sup>71</sup> During the Anti-Japanese War between 1937 and 1945, five delegations from China visited Turkey, including the Sino Muslim delegation under Wang Zengshan. They informed the Turks the true situation during the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>72</sup> They won the sympathy of both the Turkish government and its people.<sup>73</sup> After the end of the Sino Civil War (1927-1949)<sup>74</sup> in 1949, the Republic of China or the Republic of Nationalist (Kuomintang) China started to decline<sup>75</sup> and eventually the People's Republic of China was established in 1949.

The People's Republic of China and Turkey became estranged<sup>76</sup> and relations between the two nations stagnated during the last two decades of the Cold War (1947-1962)<sup>77</sup> when Turkey sided with the coalition which fought against the People's Republic of China in the Korean War (1950-1953).<sup>78</sup> Turkey's participation in that war paved the way for its accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>79</sup> However in 1971, official relations were established when: (i) the US rapprochement with People's Republic of China took place<sup>80</sup>; (ii) People's Republic of China's membership into the United Nations Security Council<sup>81</sup>; and (iii) the Republic of Turkey's support for People's Republic of China<sup>82</sup>. Therefore, diplomatic relations between the two nations has been steadily progressing since 1980s with the open door policy of both nations.<sup>83</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, diplomatic relations between China and Turkey shifted to a new phase. Due Turkey's foreign policy orientation towards the East instead of the West, China became one of the most important partners in expansion of Turkey to the East. China regards Turkey as a part of the Silk Roads Initiative and in turn Turkey has continued to support China. Thus, this led to an increase in the bilateral relations and the establishment of many consultation mechanisms at different levels over the years to discuss bilateral as well as regional and global issues, i.e., reciprocal high-level visits<sup>84</sup>, and cooperation with multilateral frameworks such as

<sup>71</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Lei, Wan, 'The Chinese Islamic "Goodwill mission to the Middle East" during the Anti-Japanese War,' *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 15(29), 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Yang, Chaochun-Sadi, 'Historical retrospection of the cultural exchange between China and Turkey,' *Erdem*, 5(15), pp: 725-748, 1989.

<sup>74</sup> For more details, please see, Cucchisi, J.L., 'The causes and effects of the Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949,' *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*, 2361, 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Dong, Zhenghua, 'Chinese views of Atatürk and modern Turkey,' *Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi*, pp: 669-675, 1999.

Tao, Zan, 'An alternative partner to the West? Turkey's growing relations with China,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> However, after of the end of the Sino Civil War in 1949, the diplomatic relations between the Republic of Turkey and Kuomintang's Taiwan continued to grow until the early 1970s. (Tao, Zan, 2010)

Tao, Zan, 'An overview of Turkish Studies in China,' *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 8(15), pp: 281-290, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>78</sup> In the aftermath of the invasion of North Korean forces, which were assisted by the then Soviet Union and People's Republic of China, on 25 June, 1950, military aid for [South Korea](#) was requested by [United Nations Resolution 83](#) on 29 June, 1950. The Republic of Turkey became the 2<sup>nd</sup> country to answer the United Nations call, after the United States. (*Department of Defense, 2007*)

*Department of Defense, Allied forces in the Korean War, Department of Defense, 2007.*

<sup>79</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>82</sup> The Republic of Turkey became one of 76 nations that voted in favor of restoring United Nations membership to the then People's Republic of China's government. (Archive, 2018)  
Archived from the original on 12 June 2018.

<sup>83</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and China*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.

For more details, please see, Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and China*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.



the United Nations, G20 and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia.<sup>85</sup> Yet, the sustainability of bilateral relations was a concern for a great number of experts in both People's Republic of China and the West.<sup>86</sup> This was because some sensitive factors influence relations, in particular on the Turkish side. The factors are identified as follows: (i) China and Turkey do not see eye to eye on the crisis in Syria. China like Russia wants Bashar al-Assad's rule to continue. However, Turkey seeks to overthrow his rule. (ii) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization membership constitutes a significant anchor in Turkey's foreign policy and security that is highly dependent upon the West. But Turkey also wants the expansion of its security cooperation with China. The possibility of Turkey progressing with a security deal with China has aroused hard feelings within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and has been portrayed by Turkey's Western allies as a potential Trojan horse. Especially, the US strongly opposes such a transaction. (iii) The crisis in Russia-Turkey relations which was caused by the downing of a Russian plane in November 2015 and which led to another challenge for China-Turkey relations, as it potentially could have developed into a head-on clash between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Simultaneously, although the crisis with Russia gives highlight to Turkey's decades-long dependence on North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it also demonstrated Turkey's fears that the organization might not support it when there is a conflict. In this regard, the crisis has encouraged Turkey to be independent in terms of defense procurement and self-reliance; thus, cooperation with China is likely to become an option for consideration.<sup>87</sup> (iv) The issue of mistreating the Muslim minority (the Uyghurs) by the China has caused diplomatic tensions which led to a suspended relations from 1999 to 2000<sup>88</sup>. This is still the most sensitive topic between China and Turkey, particularly on the Chinese side.<sup>89</sup> For example, COVID-19 pandemic diplomacy has become a cause of concern for Turkey.<sup>90</sup> One major reasons for the delay in obtaining *Sinovac* vaccine from China was because there are rumours that the Chinese forced Turkey to ratify a 2017 extradition deal with Ankara which resulted in the handing over of Uyghurs to Beijing.<sup>91</sup>

## STRATEGIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Until the year 2000, relations between China and Turkey were deemed to be less significant by a great number of Western scholars.<sup>92</sup> But the establishment of strategic relations in military affairs, economic/trade, and cultural sector has result in rebuilding relations.<sup>93</sup> Especially, in October 2010, China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao paid a visit to Turkey, which elevated relations to the strategic

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<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China and Turkey*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Chen, Yang, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Tao, Zan, 'An alternative partner to the West? Turkey's growing relations with China,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Klimeš, O., 'The Xinjiang crisis and Sino-Turkish relations during the pandemic: Part one,' *China Brief Volume*, 21(4), 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Bostock, B., 'Turkey is accused of extraditing Uighur Muslims to China in exchange for COVID-19 vaccines,' *Businessinsider*, 2021; Mashino, I., 'Future of the Middle East caught between US-China and US-Russia rivalry,' *Mitsui & Co. Global Strategic Studies Institute Monthly Report*, 2020; For more details, please see, Pan, Honghui, 'Prospects for Sino-Turkish relations unlikely partnership or uncertain complex?' *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 2(1), pp: 101-117, 2016.

<sup>92</sup> Pan, Honghui, 'Prospects for Sino-Turkish relations unlikely partnership or uncertain complex?' *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 2(1), pp: 101-117, 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

cooperative level.<sup>94</sup> Two main reasons for this are as follows: (i) China's desire to improve its geo-political and geo-economic standing globally; and (ii) Turkey's desire to diversify its relations with other powers<sup>95</sup> and increasing estrangement from the Western bloc<sup>96</sup> following an attempted military coup on 15 July, 2016. After China's Belt and Road Initiative confirmed the strategic importance of the Middle East and North Africa regions, Chinese interests in these two regions has expanded. China's international political ambitions has now extended towards the Middle East and the North Africa region.<sup>97</sup>

The extent of China's influence in the region is still at an early stage, nonetheless it is an increasingly relevant regional actor.<sup>98</sup> In the case of Turkey, due to the important historic events in March 2017 when a constitutional referendum in Turkey was held to shift from a parliamentary system to a heavily centralized *totalitarian* presidential one<sup>99</sup> led to strained relations with other European countries.<sup>100</sup> In May 2017 when there was another memorandum which set out cooperation modalities between Turkey as Dialogue Partner and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, (signed on 26 April 2013 in Almaty) which was ratified by the adoption of the Cabinet Ministers Decision dated 1 May 2017 in the Official Journal on 24 May 2017<sup>101</sup> and in June 2018 when the re-election of the current President of Turkey occurred, the strategic coordination between China's Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey's Middle Corridor project further accelerated and promoted bilateral relations.<sup>102</sup> In November 2019, Turkey became an active member of the Belt and Road Initiative project and its membership led to more strategic interactions with China.<sup>103</sup>

## **MILITARY RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND TURKEY**

Some improvement in military relations between People's Republic of China and the Republic of Turkey took place in the 1990s, in part as a result of the West's refusal<sup>104</sup> to sell certain weapon systems or individual sets of weapons to Turkey in the context of its conflict with the Kurdistan Workers'

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<sup>94</sup> China Daily, *China, Turkey to establish strategic cooperative relationship*, China Daily, 2010.

Tao, Zan, 'An alternative partner to the West? Turkey's growing relations with China,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> In July 2016 when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2016 before the G20 Hangzhou Summit to align Belt and Road Initiative with Middle Corridor Project located at a key position in the [Belt and Road Initiative](#) program, the Republic of Turkey was aimed at realizing Trans Hazar-Middle Corridor Project, which complements the North Line from People's Republic of China to Europe and open a new connecting corridor between People's Republic of China and Europe; Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and China*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021; For more details, please see, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Turkey's multilateral transportation policy*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.

<sup>96</sup> Chaziza, M., 'Sino-Turkish 'solid strategic partnership': China's dream or a reality?' *China Report*, 52(4), pp: 265-283, 2016

<sup>97</sup> Michael, S., 'Chinese views and commentary on the 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative,' *China Leadership Monitor*, 47, 2(3), 2015.

Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Scobell, A., & Nader, A., 'China in the Middle East: The wary dragon,' *RAND Corporation*, 2016.

Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> The bottom-up approach demonstrates that the presidential decisions on an individual level has a tremendous impact on relations.

<sup>100</sup> Jun, Z., 'The new Era of Sino-Turkish relations was held in Shanghai,' *International Online CRI*, 2017.

Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>101</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Shanghai cooperation organization*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>103</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>104</sup> The top-down approach has witnessed Turkey's foreign policy approach has been affected by the decision on international system governance.

Party.<sup>105</sup> In the case of China, the [Belt and Road Initiative](#) program led to its expansion of military cooperation as part of more developed strategic relations between the two nations.<sup>106</sup> China is strategically aiming at coordinating more closely on regional and international affairs, including military. The growth of its comprehensive power has led China to have two frontiers: (i) one is deemed as the natural frontier of its sovereign territory; and (ii) the other is considered to be an artificial frontier that has been created by its overseas interests. By deploying soft military presence overseas, particularly in the Middle East<sup>107</sup>, it wants to protect its commercial interests while also providing public goods for the international community and minimizing the risk of damage to multilateral relations.<sup>108</sup> In the post-2011-uprising world, the Middle Eastern and North African regional order is unstable, leading to competition among a great number of states with diverging interests and ambitions. This is coupled with the perception that the US' relative power, influence, and commitment to the Middle East is in decline. Because of this, the Middle East and North Africa regional states have been hedging their bets to maintain the US' relationship, while simultaneously engaging with China. China's Belt and Road Initiative ambitions roughly coincide with this perceived US pullback, so Middle Eastern leaders are developing these kinds of political and economic relations. At the same time, nobody expects China to replace the US in military terms.<sup>109</sup> China has to a lesser extent increased security footprint in the Middle East in the last decade. This is maybe because it still has a limited appetite for challenging the US-led security architecture in the Middle East.<sup>110</sup> Recent years have witnessed small steps toward security partnerships with arms sales, joint training, and high-level meetings between military and defense officials. However, Gulf leaders have wanted more.<sup>111</sup> In September 2013, the China Precision Machinery Import-Export Corporation won a Turkish tender for the purchase of anti-missile defense systems.<sup>112</sup> Several high-level delegations from China to Turkey have been playing a significant role in improving its national security.<sup>113</sup> In the case of Turkey, it received the necessary know-how that permitted the state to develop artillery<sup>114</sup> ballistic missiles within the range of 100-150 kilometers.<sup>115</sup> In the 1990s, when negotiations for technology transfer and production under license in Turkey of the American M-270 MLRS artillery rocket system failed which led to China's cooperation with Turkey for joint development of ballistic missiles production.<sup>116</sup> After China's participated in Turkey-initiated air force exercise Anatolian Eagle in October 2010, the first-ever joint military training between both states, there were a lot of concerns whether Turkey is shifting its military and diplomatic focus to the East. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization members,

<sup>105</sup> DW Academia, *Turkey, China seek to expand economic ties despite political differences*, DW Academia, 2020.

Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>106</sup> For more details on the military relations between People's Republic of China and the Republic of Turkey, please see, Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

Yoon, Hyun-soo, 'Turkish foreign policy and strategic partnership in Asia-Pacific,' *Middle East Technical University*, 2019.

<sup>107</sup> China's involvement in the Middle East brought some negative and destabilizing effects on the region.

Rubin, B., 'China's Middle East strategy,' *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 3(1), p. 52, 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Degang, Sun, 'China's soft military presence in the Middle East,' *Middle East Institute*, 2015.

Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>109</sup> Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> Lons, C., Fulton, J., Sun, De-gang, & Al-Tamimi, N., 'China's great game in the Middle East,' *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> Fulton, J., *China's relations with the Gulf monarchies*, Routledge, 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>115</sup> DW Academia, *Turkey, China seek to expand economic ties despite political differences*, DW Academia, 2020.

Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>116</sup> Al Araby, 'How China is heavily contributing to Middle East drone and missile proliferation,' *Al Araby*, 2019.

particularly the US, which is cautious of China's growing prestige and stronger military posture due to such participation, and fears its rise strongly objected to the inclusion of F-16 fighters by Turkey in the training lest any key technological information be leaked to the Sino. Moreover, both nations have been engaged in ever closer cooperation as evidenced by Turkey's intensifying efforts to join the Sino-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Sino companies' active participation in Turkey's many military/defense projects.<sup>117</sup>

## **ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND TURKEY**

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991,<sup>118</sup> the rise of China was regarded as an opportunity by Turkey in terms of economic and trading relations.<sup>119</sup> In 1992, the Sino-Turkish Business Council was established.<sup>120</sup> However, the issue of the Uyghurs caused strain in relations resulting in suspension of relations from 1999 to 2000.<sup>121</sup> Later, a substantial growth of bilateral trade became a norm.<sup>122</sup> In the year 2000, thanks to the establishment of strategic relations between China and Turkey, economic relations grew rapidly<sup>123</sup> and the total bilateral trade volume exceeded US \$ 1 billion for the first time.<sup>124</sup> However, two problems arose due to the following reasons: (i) the first is the imbalance in trade, favoring China; and (ii) the second is fierce competition between the two nations in similar industrial sectors.<sup>125</sup> In the case of China, due to the Belt and Road Initiative, the relations has allowed Beijing a foothold in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>126</sup> In 2015, China hosted the Asia-Europe Meeting in Chongqing and officially announced the Belt and Road Initiative, with spreading across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean region.<sup>127</sup> One of these corridors within the initiative, the China-Central West Asia Economic Corridor, involves the Middle East and North Africa as an endpoint and passes through Central Asia before forking to Turkey and Iran. This is known as the only economic corridor to pass through the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>128</sup> China's influence has spread rapidly in these two places. For instance, according to the Oxford Economics, in 2015, China was

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<sup>117</sup> Pan, Honghui, 'Prospects for Sino-Turkish relations unlikely partnership or uncertain complex?' *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 2(1), pp: 101-117, 2016.

Chaziza, M., 'Sino-Turkish 'solid strategic partnership': China's dream or a reality?' *China Report*, 52(4), pp: 265-283, 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Yan, Xuetong, 'The rise of China and its power status,' *Journal of International Politics*, 1, p. 5, 2006.

Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

<sup>120</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and China*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.

<sup>121</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

For more details, please see, Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

Yoon, Hyun-soo, 'Turkish foreign policy and strategic partnership in Asia-Pacific,' *Middle East Technical University*, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> TRT World, *Economic ties develop between China, Turkey*, TRT World, 2015.

Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>124</sup> Archived from the original on 20 August 2019. MOFCOM.

<sup>125</sup> Tao, Zan, 'An alternative partner to the West? Turkey's growing relations with China,' *Middle East Institute*, 2013.

<sup>126</sup> Michael, S., 'Chinese views and commentary on the 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative,' *China Leadership Monitor*, 47, 2(3), 2015; Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>127</sup> Yini, He, 'China to invest \$ 900b in Belt and Road Initiative,' *China Daily*, 2015.

Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Fulton, J., 'China's changing role in the Middle East,' *Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence*, 2019.

ranked second among the 24 trade partners of Turkey.<sup>129</sup> In 2019, China became Turkey's first trading partner in East Asia and second important partner after the Russian Federation.<sup>130</sup> One year later, China came to be Turkey's biggest trading partner<sup>131</sup> and it ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in Turkey's top trading partners in terms of export sales (US \$ 2.9 Billion (1.7%).<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, with more than a few high-level Sino delegations visiting Turkey, this has improved the state's economic development.<sup>133</sup> In the case of Turkey, bilateral trade has mostly been based upon China's exports to Turkey, and Turkey has tried to increase its exports to of China instead.<sup>134</sup> In 2012, a weak economy caused Turkey to become closer to China and Russia, and to be more dependent on them.<sup>135</sup> In other sectors, cultural cooperation agreement between China and Turkey in 1993 saw more interactions in sports, education and cultural exchanges.<sup>136</sup> The attempted military coup on 15 July 2016<sup>137</sup> in Turkey led to a more pronounced effect on bilateral trade flows between China and Turkey.<sup>138</sup> In June 2019, to help the Turkish economy, US \$ 1 billion worth of funds were transferred by to Turkey.<sup>139</sup>

## CONCLUSION

China's political influence in the Middle East was weak until the late 1990s.<sup>140</sup> However, it has significantly increased in the last decade, yet China has limited appetite for playing a significant role in regional politics.<sup>141</sup> China recognized the importance and significance of Turkey as a bridge between Europe and Asia, particularly with regard to foreign direct investment<sup>142</sup> and trade.<sup>143</sup> When the attempted military coup on 15 July 2016 took place, this affected Turkey's relations with the west - especially dealings with the European Union and the US. Thus, Turkey had to reconsider its allegiances and political positions, and therefore it improved its relations with China.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, a number of

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<sup>129</sup> Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Holdings PLC, *Turkey: Trade report*, Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Holdings PLC, 2015.

<sup>130</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and China*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021.

<sup>131</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Workman, D., 'Turkey's top trading partners,' *Worldstopexports*, 2020.

<sup>133</sup> Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>134</sup> Lavi, G., & Lindenstrauss, G., 'China and Turkey: Closer relations mixed with suspicion,' *Strategic Assessment*, 19(2), 2016.

For more details, please see, TRT World, *Economic ties develop between China, Turkey*, TRT World, 2015.

Archived from the original on 20 August 2019. MOFCOM.

<sup>135</sup> Altay, K., 'Why Erdogan has abandoned the Uyghurs,' *Foreignpolicy*, 2021.

For more details, please see, Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>136</sup> Archived from the original on 25 December 2014. Chinese Embassy in Turkey.

<sup>137</sup> Yang, Chen, 'Developments in China-Turkey relations: A view from China,' *Critical Sociology*, 46(4-5), pp: 777-787, 2019.

<sup>138</sup> Klepek, J., 'Contemporary China-Turkey relations,' *Instytut Nowej Europy*, 2020.

<sup>139</sup> Berman, I., 'Erdogan's Chinese gamble,' *The Diplomat*, 2019.

<sup>140</sup> For more details, please see, Rubin, B., 'China's Middle East strategy,' *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 3(1), p. 52, 1999.

<sup>141</sup> Lons, C., Fulton, J., Sun, De-gang, & Al-Tamimi, N., 'China's great game in the Middle East,' *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2019.

<sup>142</sup> For more details, please see, Chen, M.X., & Lin, C., 'Foreign investment across the Belt and Road patterns, determinants and effects,' *World Bank Group*, 2018.

<sup>143</sup> Tao, Zan, 'Uncertainty and ambiguity: Turkey's perception on the rise of China,' *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(1), 2009.

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high-level Sino delegations were sent to the Republic of Turkey, and this played an important role in improving its political stability.

This study examined the multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations at official, military, economic, and cultural from the pre-modern era to the present. In the pre modern era, nomadic Tu'jues' interactions with various Chinese dynasties expanded economic, political, religious, and cultural level featured different levels. They were both at peace and war, yet their multidimensional relations were mostly affected and burdened by disagreements, and conflicts. In the aftermath of a series of wars with the pre-modern Tang dynasty, the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues began looking towards the West. Clearly, there was a shift to a new phase of multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations between the pre-modern Sino people and the pre-modern settled Turks. It can be assumed that this shift led to one of the most significant historic events that gave rise to China beginning with the liberal thinking in pre-modern China through the export of Sino tea and porcelain to the pre-modern settled Turks. At the same time, China's transition from liberal thinking order to a state neo-liberal economic thinking became relevant to China with the beginning of reforms and the opening up in 1978. By comparing between the pre-modern era and the early modern era, the modern era navigated multidimensional Sino-Turkish relations through the establishment of a great number of consultation mechanisms at different levels - not only bilateral but also regional and global.

Firstly, modern China under the rule of the last imperial dynasty and the modern Ottoman Empire became periphery or semi-colonies of Western colonizers, and their multidimensional relations were not as close as before. Furthermore, the Western colonizers' influence on resulted in the suspicion of the colonizers. Secondly, both nations became a modern Republic at different times and witnessed the emergence of official and diplomatic relations between Kemalist Turkey President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the Republic of China. Thirdly, multidimensional relations between China and Turkey sometimes were suspended due to conflicts. Fourthly, the 2000s became a major turning point for improving relations due to rise of China as a major and Turkey as a minor power on the regional and global level, respectively. Yet research demonstrates that the pre-modern Sino dynasties and the pre-modern nomadic Tu'jues established better political relations. Eventually, Sino-Turkish relations became multidimensional from the pre-modern era to the present, but China is more dominant and Turkey has become more submissive by making concessions to Beijing. The future looks bright for bilateral relations but Turkey might be put in a difficult position if the US-China rivalry becomes intolerable in the near future.

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