

TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CHINA

Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement

DR. ALTAY ATLI

Boğaziçi University, Asian Studies Center



GLOBAL RELATIONS FORUM YOUNG ACADEMICS PROGRAM POLICY PAPER SERIES No.3

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FOREWORD

Global Relations Forum community programs aim to advance a culture of intellectual diversity, rational and constructive debate, and analytic coherence.

GRF Young Academics Program is distinct among these community initiatives as it serves an additional but equally important objective. Through this program, GRF hopes to establish the core elements of an expanding network for young academics that will enrich the Turkish policy debates in the coming decades.

The program is designed to culminate in the publication of a policy paper authored by the young academic. The author benefits from the experience of GRF members in crafting her policy analysis and recommendations. However, the publication reflects the views of the young academic and not the institutional views of GRF or the individual positions of the commission members.

This paper entitled “*Turkey’s Foreign Policy Towards China, Analysis and Recommendations*” is authored by Dr. Altay Atlı. GRF thanks him for his contribution and commitment to this effort.

GRF convened the following group of distinguished members to evaluate and guide Dr. Altay Atlı’s paper:

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GLOBAL RELATIONS FORUM

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Turkey's Foreign Policy Towards China, Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement

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Executive Summary

With its rapidly growing economic leverage at a global scale, China is today's rising power in the international system and this is a fact which is by no means escaping the attention of Turkey's policy makers. Despite occasional ups and downs between Ankara and Beijing, Turkey attaches great importance to the further development of its relations with the world's new great power, and this study aims to contribute to these efforts by analyzing Turkey's relationship with China and making recommendations for further improvement of its foreign policy towards this country.

In order to provide a theoretically informed discussion on the relationship between the two countries, it is necessary to employ the tools of the International Relations (IR) discipline, and this study benefits from doing so in an analytically eclectic manner drawing together elements of diverse theories in ways through which real-world issues of policy and practice are illuminated. Within this framework, the study views Turkish-Chinese relations through the three paradigms of the scientific inquiry into international relations, i.e. realism, liberalism and constructivism, and by incorporating interactions among multiple mechanisms and logics distilled from all of these paradigms, it generates a number of policy recommendations, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Encourage Chinese direct investment to Turkey. Focus on investment projects that would bring not only capital, but also technological capabilities, know-how and higher value added for the Turkish economy.
2. Initiate economic cooperation projects between Turkey and China in the Middle East, based on mutual interest and a vision for the post-conflict reconstruction of the region.
3. Upgrade cooperation with China in defense industry and other industries with high technology component with a focus on technology transfer from China to Turkey and joint production.
4. Use multilateral platforms such as the G20, CICA and various fora of the United Nations to improve bilateral dialogue with China.
5. Establish, with Chinese participation, the Turkish-Chinese Strategic Dialogue body to ensure the functioning of a multiplicity of dialogue channels between the two countries.
6. Form an accessible database for Turkish citizens graduating from Chinese universities and design an employment program, which will cover both the public and the private sector.
7. Mobilize the Uyghur community in a way that would improve Turkish-Chinese relations and turn the rhetoric of "Friendship Bridge" into reality.
8. Cooperate with China in issues related to Islamic culture and education.

9. Proactively take part in the “One Belt, One Road” project. Maintain dialogue with the Chinese side about how Turkey can maximize its involvement in the project and how Turkey and China can cooperate in joint investment and construction projects along the route.

10. Upgrade the Turkish diplomatic missions and the offices of other ministries in China in terms of personnel and budget.

11. Establish a fully structured and institutionalized China Policy Coordination Board for Turkey. This board will include representatives from public institutions and private sector organizations.

12. Initiate a public diplomacy program to underline that for Turkey, China is not a partner to replace the West, but a building stone of Turkey’s global presence.

Turkish-Chinese relations are of increasing importance, not only for these two countries, but also at a global level. Turkey’s task is to improve its China policy to serve her national interest in the best possible way, and this study hopes to make a modest yet meaningful contribution to this quest.

1. Introduction

On July 29, 2015, when Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was received by his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing's majestic Great Hall of the People, the mood on both sides of the meeting table was optimistic if not outright euphoric. Erdoğan said that the two countries were presently "moving in a constructive direction bringing more content to their strategic cooperative relationship,"¹ while Xi commented that China and Turkey should "support each other on major issues."² The next day, the two leaders met again, this time accompanied by the business communities of the two countries to discuss billion-dollar economic cooperation projects. Turkey and China are increasingly willing to develop a constructive relationship and they are making efforts to that end, not only in the economic, but also in political and cultural spheres. Occasional setbacks such as the anti-Chinese demonstrations in Turkey that erupted only a few weeks before the president's trip to Beijing appear to be doing little damage, if any.

China is the world's new economic powerhouse and a leading actor in global politics. This is why in today's globalized world of interdependence engaging more effectively and constructively with China is not an option for Turkey, but rather a vital and sine qua non component of its global vision. Turkey has to have a well-structured, balanced, effective, and sustainable foreign policy towards China.

"Turkey considers the People's Republic of China as a very important partner" says the web site of the Turkish Embassy in Beijing, "Turkey attaches great importance to further development of its relations with China. There is still great potential to be tapped for further improvement and enrichment of the steadily growing cooperation between the two countries."³ This discourse makes sense for sure, but the real question is how these goals can be achieved and how Turkey's China policy should be formulated to improve the relationship in the desired direction. Borrowing Erdoğan's words, quoted above, it is all about bringing more content to the relationship.

Foreign policy is a realm where decisions and actions are taken under constraints and conditions of uncertainty. The ultimate aim of policy makers is the maximization of the national interest - i.e. the foreign policy goals, objectives, and preferences that benefit the society as a whole.⁴ Policy makers first identify and prioritize goals, objectives, and preferences according to the satisfaction they are expected to generate, and then identify and select the means available that will fulfil these goals at the lowest cost possible.⁵ In line with their foreign policy principles, nations make efforts to maximize their national interest within constraints imposed by external and internal conditions. This study deals with a particular bilateral relationship, which is between

¹ "Erdoğan in China for Talks About Uighurs, Missile Program," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 29, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-in-china-for-talks-about-uighurs-missile-program.aspx?pageID=238&nID=86137&NewCatID=510.7>

² Ibid.

³ "Turkish-Chinese Relations," *Turkish Embassy in Beijing*, <http://beijing.emb.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=121257>.

⁴ Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 57.

⁵ Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 15-16.

Turkey and the People's Republic of China, and will tackle the question of how Turkey can improve its foreign policy towards China; or to put it in another way, how Turkey can maximize its national interest vis-à-vis China under current conditions. This is a vital task for Turkey because, first, China is a rapidly rising powerhouse that is increasingly influencing and shaping the global order, and second, although there exists a substantial amount of studies on Turkey's relations with other countries and country groupings such as the United States, European Union, or the Middle East; the China dimension of Turkey's international relations is yet to be subjected to systematic inquiry.

This study aims to carry out an analytical investigation of the Turkish-Chinese relationship yielding a set of concrete foreign policy recommendations. This purpose directly addresses a shortcoming in foreign policy making process, not only in Turkey, but one that is inherent in the entire system of nation states: the gap between theory and practice, or the lack of connection between the scholars and practitioners, in other words the lack of exchange between idea-producers and policy-makers. Policy makers pay relatively little attention to academic studies on international relations and many scholars refrain from doing policy-relevant work. This is unfortunate, because theory remains essential for diagnosing real-life events, identifying causalities, prescribing responses, and evaluating the impact of different policies.⁶

The lack of interaction between theory and policy-making, and - to the extent that theory is involved in the process - the state of remaining epistemologically constrained within the confines of one particular theory or paradigm, instead of combining different analytical perspectives result in impoverishment of foreign policy analysis. This in turn makes it impossible to improve the policy formulation process. Most individuals, including foreign policy decision makers, subscribe explicitly or implicitly to a particular worldview on international relations, i.e. to one specific paradigm, which narrows down the range of their perception and diagnosis, thereby risk misconceptions. Effective foreign policy making and analysis, on the other hand, requires the widest possible spectrum of theoretical perspectives to be used eclectically, complementarily, and pragmatically.

The objective of this study is to make a humble contribution to bridging the gap between the academia and policy-making by offering a theoretically informed discussion for Turkey's relations with one of its largest and globally most influential, yet least studied, foreign policy partners - China. The study inspired by analytical eclecticism, an approach that "demonstrates the practical relevance of, and substantive connections among, theories and narratives constructed within seemingly discrete and irreconcilable approaches,"⁷ will try to present a holistic analysis of Turkey-China relations and to prescribe policy recommendations. Through this particular approach, it will also offer a thorough understanding of how theory interacts with the real-life process in Turkey's relations with China. Before proceeding to the analytical inquiry, it is necessary to investigate the historical background of the relations between Turkey and China.

⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (2005): 23.

⁷ Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

2. Historical Background of Turkish-Chinese Relations

Origins of the relationship between the Turks and the Chinese can be traced back to centuries before the Common Era, to the encounters between the two peoples in the Central Asian steppes. Throughout this period, commerce formed the backbone of the relationship between the two peoples, and it took the form of Turkish merchants and their caravans carrying goods between their homeland and Chinese territories under conditions of trade set by the Chinese emperor.⁸

Fast forwarding to modern times, the late 19th century provides an appropriate starting point for the investigation of the historical roots of the relationship between the two countries. The first attempts by the Ottoman Empire to establish diplomatic relations with China came in 1875, followed by a series of special envoys sent to establish contact, although none of these attempts were successful. Direct official relationship could not be established, and relations had to be carried out through third parties, yet there is sufficient evidence to prove that in this period individuals from both sides were travelling between the two empires for commercial and/or religious reasons.⁹

After the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, during a time when China was going through a turbulent period following the dissolution of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, the national government in Ankara initiated a series of efforts to build diplomatic relations with China. In 1934 a consulate was opened in Nanjing, which was the capital of China then, and the mission was upgraded to an embassy in 1945.

The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 marking a turning point in bilateral relations. Turkey refused to recognize the communist People's Republic and opted for maintaining diplomatic ties with the Nationalist government that had found refuge on the island of Taiwan. During the following two decades, Ankara recognized the Republic of China in Taiwan as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people and refrained from having any form of ties with the communist government in Beijing. Within the bipolar world order of the Cold War era, Turkey, which became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, was clear on which side it was standing.

Early attempts for closer contact with the government in Beijing appeared in late 1960s, when economic linkages between Turkey and China gained momentum through third party channels, and in 1969 Turkey signed trade treaties with the governments in both Beijing and Taipei. In the meantime, the Sino-American rapprochement paved the way for Turkey to normalize its relations with China, and with the agreement signed in Paris on August 5, 1971, Turkey recognized the People's Republic of China, ceasing her diplomatic relationship with the government in Taipei. A new trade agreement was concluded three years later.

⁸ İsenbike Togan, "Türk-Çin İlişkilerinde Ticaretin Rolü," *Türkiye'de Çin'i Düşünmek: Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel, İsenbike Togan and Altay Atlı (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2013), 12.

⁹ Selda Altan, "Osmanlı'ya Doğudan Bakmak: 20. Yüzyıl Dönümünde Çin'de Osmanlı Algısı ve Milliyetçilik," *Türkiye'de Çin'i Düşünmek: Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel, İsenbike Togan and Altay Atlı (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2013), 95.

It was not before the early 1980s that the countries embarked on diplomatic exchange and sought ways of increasing economic interaction. During the 1970s, Turkey was suffering from political and economic instability, while China was going through the terminal phase of the Mao Zedong era. Debates in Turkey in this period about the merits of a closer relationship with China show that there were serious doubts about whether the expected economic benefits would justify taking the political and ideological risk of recognizing “Red China.” While one line of argument went that China with its huge population and with an economy that was opening up to the world could offer significant opportunities for Turkish businesses; the counter-argument was that China was exporting its communist ideology to the rest of the world and that its possible support to the extreme leftist organizations in Turkey would pose a significant threat.¹⁰ Despite a lack of consensus on what China really meant for Turkey, and with Beijing embarking on a series of reforms and an opening-up process and with Turkey liberalizing its economy and searching for new markets, diplomatic and commercial traffic between the two countries gained momentum. High level visits such as those of President Kenan Evren to China in 1982, followed by Chinese President Li Xiannian’s visit to Turkey in 1984, Prime Minister Turgut Özal’s visit to China in 1985, and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang’s visit to Turkey in 1986 contributed not only to take the first concrete steps towards a stronger relationship but also to a greater understanding and awareness between the two peoples.

This positive environment did not last into the 1990s. Beijing’s concerns on Ankara’s policy regarding the Turkic/Muslim Uyghur community in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which were eventually aggravated by Turkish politicians’ contacts with Uyghur opposition leaders, led to deterioration of the relationship. Near the end of the 1990s, however, Turkish foreign policy took another turn, and Ankara developed a strategy of acting in greater coordination with Russia and China in the Central Asian region, instead of trying to establish influence on its own. It was in this period that Turkey discontinued its support for Uyghur movements and chose to support the Uyghur community economically and culturally while at the same time rejecting any attempt that would jeopardize China’s territorial integrity.

The foreign policy paradigm adopted by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which aimed to proactively engage with regions that were hitherto ignored or superficially engaged - such as Asian, African and Latin American countries - brought a renewed momentum to Turkey’s efforts to cement ties with China. Diplomatic exchanges increased, trade soared, and more efficient dialogue was initiated between the two countries. In 2010, during Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to Turkey, the relations were upgraded to the level of “strategic partnership.” In 2012, Vice President Xi Jinping, who would take the office as the President the following year, visited Turkey, and during his visit several bilateral agreements aiming to consolidate economic relations on a sustainable basis in the long term were signed. Turkey’s trade with China is increasing, having reached a total volume of \$27.3 billion in 2015, however so is Turkey’s deficit, which is why Turkey is now placing greater emphasis on attracting more investment from China.

¹⁰ Altay Atlı, “12 Mart Muhurması ve Türkiye’nin Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti’ni Tanıması,” *Türkiye’de Çin’i Düşünmek: Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Selçuk Esenbel, İsenbike Togan and Altay Atlı (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayinevi, 2013).

In sum, it is possible to argue that despite occasional ups and downs, relations between Turkey and China are following a path that is quite stable. There are no significant political problems between the two governments, the Uyghur issue is no more poisoning the relationship, as Turkey supports the Uyghurs' rights but strictly opposes separatism. Events over the past years have clearly shown that while incidents such as the Urumqi riots in 2009 and the anti-Chinese demonstrations in Turkey in the summer of 2015 can temporarily cause diplomatic tension between the two countries, these remain short-lived as the both sides are able to manage the process without further conflict.¹¹ In the meantime, economic relations are increasingly beneficial for both parties despite a growing deficit for Turkey. The question is whether these trends will imply that Turkey has an efficient and productive foreign policy towards China. Not necessarily.

3. Analyzing The Relationship

While on the surface relations with China appear to be improving from Turkey's perspective, resorting to theory and employing the tools of the International Relations (IR) discipline in an analytically eclectic manner will enable us to better understand the dynamics of the relationship, to identify the weaknesses, and to generate suggestions for improving policy in a way to maximize Turkey's national interest with respect to its relationship with China within the constraints that define the foreign policy environment. Analytical eclecticism engages theories, "but with the intention of systematically drawing together elements of diverse theories in ways that can shed new light on real-world issues of policy and practice."¹² It is operationalized as analysis that "extricates and recombines elements of theories embedded in the three major paradigms - realism, liberalism, and constructivism - in the process of building complex middle-range causal stories that bear on important matters of policy and practice."¹³ In other words, an analytically eclectic approach can take the insights that realist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives offer and build linkages between them, investigate how certain elements in each of these paradigms can affect others by establishing causal links with elements in other paradigms.

¹¹ In the summer of 2009, after demonstrations in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, were suppressed by force and around two hundred people lost their lives, Turkey had a very strong reaction, and the then prime minister Erdoğan called the incident in very strong words, as "almost genocide." Despite expectations for a harsh response, Chinese authorities preferred to soften the issue, Turkish authorities immediately adopted a conciliatory tone, and the Beijing government invited Turkish businessmen to visit Xinjiang and explore the investment opportunities there. A few months after the incident of Urumqi, the then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao was in Turkey to sign the Turkish-Chinese Strategic Partnership Agreement. In the summer of 2015, media reports on Chinese government's decision to ban Ramadan fasting for public servants, teachers, and students in Xinjiang caused public outrage in Turkey, which was further fuelled through disinformation spreading through social media. A number of demonstrations were held, which in some cases turned violent. Turkey's Foreign Ministry summoned the Chinese ambassador in Ankara to express concerns about the developments in Xinjiang, and China in turn expressed its own concerns about Ankara's stance on the issue. This time it was Erdoğan's conciliatory tone that calmed down the situation. He argued that most of the media reports about Chinese oppression against the Muslims in Xinjiang were fabricated and it was the work of provocateurs who wanted to damage the relationship between Turkey and China. Erdoğan's visit to Beijing only a couple of weeks later helped to restore confidence on both sides.

¹² Sil and Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms*, 212.

¹³ *Ibid*, 37.

a. The Three Paradigms

The realist school asserts that international politics is a struggle for power among independent actors in an international system without a higher authority that can impose order. Realism defines international relations through the relative positions of states in the international system in terms of capabilities and power. Economic realism assumes that economic wealth is vital to the states' ability to wage war and ensure their survival, and for this reason states make sure to keep a positive trade balance by protecting against competing imports and by maximizing exports.

In contrast to realism, the liberal paradigm asserts that not only conflict, but also cooperation can be possible between states depending on the distribution of state preferences. States are self-interest seeking actors, but self-interest can also be secured through cooperation. Economic interdependence, which is the defining feature of globalization, can lead to greater cooperation between states, and cooperation can also be facilitated through international institutions, as self-interest seeking states voluntarily enter into binding agreements that mitigate the negative effects of anarchy in the international system and that provide a platform for greater cooperation.

Finally, constructivism claims that material factors are important, but ideas matter as well, as the world we are living in is "socially constructed," and international relations do not result from an objective social reality, but reflect the actors' ideas, perceptions, assumptions, and the norms to which they adhere. Foreign policy goals are thus defined not only by material parameters such as trade patterns, access to raw materials, defense budgets, and so on; they also reflect immaterial, shared, and collective beliefs as well as identities.¹⁴

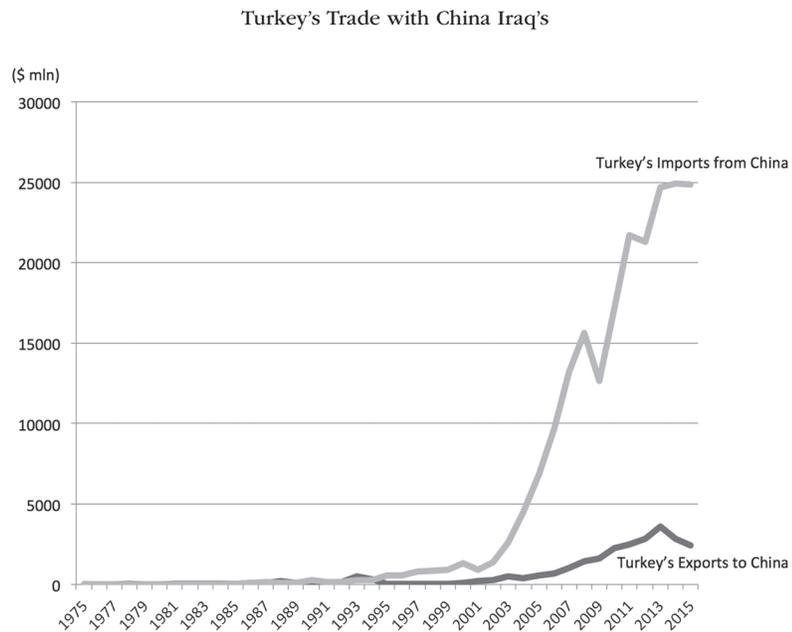
Each of the above discussed paradigms can provide a narrative separated from others. The analytically eclectic approach, however, does not only capture the multidimensionality and complexity of the relationship, but it also looks at how the strengths and weaknesses discussed by these three paradigms can influence each other. For instance, in the Turkish-Chinese relationship that is under investigation, can a particular strength from the realist perspective have an impact on a weakness that was discovered through the liberal lens, or the other way round? Can the ideational elements of the relationship that are unearthed through the constructive perspective have an impact on the components that are emphasized by realist and/or liberal paradigms? By incorporating interactions among multiple mechanisms and logics distilled from more than one paradigm, analytical eclecticism can help to understand the Turkish-Chinese relationship as a whole and to provide suggestions for improvements.

¹⁴ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

b. The Realist View of Turkey-China Relations

A proper starting point for the analysis is to discuss how each of the three paradigms views the Turkish-Chinese relationship from its own viewpoint. For realists the defining feature of the relationship between Turkey and China is the asymmetry in power. China has the second largest economy in the world, and it is the largest exporter, and while Turkey has a growing economy, it is far from the Chinese level. In terms of diplomatic, political, and military capabilities there is a similar picture. This asymmetry limits the possibilities and scale of competition between the two countries. From the realist perspective there are two main areas of contention between Turkey and China.

The first area is related to bilateral trade. As can be seen in the figure below, Turkey has a rapidly growing trade deficit with China. In 2015, Turkey's exports to China amounted to \$2.4 billion, while its imports from this country totaled a massive \$24.9 billion. In other words, for every dollar worth of goods Turkey is exporting to China, it is buying back more than ten dollars worth of goods. Given Turkey's chronic current account deficit problem, this widening gap is a serious problem. From a realist point of view, this can be interpreted as a reflection of China's mercantilist strategy and there is little that Turkey can do in order to reverse the picture.



Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

The second area of contention between Turkey and China in the realist perspective is the competition in the Middle East. Under the AKP government, Turkey has made several overtures towards the Middle East, in every sense: economic, political, cultural, and so forth. Turkey shares a land border with three Middle East countries, i.e. Syria, Iraq and Iran, and security is a major concern in this respect for policy makers in Ankara. Turkey aimed, and to a large extent managed, to create a virtuous cycle “with greater security along the borders and growing economic interdependence between Turkey and the neighboring regions tending to create a mutually beneficial process.”¹⁵ However, the Arab Spring period exposed the limitations and shortcomings of Turkey’s policies. Turkey attempted, but failed to facilitate reform or regime change in Syria and to influence the direction of political change in Egypt. To make the matters even worse, Turkey’s policies which were marked by excessive involvement in sectarian conflicts and domestic issues of the countries in the region have caused a backlash, undermining the country’s image as a benign regional power.¹⁶ In the post-Arab Spring period, Turkey faces the need to realign its Middle East policy with reference to its own capabilities and the economic and political realities on the field.

China, on the other hand, has adhered to its non-interference policy in the Middle East, and in 2011, it has abstained from the United Nations resolution that paved the way for a NATO intervention in Libya. This turned out to be a “bitter lesson” for Beijing, because abstaining from the decision had both political and economic costs for China; it was perceived as siding with the authoritarian regime and was excluded from economic deals in the aftermath of the regime change.¹⁷ This disappointment led to a policy change by China; Beijing vetoed the UN resolution on Syria in 2012 and began to get involved in Middle Eastern affairs by opposing military intervention by external actors and by facilitating intermediation processes, not only in the Syrian case, but also in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As its dependence on hydrocarbons from the region increases, Beijing feels the need to have greater leverage in the Middle East in order to ensure its energy security given the toughening competition in what still remains a highly volatile and instable region.

The realist paradigm asserts that Turkey and China’s interests in the Middle East will inevitably clash. There are two areas of potential conflict, which can lead to a divergence between Turkey and China with respect to the Middle East issues; one being political, the other economic. On the political side, divergence can stem from how to solve the crisis situations in the region, such as the Syrian civil war. There had already been signs of divergence. In February 2012, after China vetoed - together with Russia - the UN resolution on Syria, Ankara reacted in a very harsh manner, accusing the two countries of preventing a solution to the crisis, and of “making it impossible to help the Syrian people.”¹⁸ After these initial reactions, however, both Turkey and China have toned down their involvement in Syria.

¹⁵ Ziya Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East,” *Mediterranean Politics* (2014): 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷ Yun Sun, “Syria: What China Has Learned From its Libya Experience,” *Asia Pacific Bulletin* 152 (2012).

¹⁸ “Ortadoğu’da Soğuk Savaş Donemini Sona Erdirmek İstiyoruz,” *Dünya*, 5 February 2012, <http://www.dunya.com/ortadoguda-soguk-savas-donemini-sona-erdirmek-istiyoruz-145152h.htm>.

Middle East is important economically for both Turkey and China, and both of these countries are stepping up their economic involvement in the region. As mentioned above, China's dependence on Middle Eastern oil and gas is increasing. Currently, China sources 50.7 percent of its oil imports from the Middle East; this is up from 38.7 percent in 2002, and is expected to reach 70 percent by 2020.¹⁹ In order to secure the energy supplies, China pursues a multi-faceted economic policy in the Middle East, concluding purchase agreements, buying shares in local energy companies, and investing in the region's hydrocarbon production and transportation infrastructure. In the meantime, the Middle East is also a large and promising market for Chinese consumer products, and China has been increasing its market share in a large variety of products over the past years.²⁰

Similar to China, Turkey is actively investing in the region to secure its energy supplies. As both Turkey and China are increasingly active in the Middle East's energy scene, competition over supplies remains a possibility, especially in countries like Iraq where both Turkey and China have already large stakes. Moreover, plans to turn Turkey into a transit state imply in most cases the connecting of the producers in the Caucasus with the consumers in Europe, and there is the possibility that such pipeline projects would run against China's interests and priorities. In the meantime, the Middle East and North Africa region is also important for Turkey's economy as an export market. According to TÜİK data, the share of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's total exports volume increased from 16.0 percent in 2004 to 30.0 percent in 2013 (which went down to 22.5 percent in 2014, due to the violent conflict in the region, going up to 27.5 percent again in 2015 as a result of the relative decline in Turkey's exports to other major markets),²¹ while the share of the European Union went down from 58.1 percent to 44.4 percent from 2004 to 2015. In this field, competition can be expected between Turkish and Chinese products, especially after violence comes to an end in the region and reconstruction efforts begin. Both Turkey and China enter the Middle Eastern markets with competitive advantage derived from low cost; Turkish products enjoying low transportation costs; and Chinese products enjoying low labor and other input costs.

¹⁹ "Statistical Review of World Energy," British Petroleum, 2015. See also: Muhamad Olimat, "Playing by the Rules? Sino-Middle Eastern Relations," *Handbook of China's International Relations*, ed. Shaun Breslin (London: Routledge, 2010), 177-186.

²⁰ Ted C. Liu, *China's Economic Engagement in the Middle East and North Africa*, Policy Brief no. 173 (Oslo: Frida, 2014).

²¹ It is important to be clear that the increase in the share of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's total exports from 2014 to 2015 did not occur as a result of recovery in export volumes to this region. The increase in share resulted from the overall decline in Turkey's total exports volume and the decrease in exports to other major markets. Despite the proportional increase, in nominal terms Turkey's exports to the Middle East and North Africa have decreased as well, albeit relatively less than export to other major markets. In 2014, Turkey's exports to the Middle East and North Africa totaled \$45.1 billion; in 2015 this figure was \$39.6 billion. Despite this decline in nominal terms, however, Turkey's export to this region is much larger in terms of volume compared to ten years ago.

c. The Liberal Approach to Turkey-China Relations

The world we are living in is defined by complex and multidimensional interdependence, and economic interdependence in this respect comprises not only trade relations, but also financial flows and transnational production. This perspective of the liberal paradigm, when applied to Turkey's relations with China, offers a bleak picture at best. Despite the rising trade volume, it is not possible to argue that there is significant interdependence between the two countries. First of all, interdependence is an asymmetric dynamic, impacting the involved parties at unequal magnitudes. In terms of trade, while China is one of the largest partners for Turkey, the latter has only a minor position in China's total trade. According to 2015 data, China's share in Turkey's imports was a significant 12 percent, making China Turkey's largest import source in the world. What China sells to Turkey, however makes up only 1.1 percent of China's total exports. While it is true that Turkey buys from China intermediary products and inputs that are used for the final assembly of goods produced in Turkey, Turkey's imports from China does not constitute a significant dependence on this country as it does not include strategic resources like the hydrocarbons, as it is the case with Turkey's imports from Russia. In the meantime, exports to China make up only 1.7 percent of Turkey's total export volume; in other words, Turkey's dependence on China as a market for its own products is minimal as well.

The non-trade components of economic interdependence between the two countries paint a similar picture. Cross border investment relations have so far remained limited. According to the figures released by the Turkish Undersecretariat of the Treasury, the total stock of Turkish direct investment in China was \$104 million as of June 30, 2015. China's total direct investment in Turkey, on the other hand is reported by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce to amount to \$642 million, larger compared to Turkish investment in China, but still a fraction of China's total outward investment around the globe which totals \$107.8 billion; in other words Turkey receives only a fraction of China's total investment around the world.

International institutions offer effective platforms for cooperation between nation states. They establish rule-based cooperation and governance patterns at both regional and global levels, and they also help improve relations by creating dialogue platforms at the bilateral level. To put it in other words, international institutions bring together nation states within the framework of binding agreements, hence facilitating cooperation and conflict resolution between them, but they also help nation states to maintain bilateral dialogues among each other. Turkey and China both benefit from participating in these institutions at the multilateral level. However, if one turns to the merits of institutions on relations at the bilateral level, as required by the subject of this study, there is less evidence of a positive contribution to Turkish-Chinese relations. These countries are both members of the United Nations, but, as observed in the Syria resolutions case, it is not uncommon that they vote in opposite directions.

²² Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (2014): 653.

They are both members of the G20, which is an effective platform for furthering global governance and strengthening multilateral dialogue in global issues. It can be argued that G20 contributes to the facilitation of Turkish-Chinese exchange, and more so as Turkey was the host of the G20 summit in 2015 and China assumed the chair in 2016. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) is another institution where Turkey and China cooperate, and in fact in 2014 China took over the chairmanship from Turkey. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where China is a full member and Turkey is a dialogue partner, is frequently referred to by the Turkish government and the media as a possible alternative to the European Union. Although SCO can have some effect on improving Turkish-Chinese dialogue, the loosely defined structure and the anti-Western/overly-authoritarian rhetoric of the organization suffice to disqualify it as a rational objective for Turkish foreign policy.

d. The Constructivist Take on Turkey-China Relations

The relationship between Turkey and China depends not only on material parameters such as trade and investment, but also on factors like how Turks and Chinese perceive each other, their ideas about each other and the global order, their national, ethnic, and cultural identities, and so on. How the Turks and the Chinese view each other is a very complicated question. However, it is fair to say that the lack of knowledge about each other and the misperceptions and prejudices resulting thereof is an important factor holding back progress in bilateral relations. The Turkish public opinion is divided on whether a 'rising China' poses a window of opportunity for Turkey or a growing threat to its values and interests.²³ While the ideologically left-leaning groups in Turkey have a favorable view of China and its place in the global system; for those subscribing to the Turkic/Muslim identity based view of the world, China is seen in extremely negative terms due to the Uyghur issue. For business circles China is a growing economic pie from which one needs to get a slice; and for the Turkish state China is a potentially balancing factor in world politics.²⁴ Different societal groups certainly have different views of China, however, with respect to the general public in Turkey; perception of China oscillates between neutral and negative, due to lack of knowledge and China literacy and misperceptions caused by superficial and often biased narratives on China. According to the *Pew Research Center Global Attitudes* survey in 2015, only 18 percent of the Turkish respondents answered positively the question of whether they have a favorable view on China (compared with 40 percent in 2005), while 59 percent stated that they have an unfavorable view of the world's new rising power.²⁵ The situation is not much different in China with respect to ideas and perceptions on Turkey and the Turks. Despite growing sympathy, there is either lack of knowledge or unfavorable ideas dominating the Chinese public opinion. A recent survey study reveals that 17.7 percent of the respondents in China have a favorable view of Turkey, and the main reason of the unfavorable attitude is the Uyghur issue and Turkey's perceived role in it.²⁶

²³ Selçuk Çolakoglu, *Turkish Perceptions of China's Rise*, Report No. 39 (Ankara: USAK, 2014), 9.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Opinion of China," Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/custom-analysis/indicator/24/countries/224/>.

²⁶ R. Kutay Karaca, "On the Misperceptions Between the Peoples of Turkey and China," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 7 (2013): 109.

People-to-people exchanges, cultural communication, education, and tourism linkages can help to increase knowledge on a mutual basis and to erase misperceptions, and this would have a positive impact on Turkey's relations with China. Events like the 2012 Year of Chinese Culture in Turkey and 2013 Year of Turkish Culture and other cultural activities help to improve awareness. Tourism contributes to the learning process, but more important is the educational exchanges. Turkish students in China and Chinese students in Turkey become not only goodwill ambassadors, but they also contribute to the strengthening of the relationship through their undertakings in their professional career. While official figures are not accessible, it is estimated that there are around 1,500 Turkish students in China, and 700 Chinese students in Turkey undertaking tertiary studies, graduate degrees, and language courses.

When Turkish-Chinese relations are viewed through the three paradigms, i.e. realism, liberalism, and constructivism, they do not offer a bright picture. From a Turkish point of view, it can be argued that the country's relations with China are truly in need for improvement. In the following section, this study will try to contribute to task by employing these theoretical perspectives in an analytically eclectic way in order to generate concrete policy recommendations.

4. Policy Recommendations

Different paradigms of international relations each on their own have a narrative of the Turkish-Chinese relations, and while these narratives can point to weaknesses, to some extent they can also help to produce solutions as well. However, unless they are used in an analytically eclectic way, they would not provide sufficient analytical depth for Turkey's China policy. For instance, the realist view emphasizes in the economic field a kind of relationship dominated by Chinese mercantilism. The realist recipe for this would be for Turkey to increase exports and reduce imports; this sounds good in theory, however in practice it is not a feasible task. The realist school would also point to China as a rising competitor in the Middle East and as an increasingly dangerous threat with respect to the Uyghur Turks, and the proposed solution would be for Turkey to increase its capabilities to counter China's rise. The liberal view points to economic interdependence, or better said, to lack of it. With respect to the institutions, it is a good thing that these structures exist and Turkey and China cooperate in them, but being excessively focused on the systemic level, the liberal view will not have much to say about how institutions can help Turkey to reinforce its policy towards China at the bilateral level. The constructivist view, on the other hand, would argue that for progress in bilateral relations, the Turks and the Chinese need to know each other better, understand each other's mentality and worldviews, get rid of misperceptions, and so on. This is of course the ideal solution in the long term, but what needs to be done before we reach this optimal state?

With an analytically eclectic approach, this part of the study will employ a dose of practicality and focus on the connections between the narratives constructed within the three separate and discrete approaches, in order to generate policy recommendations aimed at improving Turkey's foreign policy towards China.

The big question with respect to the Turkish-Chinese relationship from the former's perspective is: how to deal with the trade deficit. Turkey's experience throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s have shown that traditional attempts

to solve this problem are futile. The trade deficit with China cannot be solved by asking the Chinese side to buy more from Turkey and/or by using protectionist measures to curb imports from China. However, bilateral current account deficits can be offset with a bilateral capital account surplus, so a possible option might be to draw more Chinese capital to Turkey.

One way of increasing China's dependence on Turkey as an economic partner goes through investments, and there are prior examples of this. For instance, during the 1990s substantial amounts of Japanese and Korean investment in the automotive sector came to Turkey, in order to benefit from Turkey's customs union with Europe. Japanese and Korean companies depended on Turkey in order to maintain their competitive edge in European markets. In another example, China is the largest investor in Greece's transportation infrastructure, and the reason is the fact that China has a heavy dependence on Greek shipping lines for the logistics of its global trade. Turkey has to identify the areas where investment can create further downstream interdependencies and opportunities by incorporating technology transfer and value added activities. In this way, Turkey will perhaps not be able to close its trade deficit, however, if planned and managed well, it can help rebalance the relationship, and making the trade asymmetry more manageable.

Recommendation #1: Encourage Chinese direct investment to Turkey. Focus on investment projects that would bring not only capital, but also, and more importantly, technological capabilities, know-how, and higher value added for the Turkish economy.

Economic interdependence is important, and it is useful not only for balancing the economic relationship, but it can pay political dividends as well. The realist threat perception of a China that is increasingly more assertive in the Middle East region can be weathered by establishing new dependencies. China is a powerful actor, but Turkey has the advantage of being the local player in the Middle East. Through economic projects in the Middle East region, where the Chinese will benefit from Turkey's assets and capabilities will be useful for Turkey's China policy. For instance, China has a vital stake in Iraqi oil. Providing the Chinese with favorable options for the transmission of the oil through pipelines over Turkish territory and the port of Ceyhan from which oil can be shipped to China is one way of creating a dependency. The Middle East is undergoing an extremely turbulent period, but sooner or later, the time will come for reconstruction and healing the wounds. Construction business will be crucial, infrastructure projects and manufacturing as well, and China will want to get involved. It is Turkey, and not Syria or Iraq, which has the capabilities to provide China with resources, distribution channels, knowledge, and expertise in this kind of projects. To add a further point, China is already involved in projects in regions neighboring Turkey's Middle Eastern borders. For example, China is building mines in Şırnak, and there are companies in as far as Hakkari, which are extracting natural resources and shipping them to China. Turkey can and should improve partnerships with China in the Southeastern Anatolian region, as it will not only be beneficial for the economic development of the region, but it will also help make China more dependent on Turkey, because it needs not only the resources available but also desires to maintain a strong presence here. This dependency will contribute to a convergence between the political objectives of Turkey and China vis-à-vis the Middle East. The more the actors depend on each other economically, the more they tend to converge politically.

Recommendation #2: Initiate economic cooperation projects between Turkey and China in the Middle East, based on mutual interest and with a vision for the post-conflict reconstruction of the region.

The realist paradigm, which envisages an anarchical global environment and sees the world through zero-sum glasses, would find it hard to understand why Turkey has negotiated a missile defense system with China, at the expense of alienating her allies in the West.²⁷ The liberal idea of interdependence can clarify the picture. The interdependence relationship of Turkey with both the West and China is asymmetric to the detriment of Turkey in the sense that Turkey depends considerably more on these partners than they depend on Turkey. Despite the fact that the missile defense system tender was annulled entirely at the end, even the decision to involve the Chinese was a significant attempt by Turkey to reduce its dependence on the West. On the other hand, the deal could also be expected to make China more dependent on Turkey. Turkey preferred the Chinese system on economic grounds: the Chinese accepted technology transfer and joint production while the American and European sides did not. At the same time, defense industry has always a political side to it, and concluding such a deal with Turkey could have helped China to increase its political position in the greater Middle East region. Turkey is cooperating with China in defense industry since the mid-1990s, and despite the failure of this particular tender, Turkey has to continue its partnership with China in the future. The same blueprint can be applied for other industries with high technological content as well, and it is important to ensure that cooperation in these fields are established in the form of multi-stakeholder partnerships where not only government agencies but also other technology-related actors such as universities, non-governmental organizations, and scientific related institutions are involved.

Recommendation #3: Upgrade cooperation with Chinese in defense industry and other industries with high technology component with a focus on technology transfer from China to Turkey and joint production. Involve universities and other technology related institutions in the process.

While the West's reaction against Ankara's decision to talk to the Chinese for the missile defense system was understandable, Turkey still needs to make it very clear to the international community that it needs to improve its own technological capabilities, especially in defense industry, and that it does not necessarily have to depend on one single source, should better alternatives arise.

²⁷ In September 2013, the Turkish Undersecretariat of Defense Industry decided to include the Chinese company CPMIEC in the tender for its procurement of a long range air and missile defense system, together with a US company and a European consortium led by the French. While the Western bidders could not go down below \$4 billion, the Chinese made an offer of \$3.4 billion, and more importantly they accepted joint production and technology transfer, a condition that the Western participants refused. Negotiations with the Chinese company were continued throughout 2014, but at the same time the Turkish government gave a deadline to all bidders to revise their offers until August 31. The United States and NATO reacted against Turkey's decision to negotiate with the Chinese on the grounds that the Chinese system would not be compatible with Turkey's NATO-based defense system. Over the following weeks, the Turkish government announced that there are some disagreements with the Chinese company, and the deadline for the renewal of bids was extended to December 31, 2014. The tender still could not be finalized and at the Defense Industry Executive Meeting chaired by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, a decision was made to resume negotiations. The only statement made during President Erdoğan's visit to Beijing in July 2015 was that the two countries had "strong interests in defense cooperation and will strengthen cooperation in this area." Finally in November 2015, the Turkish government announced that the tender was annulled in entirety ("3.4 Milyar Dolarlık Çin Füzesi İptal," *Milliyet*, November 16, 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/3-4-milyar-dolarlik-cin-fuzesi-gundem-2148480>.)

The institutionalist version of the liberal approach to international relations can be engaged here as well. Can international institutions help dealing with the realist threat perceptions and improving the bilateral relations between Turkey and China? These institutions aim at improving governance at the multilateral level, however they also help to improve dialogue at the bilateral level. There is currently an opportunity window open for Turkish-Chinese relations. For two years, 2015 and 2016, Turkey and China are members of G20 troika, the group of three countries at the helm of the organization. Similarly the two countries have an influential position at CICA as well. In both of these organizations, Turkey and China will be in close cooperation, much closer than they have ever been. Turkey must make sure that this cooperation will have positive spillover effects on the bilateral relationship. In this way, realist threat perceptions can be reduced through greater understanding and collaboration, and even economic interdependence can be enhanced for the benefit of the two parties. An early sign for this has actually occurred during the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September 2014, when the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his delegation had a meeting with the Turkish delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and the Chinese side proposed a free trade agreement to the Turkish side.²⁸

Recommendation #4: Use multilateral platforms such as the G20, CICA, and various fora of the United Nations to improve bilateral dialogue with China.

The realist school would argue that Turkey would have the same issues with any rising superpower, so nothing special about China. The constructivist paradigm argues, however, that the issues are mostly specific to China, irrespective of the material factors that define the relationship, Turks and Chinese do not know and understand each other well and this lack of knowledge results in prejudices, wrong ideas, and antagonism; also the identity factors, currently focused on the Turkic/Muslim identity and the Uyghur people living in Xinjiang, function as a source of vulnerability, a hot spot jeopardizing the relations. The point is that a reversal on the constructivist side can lead to an improvement in bilateral issues that the realist view with its objective framework cannot foresee. Favorable ideas and perceptions on the part of both sides can definitely help to achieve progress in both economic and political aspects of the relationship. Ideas and perceptions do not change overnight, but it is the process towards this end that matters, and better communication can be useful.

Better communication between Turkey and China at the governmental level is certainly crucial. Therefore the channels have to be open at all times. Mutual official state visits and meetings at the sidelines of international summits are not enough. The dialogue between the Turkish and Chinese governments needs to be institutionalized, there has to be a calendar of meetings, with pre-discussed agendas, effective follow-up, and on so on. Turkey and China are strategic partners since 2010, and a fully institutional and formal structure, like a Turkish-Chinese Strategic Dialogue body, together with its secretariat and personnel, would be useful.

Recommendation #5: Establish, with Chinese participation, the Turkish-Chinese Strategic Dialogue body, which will work in a structured and institutional

²⁸ “Çin, Türkiye’ye Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması Önerdi,” *Radikal*, September 27, 2014, http://www.radikal.com.tr/ekonomi/cin_turkiyeye_serbest_ticaret_anlasmasi_onerdi-1215219.

format to ensure the functioning of a multiplicity of dialogue channels between the two countries.

Communication at the societal level is perhaps even more important. There are already several efforts aiming at expanding people-to-people contact between Turkey and China, especially in the fields of tourism and education. These efforts have to continue; but they will not be sufficient unless the individuals who go through this exposure are turned into agents of change. Tourism is important in exposing people to each other's cultures and mindsets. However tourism is a short-term activity. Agents of change can come from education; it is the Turkish students who spend years in China, learn the language, learn the culture, and learn the habits, who will be engineering a change for the good in Turkey's relations with China. Turkey must provide the necessary incentives for these individuals and open up opportunities for them to use their skills for the benefit of Turkey's relations with China. The more there are job opportunities for Turkish students with Chinese education background in Turkey's bureaucracy, business, and civil society and the more they are allowed to contribute to the formulation of Turkey's China policy, the higher will be the benefits.

Recommendation #6: Form an accessible database for Turkish citizens graduating from Chinese universities and design an employment program which will cover both the public and the private sector.

The identity factor can work in a similar fashion. The Turkic and Muslim identities do not necessarily have to be detrimental to Turkey's relations with China. Since the mid-1990s, Turkey's governments and statesmen have faithfully subscribed to the rhetoric of the Uyghur people as a "friendship bridge" between the two countries. However, concrete actions to turn the rhetoric into outcome are yet to be designed. An overwhelming majority of the Uyghur people living in Turkey and Xinjiang keep a clear distance from radical movements and they are willing to contribute to the improvement of relations because after all it is first and foremost themselves who will reap the benefits. There are several Uyghur-origin Turkish citizens living in Turkey, who hold influential positions in the business sector, in academia, and in many other parts of life; and these people can act as a bridge. These citizens speak both Turkish and Chinese and they have absorbed both cultures. Turkey must mobilize the Uyghur community in a way that would improve Turkish-Chinese relations. Launching joint investments in Turkey and Xinjiang where Uyghur workers and managers are employed, appointing Uyghur academics and businessmen as advisors to Turkish policy makers, establishing consultation mechanisms, and supporting Uyghur diaspora's activities that aim at enhancing the well-being of the Uyghur people without threatening China's territorial integrity are some of the actions that can be taken.

Recommendation #7: Mobilize the Uyghur community in a way that would improve Turkish-Chinese relations and turn the rhetoric of "friendship bridge" into reality. Encourage joint investments in Turkey and Xinjiang where Uyghur people can be employed. Establish consultation mechanisms where Uyghur academics and business people are employed. Support Uyghur diaspora's activities that aim at enhancing the well-being of the Uyghur people, while at the same time continuing with the policy of no-tolerance for any kind of activity threatening China's territorial integrity.

A similar approach can be adopted with respect to the role of the Islamic identity as well. Both Turkish and Chinese governments promote the non-radical version of Islam, and Turkey is one of the few countries in the Islamic world where it can turn for a version of Islam that can be a model for China's own Muslim minorities. The agreement in 2011 between Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Chinese Muslim Association makes it possible for Chinese students to study in Turkey's religious high schools and theology departments. This is a good start and such efforts should continue in order to have the Islamic identity act as a bond between the two countries. In this respect, Turkey's support for the preservation and maintenance of Islamic cultural heritage in China, and the two countries' joint and uncompromising stance against radical movements and terrorism are of crucial value.

Recommendation #8: Cooperate with China in issues related to Islamic culture and education.

The New Silk Road project, or the "One Belt, One Road" project as it is called officially in China, was initiated by the Chinese government in 2013 and for the last two years China has been investing heavily in a program for the promotion of the project. This project can provide a useful instrument for most of the efforts discussed above. The New Silk Road is more than just railroads connecting China with Europe; it envisages an economic belt where countries will work together to improve their trade, to make joint investments, and to enhance their cultural communication. The project starts from China, goes through Xinjiang, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkey, Balkans, and ends up in Central Europe, increasing connectivity and cooperation between the countries on the route. Turkey must actively take part in this project, assume a leading role in the sub-projects within this framework, and utilize the New Silk Road as a transmission channel of goods, ideas, and people between herself and China.²⁹

Recommendation #9: Proactively take part in the "One Belt, One Road" project. Maintain dialogue with the Chinese side on how Turkey can maximize its involvement in the project and how Turkey and China can cooperate in joint investment and construction projects along the route, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asian segments of the project where Turkish companies have accumulated business experience.

All of the suggestions above require an increase in the capacity of the agents. The merits for Turks receiving training in China and the need for more effective employment of Turkish students with Chinese degrees have already been discussed above. Having more Chinese educated in Turkey and providing employment opportunities for them will also be helpful. Similar measures need to be taken for

²⁹ Two agreements that were signed between Turkey and China on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Antalya in November 2015 reveal that from the logistical and physical infrastructure related perspectives Turkey is to practically become a part of the "One Belt, One Road" project in the near future. An agreement on the "harmonization of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road with the Middle Corridor Initiative" and a "railroad cooperation agreement" about building a high-speed railway link between Kars and Edirne, in other words between the easternmost and westernmost points of Turkey, will utilize Chinese know-how and Chinese finance in order to upgrade Turkey's domestic rail network and its expansion towards the Caucasus and Central Asia, turning Turkey into a key transit location between Europe and Asia on the New Silk Road (Atli, Altay. "Turkey to Get Railroads from China, not Missiles," *Asia Times*, November 19, 2015, <http://atimes.com/2015/11/turkey-to-get-railroads-from-china-not-missiles>).

each stakeholder. Bureaucratic capabilities need to be enhanced, and the most appropriate focus point would be the bureaucratic arms of the Turkish state that occupy key positions in implementing Turkey's China policy, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology, Ministry of National Defense, and Undersecretariat of Treasury. Their offices in China, just as the embassy in Beijing, the consulates, trade offices etc. elsewhere, are understaffed, and increasing manpower in these missions will help them to work proactively and creatively, instead of only saving the day through routine jobs. Similarly, these ministries and their missions in China will benefit profoundly if more Turkish graduates from Chinese universities are employed there.

Recommendation #10: Upgrade the Turkish diplomatic missions and the offices of other ministries in China in terms of personnel and budget.

The business community also needs greater capabilities in order to engage with China in a more efficient way. We can assume that the business community does not lack the financial resources for this purpose. However, the employment of citizens educated in China, is also, perhaps even more important for corporations. There are several voluntary business associations who work to strengthen Turkey's economic relations; there are business-wide organizations such as TÜSİAD, MÜSİAD, TUSKON, TİM, etc., and there are also specialist organizations such as the Turkish-Chinese Business Council under the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), Turkish-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, TÜMSİAD, TÜÇSİAD, TUSEM, etc. It is understandable that this multitude of associations compete with each other, however, for an optimal national policy towards China, it has to be made sure that the efforts of these institutions complement, rather than challenge or undermine each other. The best alternative is to institutionalize the cooperation between the state and the business community, and also among the associations themselves. A consultation body that brings together policy makers, bureaucrats, and business representatives, not on an ad hoc basis but through a formal structure, will be helpful.

Recommendation #11: Establish a fully structured and institutionalized China Policy Coordination Board for Turkey. This board will include representatives from public institutions and private sector organizations. It will gather information and feedback from all the stakeholders that are involved in relations with China, coordinate their China-related activities, ensure that inputs from all stakeholders are channeled to the formulation process of Turkey's China policy.

Finally, it is important to frame Turkey's relations with and foreign policy towards China not as an alternative to its relationship with the West, including the NATO allies, but rather as a component of a larger global vision. The "shift of axis" discourse that used to occupy newspaper headlines in the West had been the outcome of a false dichotomy as modern diplomacy is conducted not through two-dimensional axes as it was the case during the Cold War, but through multi-dimensional networks. Turkey does not need to make a choice between the East and the West, but it needs to improve its presence as a global player. Throughout the history of the modern republic, Turkey has benefited from its relations with the West, particularly from its EU accession process, and will continue to do so, while at the same time making efforts to reap benefits from relations with China in particular and Asia in general. Improved relations with China will help Turkey diversify its foreign policy portfolio. It will also turn Turkey into a more attractive partner for China, which already sees Turkey as a stepping platform to Europe and

other neighboring regions.

Recommendation #12: Initiate a public diplomacy program to underline that for Turkey, China is not a partner to replace the West, but a key element of Turkey's global presence that complements other main pillars such as the United States, EU, and the Middle East. Explore possibilities for economic cooperation projects that will include Turkey, China, and partners from Western countries.

These are only a limited number of concrete policy recommendations that can enable Turkey to improve its China policy, and to get the most from the rise of China. More recommendations can be formulated, as the analytically eclectic approach helps us to think outside the box and to think about a complex phenomenon in a multi-dimensional way. Turkish-Chinese relations are of increasing global importance and consequently, Turkey's task should be improving her China policy in a way to serve her national interest in the best possible way.

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