DOCTORAL THESIS

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

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

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

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

Keywords: Turkey, China, constructionism, bilateral relations, international relations
# Contents

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

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

**PART I – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** ............................................................................. 38  
**Chapter 1: Identity Building** ............................................................................................... 39  
Turkey’s Political History ........................................................................................................... 39  
Turkish Foreign Policy ............................................................................................................... 44  
China’s Political History ............................................................................................................ 54  
Chinese Foreign Policy ............................................................................................................ 61  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 67  

**Chapter 2: History of Turkey and China’s Bilateral Relations** ...................................... 69  
Old Days and Historical Legacies ............................................................................................ 69  
Diplomatic Recognition of the PRC and First Contacts (1971–2000) ..................................... 90  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 101  

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

**Chapter 4: China’s Political Context** .............................................................................. 207  
Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy ...................................................................................... 207
International Relations ................................................................. 213
China’s Turkey Policy ............................................................... 228
China’s Perceptions of Turkey .................................................... 234
Conclusion ..................................................................................... 244

**PART III – CURRENT INTERACTIONS ........................................248**

**Chapter 5: Features of the Turkish-Chinese Relations: An Emerging Strategic Partnership?................................................................. 249**
- Political and Strategic Dialogues .............................................. 249
- International Convergences .................................................... 264
- Party-to-Party Dialogues .......................................................... 269
- Trade and Economic Cooperation .......................................... 278
- Military and Security Cooperation ......................................... 297
- Cultural, Educational and Touristic Cooperation .................. 309
- Conclusion ..................................................................................... 329

**Chapter 6: Major Irritants for Relations ........................................331**
- Historical Burden and Current Perceptions .............................. 331
- “Distant” Relatives: The Uyghur Issue .................................... 339
- Trade Asymmetry and Competition ........................................ 358
- International Divergences ....................................................... 366
- Conclusion ..................................................................................... 376

**Conclusion ..................................................................................... 378**

- *Appendices* .................................................................................. 398
- *Bibliography* ................................................................................. 415
- *CURRICULUM VITAE* ................................................................. 466