

DOCTORAL THESIS

Turkey-China relations in the 21st century: from enhanced to strategic partnership

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Abstract

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

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

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

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

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

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