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**CHINA’S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR TURKEY**

MA Thesis in International Relations

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, as China's economic growth and international status have increased significantly, the development of bilateral relations with China has become an important diplomatic direction for many countries. In 2013, The Belt and Road initiative started with the motto of the president of China, Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan, and it became one of the most important foreign policy tool of Beijing in recent years. As the project was expected to be a connection between Europe and Asia, it was a strategy that has multiple advantages in Chinese foreign politics. The Belt And Road initiative proposed by China covers all aspects of economy, politics, transportation, culture, etc., and it also encompasses many countries . Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China wants to improve infrastructure development in countries along the route, especially in Central Asia, which is an important gateway to Europe by land, and expand its own commodity markets by accelerating regional economic integration and enhancing economic engagement with the region as well as Europe. And Turkey has been an important pivot point of the ancient Silk Road since ancient times, Therefore, in the Belt and Road Initiative, considering Turkey's special geographical position, its important influence in Central Asia and its importance to Europe, the relationship between China and Turkey appears to be of vital importance. In this study, China-Turkey relations have been evaluated through the Belt And Road initiative. The main purpose of the study is to review “The Belt and Road” initiative, and its effects on the region countries since the time it was announced. On the basis of the study; answers have been searched for why China needs such initiative and how to implement this policy, what is the importance of this initiative for Turkey, and what are the challenges and opportunities within the scope of The Belt and Road initiative between two nations.

Keywords: Ancient Silk Road; The Belt and Road; China-Turkey Relations;

ÖZET

Çin'in son yıllarda ekonomik olarak gösterdiği performans büyümesi ve uluslararası politikada ağırlığının artması nedeniyle Çin ile ikili ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi, birçok ülke için öncelik haline gelmiştir. Bu gelişmelerle birlikte 2013 yılında Kazakistan'da Çin Devlet Başkanı Xi Jinping'in girişimleriyle başlayan “Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi”, son yıllarda Pekin'in sık sık başvurduğu dış politika araçlarından biri haline gelmiştir. Projenin temelinde Avrupa ve Asya arasında bir bağlantı olması beklenmesinden dolayı, Çin dış politikasında bu proje stratejik öneme sahip olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çin'in önerdiği Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi ekonomi, siyaset, ulaşım, kültür vb. tüm alanları kapsamakta ve birçok ülkeyi de içermektedir. Çin, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi ile Orta Asya ülkeleri başta olmak üzere Avrupa'ya uzanan diğer ülkelerdeki ulaşım ve altyapı projelerini geliştirmeyi, bölge ve dünya ekonomisi ile entegrasyon sürecini hızlandırmayı ve güzergahı boyunca bölgede kendi nüfuz alanını genişletmeyi hedeflemiştir. Türkiye ise antik çağlardan beri İpek Yolu'nun önemli bir noktası olmuştur. Bu nedenle, Türkiye'nin coğrafi konumu, Orta Asya'daki önemli etkisi ve Avrupa'ya uzanan bir yol olarak göz önüne alındığında, Çin ve Türkiye arasındaki ilişkiler Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi ile kayda değer önem taşıdığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Çin-Türkiye ilişkileri Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi bağlamında nasıl geliştiği değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel amacı, “Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi”ni ve ilan edildiği tarihten itibaren bölge ülkeleri üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektir. Çalışmanın temelinde, Çin'in neden böyle bir girişime ihtiyaç duyduğu ve bu politikanın nasıl uygulanacağı, bu girişimin Türkiye için önemi ve iki ülke arasındaki Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi kapsamındaki zorluk ve fırsatların neler olduğu sorularına yanıt aranmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eski İpek Yolu; Kuşak ve Yol; Çin-Türkiye ilişkileri;

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of the Silk Road actually began to appear in the public eye long ago. The ancient Silk Road which began in China and ended in Anatolia acted as route for the transportation of Chinese tea, spices, silk, and porcelain products which were continuously produced by China and all these products were shipped to Europe. Actually, China and Turkey, in one way or other were bound by the ancient Silk Road. In recent years, with the rise of China's international status and steady growth in economic power, China's development has attracted more and more attention from the world. Some of China's economic propositions have been gradually accepted by other countries or regions in the world. China and Turkey are both enormous developing countries and important emerging countries as well, and the two countries have broad common interests in various fields. In 2013, New Silk Road attempt that started with the motto of "The Belt and Road" proposed by the President of China, Xi Jinping, in Kazakhstan, further became one of the most important foreign policy of Beijing. From this stage onwards, the official definition of the New Silk Road has been established a bit under the name of Belt and Road, and the Belt and Road initiative has since become one of the most important foreign economic policies of China. As the project was expected to be an affiliation between Europe and Asia, it was claimed to be a strategy that has multiple advantages in foreign policy. The Projects will act as a versatile strategy with its political, economic, and cultural gains. By means of this Project, Beijing aims to be a more effective power in areas where it previously was not. In other words, it can be said that with the establishment of this project China will try to dominate this region and will also impose its hegemony in the area.

The main aim of this thesis is to search for the main steps of the Belt and Road initiative as suggested by China in 2013. This thesis deals with the cooperation between China and Turkey on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative. China's recent efforts to revive the ancient Silk Road, which enabled the transmission of languages, religions, civilizations and goods between the East and the West, are somewhat remarkable. This

thesis will further elucidate the global and possible future reactions to this initiative which Beijing has designed by putting itself in the center. For this reason, viewpoints of several countries, especially Turkey, related to the project were evaluated in detail.

China, which is trying to rebuild the Silk Road through the "Belt and Road Initiative" occupies a pivotal position in China's 13th Five-Year Plan announced in October 2015, and it is also claimed to be the country's most ambitious foreign trade and investment project. It spans through 65 countries and 60% of the world's population and aims to redraw the trade channels for products that are made in China. According to Simeon Djankov¹, The main reason for China's implementation of the Belt and road initiative is that China which is one of the world's largest trading country, wishes to reduce the cost of transportation. In addition to reducing trade costs, the initiative has four other goals. First, China is trying to reduce the economy's dependence on domestic infrastructure investment and the related growth that such investments bring. Second, paying attention to infrastructure construction will help China improve the status of the RMB at the international level, that is, reach the status of an international reserve currency. The third motivation behind the Belt and Road Initiative is to ensure China's energy supply through new pipelines in Central Asia, Russia, and deep-water ports in Southeast Asia. Fourth, the development of infrastructure in countries along the "Belt and Road" may help countries achieve economic growth, thereby increasing the demand for Chinese goods and services.

In China's Belt and Road initiative, Turkey will become one of the key countries after putting the Ancient Silk Road project in to practice. Traditionally, Turkey is one of the countries which support China's the most in terms of the Belt and Road Initiative and is willing to participate as well. Geopolitical position of Turkey which connects the East to the West increases the interest of China in Turkey. Therefore, it can be seen that

¹ Djankov, Simeon. *"The rationale behind China's Belt and Road initiative."* China's Belt And Road Initiative, 2016, p.22.

there has been a strong “Silk Road Diplomacy” between Turkey and China recently.² Turkey will strengthen its role of being a transit country that connects the East to West. Eventually, it is possible for Turkey to obtain gains from investing activities, foreign economics and energy.

A reason for Turkey to look at the Belt and Road initiative is the desire to strengthen its economic and commercial relations with the countries that are in the zone. Turkey will also try to strengthen its geo-strategic position by staying in the middle of the trade relations that are related to energy, industry, and agricultural products. Thus, it can be said that Turkey is willing to be in the middle of the rail transportation corridor between Asia and Europe. Further, Turkey considers that it will form a tangible relation with China and passenger railway lines, and national currencies that will take place through the trade and economic relations can be profited with ease.

The Belt and Road is the first aspiration of strengthening the regional transport infrastructure and logistics goods. In this context, the “Iron Silk Road” initiative will help China and other countries to boost mutual relations in the region especially Turkey to highest level which is expected to form the backbone of a multi-dimensional cooperation. The Belt and Road initiative starting from China's Xian City, passing through Turkey and Central Asian countries will reach Europe and will further intended to initiate a railway line operation. In order to create a kind of “Eurasian bridge” a railway line, estimated to cost one trillion dollars is to be created by China.

This thesis consists of three parts. In the introduction part, I will mainly explain the purpose of writing this thesis, the thesis will further demonstrate why China advocates the Belt and Road initiative, what goals does it wants to achieve through the Belt and Road initiative, and what is Turkey's response to this initiative. In addition, the concept of the Belt and Road Initiative is explained at the beginning of this section,

² “一带一路”倡议必将推动中土关系深入发展("Belt and Road" initiative will definitely promote the deep development of China-Turkey relations)
[http://istanbul.chineseconsulate.org/chn/zlshd/t1456799.htm\(26.042017\)](http://istanbul.chineseconsulate.org/chn/zlshd/t1456799.htm(26.042017))

and also describing the reasons why China launched the Belt and Road Initiative and explain this thesis deals with the cooperation between China and Turkey on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative. Besides, This part will further elucidate the global and possible future reactions to this initiative which Beijing has designed by putting itself in the center. For this reason, viewpoints of several countries, especially Turkey, related to the project were evaluated in detail. Further, a general description of the content will be made as well.

The first chapter starts with; Historical Background of Silk Road, the history of Silk Road and China's Current Routes used to connect to Europe and the new Silk Road. It also provides a graphic analysis of the ancient Silk Road and the now proposed route of the New Silk Road, explaining what the southern section of the Silk Road is and what the northern section of the Silk Road is, as well as the definition of the ancient Silk Road by ancient and modern scholars. And secondly, the Chinese government's efforts to revive the ancient Silk Road, the measures it has taken and the policies it has supported. Finally, the role of Turkey in this initiative is analyzed in terms of its geopolitical role and economic strength

In the second chapter, the significance of "The Belt and Road" initiative on Turkey and Turkey's attitude towards China's "The Belt and Road" initiative will be examined. In this part of study, the significance of "The Belt and Road" initiative is going to be studied in the context of bilateral history, geopolitics and economy. In this analysis, the impact on China and Turkey is analyzed from the Turkish and Chinese perspectives respectively, and the history of the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Turkey is also mentioned. Besides, official reaction from Turkish side, business and academic circles responses will be discussed as well. The content of this paragraph is mainly selected from influential magazines, speeches of officials and scholars in Turkey's official, academic and business circles to elaborate on this part of the content and rationally analyze the evaluation of the Belt and Road Initiative by all sectors in order to come to a more fair conclusion.

In third part of the thesis, I will discuss on the opportunities and challenges of “The Belt and Road” Initiative. In terms of opportunities, the analysis will focus on the prospects for economic and energy cooperation, the achievements made since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Turkey, the joint cooperation between the two countries on major international issues, and Turkey's expectations of China under the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the cultural, tourism and epidemic prevention cooperation between China and Turkey. On the challenging side, this part is addressed in terms of the different expectations of the initiative between the two sides, the trade imbalance between them and the influence of some external forces on the Sino-Turkish relations, respectively. The adversities and the problems for the initiative that might be caused by lack of cooperation between China and Turkey are going to be studied. These problems will be reviewed in the political and economic context. Besides, different expectations that are going to arise in China-Turkey relation will also be examined and the influence of other powers will be studied as well. Further, other perspectives on the solutions regarding the problems will be presented too.

In the conclusion part of the thesis, a summary analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative is presented and answers have been searched for why China needs such initiative and how to implement this policy, what is the importance of this initiative for Turkey, and what are the challenges and opportunities within the scope of The Belt and Road initiative between two nations. At the same time, the advantages and disadvantages of the Belt and Road Initiative for both China and Turkey are also summarized. At the same time, an overview of the thesis concludes that China-Turkey cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative is worthy of anticipation and will see a peak of cooperation in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

CHINA’S “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE AND TURKEY’S ROLE

1.1 The Historical Significance of The Silk Road

The ancient silk Road has been the channel of the commerce and interaction where people, goods, and ideas were spread between the East and the West for centuries.³ Having been transferred from one generation to another for centuries, the Silk Road consists the principles of peace and cooperation, openness and comprehensiveness, mutual learning and advantage and it has contributed to the progression of the civilizations with the development of countries in the zone and increase in the level of welfare. In this regard, the communication and cooperation between East and West symbolizing the spirit is the common history and cultural heritage which is shared by all countries in the world.⁴ Even if Silk Road is recalled more with its use in commerce, the routes still maintain its value today thanks to the cultural transfer.

The communities which were located at the west of China had bought silk from China during that time that goes back to BC. However, the first term “Silk Road” was coined in 1877 by a German geographer named Ferdinand von Richthofen.⁵ Until that time, people and the communities who used this route gave it different names such as “The Southern Route” and “The Northern Route” with regard to their directions. The ancient trade route starting from China's Xi'an City and extending to Europe through Central Asia's Anatolia wasn't formed as a single route; on the contrary, it was organized as a large network that unites all Asia. In this respect, Silk Road which has

³ TUTAR, Filiz KUTLUAY, and Fatma Şura BAHSİ KOÇER. "Çin'in yeni ipek yolu projesi: Bir kuşak bir yol." *Sciences* 5.17 (2019): 618-626.

⁴ NDRC, MFA. "MC (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China).(2015)." *Vision and actions on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-century Maritime Silk Road* (2018).

⁵ Chin, Tamara. "The invention of the Silk Road, 1877." *Critical Inquiry* 40.1 (2013): 194-219.

the function of integrating Asia into the world economy has been an undisputed economic center of power especially in between the second and sixteenth centuries.

According to Jean-Paul Roux, Silk Road was the wealth of Central Asia at one time in the history. With the closure of this road, the region suffered from the catastrophe and its culture almost disappeared.⁶ Silk Road completely lost its importance with European sailors heading out through the world during the period of the early Age. Thus, instead of the long journeys and the delivery of goods to the agents, shipping which was direct and takes a relatively short time gained its importance. Today, the ships have taken the place of Silk Road, with the lead of China, many countries in Asia have been in the economic rise; thus, Silk Road has become important again.

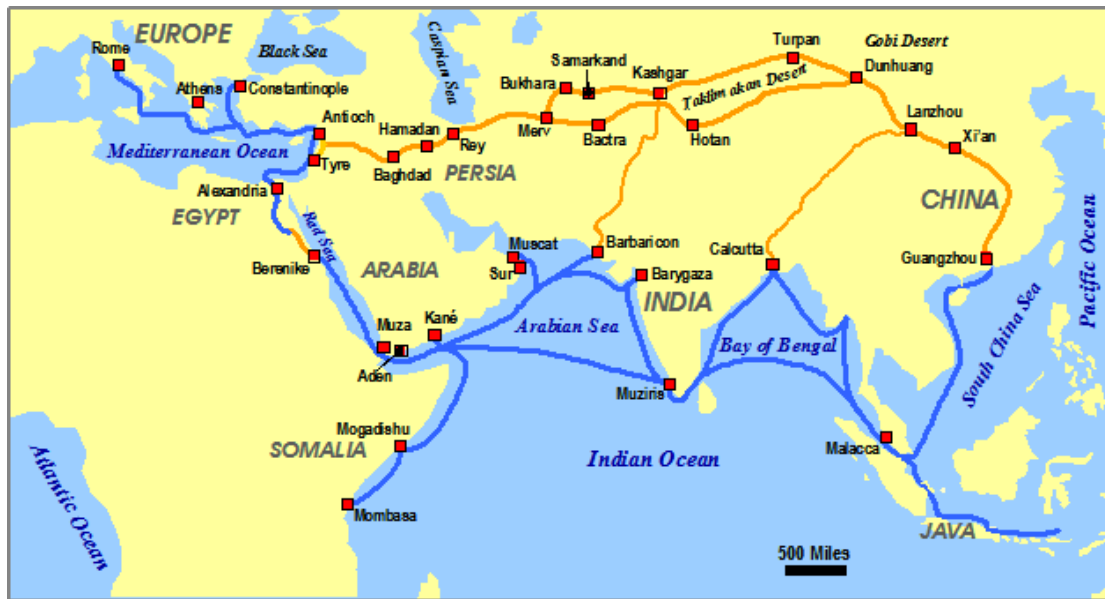
The first documents about the route of Silk Road dates back to Ancient Greek and Roman era. Even if the northern route which is described extensively by the famous historian Herodotus, there is no such data for the southern route.⁷ However, it is believed that one side of the road starts from the southeast of Turkey. According to the data provided by Ptolemaios, which was a part of the Roman Empire at that time, which starts from Antiokhia (Antakya) city in today's Turkey.⁸

⁶ Roux, Jean-Paul, and Lale Arslan. *Orta Asya: tarih ve uygarlık*. Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2006.

⁷ Silk Road, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk_Road (06.2021)

⁸ Tezcan, Mehmet. "İpek Yolu'nun İran Güzergâhı ve İpek Yolu Ticaretine İran Engellemesi." *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim (TEKE) Dergisi* 3.1 (2014): 96-123.

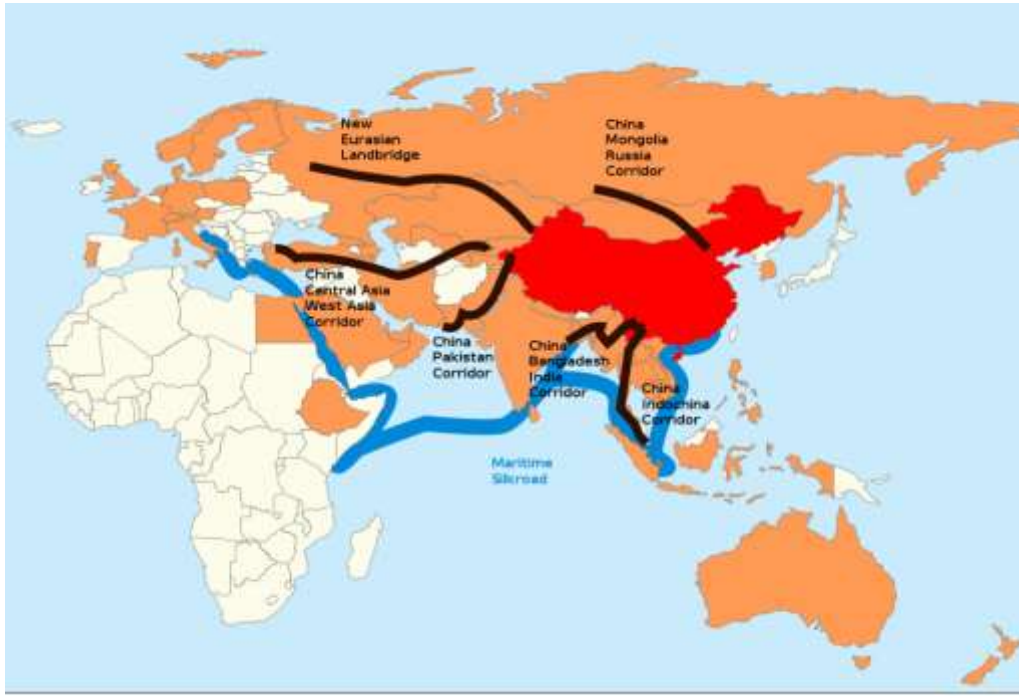
Roadmap of the Land Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road



Source: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/cjzthgjj/104.htm>



Countries along the Belt and Road



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belt_and_Road_Initiative

However, Silk Road is not just a simple road, it is also a network of trade and commerce. That's why, today's Turkey had connected the Silk Road which comes from China and crosses Central Asia and further extends to Europe as if it was a bridge. Today, the railway transportation between China and Europe is carried out through three separate routes. In Eastern route, the ships that are loaded with goods coming from the Eastern port of China are to be transferred to the trains at the port of Vostochny in Russia's Pacific coast, and then, transferred to Germany via Russia and Belarus. The total length of this line of merchandise is about 11 thousand kilometers.⁹

In Northern route which is about 10 thousand-kilometer-long, the goods are loaded in Beijing and China's northern parts and are transferred to Germany after

⁹ Demir ipek yolu ile Çin Avrupa 15 gün, [https://tr.railturkey.org/2014/10/09/cin-avrupa-demiryolu-rotalari/\(09.10.2014\)](https://tr.railturkey.org/2014/10/09/cin-avrupa-demiryolu-rotalari/(09.10.2014))

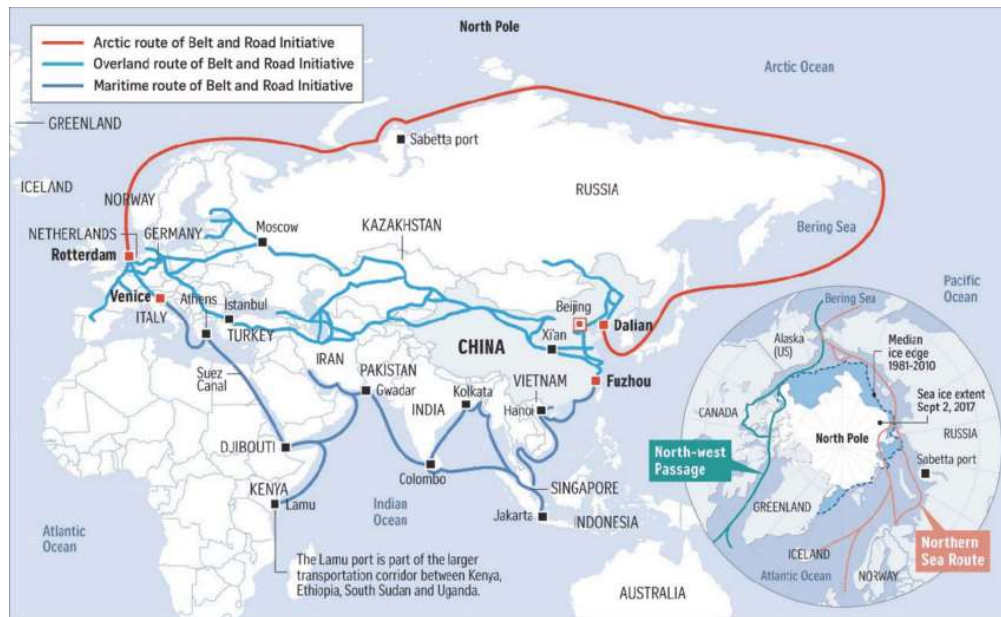
passing through the same countries through the line that is parallel to the Trans- Siberian railway. Finally, in Southern route which started economic activity in 2012, the goods are loaded in China's hinterlands which are to be transferred to the Hamburg harbor after passing 14.5 thousand kilometers on the road that includes Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus.¹⁰

The Southern route which opened in October 2012 and also expanded to reach to different cities of China in the following years now spreads to Kazakhstan starting from the cities in China's hinterlands; Wuhan-Chongqing-Chengdu- Zhengzhou. The route then connects to the cities of Germany: Duisburg and Hamburg after surpassing Russia and Belarus. This route currently provides the opportunity to have a quite low-cost, fast and relatively short-distance transportation between China and Europe. The transportation takes up to 19 days in between the most distant city of China and Hamburg. The term is slightly more than the 12-day period prescribed by the Iron Silk Road; nevertheless, it is much more advantageous than the 45-day period of the sea transport. The most important defect of this line is not to contribute to the relationship between China and the other countries in these regions except for Kazakhstan, Central Asia and the Caucasus. So, the basic motive of China builds railway transport infrastructure can be seen as the need for the aggregation of its economy with Central Asia and the Middle East rather than seeking a new line for Europe. However, Turkey has a tendency to detect the railway infrastructure construction process as a European-oriented project that completely alternates the Southern route.¹¹

Roadmap of the Maritime Silk Road and the Overland Silk Road Economic Belt

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ 土耳其大力投资铁路 (Turkey invests heavily in railroads) <http://33h.co/w8pte> (10.2019)



Source: Belt And Road Portal <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/>

The main lines of the project were publicized with the news broadcasted by the Chinese State news agency Xinhua in 2015.¹² According to this statement, the Belt and Road initiative is divided into two major parts, one is the land-based Silk Road economic Belt and the other is the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Economic Belt. The Land Silk Road Economic Belt, starting from China to Central Asia and Turkey through Iran, and then, continues to Europe; it goes to south by going to Rotterdam and ends in Venice.¹³ And the Maritime Silk Road Economic Belt, which will provide the stability of development in the region goes down from the South China Sea, touches Calcutta, passes the Indian Ocean, further touches Kenya, passes the Red Sea and the Mediterranean and connects to the Land Silk Road in Venice.¹⁴ To protect the safety of these two routes, China has increased its attention to the area and is continuing to invest in the infrastructure to ensure the proper functioning of the initiative. In other words, with the initiative of the Belt and Road, it is desired to create both a trade corridor and

¹² Belt and Road Initiative, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/english/index.htm> (06.07.2019)

¹³ Atlı, Altay. "Çin ve Yeni İpek Yolu Projesi." *Asya Pasifik Dergisi* (2014): 74-77.

¹⁴ Atlı, Altay. "Çin ve Yeni İpek Yolu Projesi." *Asya Pasifik Dergisi* (2014): 74-77.

a cultural life area by passing through most of the countries in the historic route.

1.2 China Towards To The Belt And Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative is a global developmental strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 involving infrastructure development and investments in nearly 70 countries and international organizations.¹⁵¹⁶ The President of China, Xi Jinping, initially announced the strategy during his official visits to Indonesia and Kazakhstan in 2013. "Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation, which is called as "the Silk Road Economic Belt"; whereas "road" refers to the sea routes, or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.¹⁷

Formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR) (一带一路, in short the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road (丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路)¹⁸, it has been referred to as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since 2016 when the Chinese government considered the emphasis on the word "one" was prone to misinterpretation.¹⁹ However, "The Belt and Road" (一带一路) is still used in Chinese-language mass media.²⁰

China's The Belt and Road initiative attempt is described in many resources as the construction of an enterprise project. The New Silk Road Project that is going to

¹⁵ [Belt and Road Initiative](#)". *World Bank*. [Archived](#) from the original on 19 February 2019. Retrieved 10 March 2019.

¹⁶ ["Overview – Belt and Road Initiative Forum 2019"](#). [Archived](#) from the original on 17 September 2019. Retrieved 30 January 2020.

¹⁷ Kuo, Lily; Kommenda, Niko. ["What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?"](#). *the Guardian*. [Archived](#) from the original on 5 September 2018. Retrieved 5 September 2018.

¹⁸ [Wayback Machine](#)" (PDF). 13 July 2017. Archived from [the original](#)(PDF) on 13 July 2017. Retrieved 22 March 2019.

¹⁹ ["BRI Instead of OBOR – China Edits the English Name of its Most Ambitious International Project"](#). *liia.lv*. 28 July 2016. Archived from [the original](#) on 6 February 2017. Retrieved 15 August 2017

²⁰ 王毅：着力打造西部陆海新通道 推动高质量共建"一带一路"-新华网. (Wang Yi: Strive to build a new land-sea channel in the west, and promote high-quality joint construction of the "Belt and Road"-Xinhuanet) [www.xinhuanet.com](#) (in Chinese). [Archived](#) from the original on 21 August 2019. Retrieved 21 August 2019.

connect the countries, especially the Central Asia countries, to each other through the modernized railways and targeting the economic reinvigoration with the “The Belt and Road” motto was first put into words by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in his speech given at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan on 7th September ,2013.²¹

Xi Jinping stated in his speech that there had been a unique market both with a population of three billion and an enormous potential. Xi Jinping, on the other hand, responded to the criticism that consists of Chinas step into pre-dominating the region as China had no intentions of pre-dominating the region or interfering with the internal affairs as the project focused on the economic benefits only.²²

The Belt and Road Initiative has been one of the most important government policies since 2013 and the plan of its implementation was involved in the Government Work Report that was announced by the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang (李克强) in March 14th, 2014. In the aforementioned announcement, Li Keqiang (李克强) expressed the support for construction of economic corridors of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar and China-Pakistan. In addition, he alleged that they had speeded up the infrastructure connections with neighboring countries and they had opened a new field in order to develop international economic and technological cooperation with other countries.²³

Thousands of kilometers long land and railways²⁴ and the establishment of oil and natural gas pipelines are planned to be completed in the accomplishment of targeted

²¹ 安宇宏. ““一带一路” 战略.” 宏观经济管理 1 (2015).(An Yuhong. "The "One Belt One Road" Strategy." *Macroeconomic Management*

²² 一 带 一 路
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%80%E5%B8%A6%E4%B8%80%E8%B7%AF/13132427>
(05.06.2021)

²³ 2013 年中国政府工作报告(2013 Chinese Government Work Report) <http://adkx.net/w8lip>
(01.04.2013)

²⁴ “一 带 一 路 ” , 机 遇 与 风 险 ("One Belt One Road", opportunities and risks)
https://www.bakermckenzie.com/-/media/files/insight/publications/2017/10/belt-road/baker_mckenzie_belt_road_report_chinese_v2_2017.pdf?la=en (06.2017)

economic corridors until 2030. In order to achieve this goal, the initiative is to be implemented in a healthy way, the trust and the stability of the region should be ensured according to the experts.

According to the statement of the Chinese government, the belt and road project takes the form of five headings.²⁵ In the context of politics, it is aimed at the creation of a more stable political order and the countries that are in the zone are going to take regional cooperation measures. In the context of connectivity of infrastructure, it is aimed at creating the substructure plans and the standards to construct the path of main transportation in the countries that come in the route. In the context of trade, countries are aimed at taking measures to ease the investment and trade. In the context of capital, the financial cooperation is taken into account. Finally, in the context of “Closer People-to-People Ties”, cooperation in the fields of culture, academic, human resources, tourism, science, technology, and media are taken into consideration. Within the framework of these five elements, a wide range of political and economic arrangements are foreseen such as for the implementation of the policy of providing-support for large-scale projects, regional increase of cooperation in solving problems, improvement of customs clearance in the border of the ports, the establishment of “single window” system at customs, reducing the costs of customs clearance.²⁶ In the action plan prepared in March 28, 2015, by the commission parities of National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Commerce, the principles of “The Belt and Road”, its general framework, regional cooperation priorities, and mechanism are elucidated (NDRC,2015).²⁷ According to this plan, China’s new vision aims at the inclination to a multi-polar world, economic

²⁵ 申现杰, and 肖金成. "国际区域经济合作新形势与我国“一带一路”合作战略." *宏观经济研究* 11 (2014): 30-38. (Shen Xianjie, and Xiao Jincheng. "The New Situation of International Regional Economic Cooperation and China's "One Belt, One Road" Cooperation Strategy." *Macroeconomic Research* 11 (2014): 30-38.)

²⁶ Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road , https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease_8232/201503/t20150330_1193900.html (20.06.2017)

²⁷ The National Development Reform Commission

globalization, cultural diversity, global free trade regime, and the open world economy in the spirit of open regional cooperation (NDRC, 2015). According to the proposed action plan, this initiative includes strengthening the partnership of the countries in the zone, promoting a sustainable, balanced and independent development, coordinating the strategies of development of the countries in the region, the economic connections like opening up new employment opportunities by promoting investment and consumption, improving the intercultural communication and human relations, the human values such as communication among the peoples of the respective countries, mutual learning, trust and mutual respect, living together in peace and prosperity (NDRC, 2015). China states that this new initiative is based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence “Living Together In Peace” in accordance with the aim and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. These are: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, mutual non-aggression, non-involvement in internal affairs, living together in peace with the equality and common utility (NDRC, 2015).

The Belt and Road Initiative is expected to create a new bridge between East and West and aims to create a “prosperity zone” in the economies of 65 countries reaching 21 trillion dollars. The project in its current state applies to 63% of the world population and 29% of the world economy.²⁸ China has recently taken many concrete steps to put the project into practice because Silk Road route will have a significant impact on the global economy and it will become the center of attraction. With the leadership of China, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is founded to help meeting the infrastructure and financial expenses of the project. It was expected that this bank will start operating by the end of 2015 and Turkey had also applied to be its founding member with other 57 countries.²⁹ It is believed that the aforementioned bank

²⁸ İpek Yolu’na refah formülü <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/ipek-yolu-na-refah-formulu-2057704> (11.05.2015)

²⁹ Yiwei, Wang, "China’s ‘new silk road’: A case study in EU-China relations." *Xi’s policy gambles: The bumpy road ahead* (2015): 103-115.

is China's new maneuver against the Asian Development Bank whose big shareholders are the USA and Japan. However, due to the failure of Asian Development Bank to adequately support the Asian countries which has had significant development recently, there are some interpretations that the new bank will play a complementary role instead of being a rival or alternative of the Asian Development Bank.³⁰

The countries that applied for Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, include the United Kingdom, German and France as Europe's most important powers as well as countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan which are notable in the Middle East, the application of these countries shows that China has become a country that is considered important in the international area in parallel with its increasing economic power. In addition, the fact that a great number of the countries who applied to become a member of the bank are on the Silk Road route, which is actually considered by China as an encouraging situation. The concern that Beijing's power will increase with the implementation of the project is reduced compared to the past, which is also effective because it was a great concern for some countries, especially Russia, at the very beginning of the occurrence of The Belt and Road Initiative. China promised that with such resources this project drew the attention of all the countries on the route. However, until a short time ago, as Beijing's the Belt and Road initiative does not involve Moscow, Russia still has influence in the former Soviet countries. Therefore, Central Asian countries had to hold themselves at a distance from the project.

Chinese President Xi Jinping constituted 40 billion dollars committed to allocate budget in order to start the project "The Belt and Road" in a statement he made in November, 2014. A portion of that amount will be defrayed by the Chinese Government, and the rest will be defrayed by the Chinese investment company, China Development Bank Capital Corporation and China Export-Import Bank.³¹ In addition, in January,

³⁰ Özdaşlı, Esme. "Çin'in Yeni İpek Yolu Projesi Ve Küresel Etkileri." *Electronic Turkish Studies* 10.14 (2015).

³¹ Lim, Alvin Cheng-Hin. *Africa and China's 21st century maritime silk road*. East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, 2015.

2015, Energy Development Fund which is expected to attract investment of more than 20 billion dollar was formulated.³² Moreover, among the countries in the zone with the development of the bilateral currency swap the scale and scope, Asia's bond market is intended to increase the capacity.³³ The Belt and Road Initiative is believed to implement diplomatic efforts with countries from China as soon as possible by considering the generation and speed of project funding and further resource support has increased its activities in countries that could easily lobby with China. For example, in June 5, 2014, at the opening speech of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, Xi Jinping expressed his wishes for working with the Arab countries to reach the goal of "The Belt and Road" and reviving "the meaning of Silk Road" again by requesting to work "shoulder to shoulder" with Arab Countries.³⁴ Regarding the budget, Until 2020, China will provide with a significant part of the work of the project's infrastructure to comply with it and other countries, Further China is also targeting generation industry and financial areas to support the investment plans for cooperation. This case has the characteristics of an answer from China to the criticism made against not being able to make the financial resources available to the project. In addition, to the investments that started with the name of Silk Road Fund investments are expected to be approximately 40 billion dollars that are going to be spent each year.³⁵

1.3 The Role Of Turkey In China's "Belt And Road" Initiative

Turkey and China are developing an effective partnership to sustain critical long-term benefits. At this point, it is needed to see things from a broader geopolitical

³² Yılmaz, Zeki, Cihat Erdem, and K. A. Y. A. Kubra. "Yeni İpek Yolu'nun Türkiye Ekonomisine Etkisi." *Uluslararası Afro-Avrasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5.9: 198-214.

³³ Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, <https://so.ndrc.gov.cn/s?siteCode=BM04000007EN&token=&qt=2015> (20.07.2017)

³⁴ 中阿合作论坛习近平讲话 (Speech by Xi Jinping of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum) http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/xxjxs/2018-07/12/c_1123113853.htm (12.07.2018)

³⁵ 中国的丝绸之路能带来什么 (What can China's Silk Road bring) <http://33h.co/w81cm> (18.11.2017)

perspective. To improve the relations between two countries into ideal levels in a multidimensional power environment, it is necessary to verge into not only political and strategic roots, but also into a system that will create a mutual profoundness in every parameter.

Turkey controls every strategic corridor in Afro-Eurasia³⁶ context, and it possess a crucial importance for all potential moral and material elements. In this context, Turkey is the shortest and the safest route in China's New Silk Road Economic Zone in the European context. In the Project that has been designed to have 5 routes, three of which are seaways and two of which are roadways, all of the routes pass through Turkey.

Turkey and China have joint profits in geopolitics and security areas in Central Asia and Middle East. Taking the energy security into account, as the terrorist actions are climbing rapidly, providing the peace and security in these areas is important for both countries. As both Turkey and China are on a steep climb in economic growth, these forces are considered by each other even more. For China, Turkey is the door to Europe, a good economic partner in the Middle East and Central Asia, and for Turkey, China is a partner in economic, political and security areas with whom it wants to improve its relations mutually.

At this point, The Belt and Road initiative, started by China, provides great opportunities to solve the bilateral and multilateral problems. A business model that does not prioritize the exclusive assailant economic partnership can affect the negative outcomes of global competition parameters that takes a shape of micro-nationalism. In this regard the Belt and Road initiative, with all its references, is the first flexible global integration of history. Turkey and China's potential to complete each other with bilateral

³⁶ [*Frank, Andre G. \(1998\), ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age, University of California Press, ISBN 978-0-520-21474-3*](#)

and multilateral strategic cooperation is unmatched.

Beijing had the chance to communicate with many countries as the ideological restrictions that determined relations among the countries came to an end after the Cold War. The economic transformation progress starting in 1978 with ruling party of Deng Xiaoping resulted in China becoming one of the most important economic powers in the world towards the end of 1990s. Especially with the membership of World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the economy of China opened up to the world and the leaders of China took a step forward in the politics to become powerful in terms of policymaking and economics in many regions of the world including Latin America, Africa, and Europe. Thanks to the transformation in the economic structure, China was able to follow an active and proactive foreign policy. Especially with the USA that China takes serious account of the events after the 9/11 attacks, China revolted against the USA's unipolar ideology by pioneering the political and economic formation done at local and global scale. China made arrangements to create an alternative system to the one that was created by the USA, by making dramatic changes in the contemporary foreign policy during the process. According to Heilmann, Beijing wants to strengthen its position in the World by putting effort to construct parallel structures in the international system³⁷ Therefore, it can be said that Beijing is trying to create a mechanism that maintains relationship with the existing international institutions while restricting these institutions as well as competing with them to a certain extent. In the Context of the politics that strengthen from the repercussion of the hegemony of the USA, China is increasing its reputation by leading a number of policies, economic, and military organization day by day. Thus, The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most important examples of becoming an active and international representative with the soft power elements. Following this project holding the qualification of being a part of the strategy that includes multiple directions and agents in foreign policies from 2000s, China is aiming to become a more active power in many regions where it wasn't that

³⁷ Heilmann, Sebastian, and Dirk H. Schmidt. *China's foreign political and economic relations: an unconventional global power*. Rowman & littlefield, 2014.

active in the earlier years.

Since 1991, there have been many projects to restore the ancient Silk Road that has been an important network in economy and transportation for centuries. Many attempts by the USA to shake the prestige of China and Russia in the former Soviet region starting with the Central Asia remains inconclusive due to the lasting influence of Russia on that region in terms of the economics and politics. In 2013, on the other hand, The Belt and Road Initiative attempt that started with the slogan of the president of China, Xi Jinping “The Belt and Road” in Kazakhstan became one of the most important foreign policy of Beijing.³⁸ As the project was expected to be a linking point between Europe and Asia, it was a strategy that has multiple advantages in foreign policy. Therefore, with this project, China aims to become a more active in the regions where it has not been previously much active.

Turkey is an important country connecting three continents. When compared with other countries along the “Belt and Road”, Turkey has outstanding characteristics: First, its geographical location is very imperative and important. Turkey is both a Middle Eastern country and a Turkic-speaking country closely related to Central Asia; it is both a NATO member and a possible candidate country for the European Union, but it has a high degree of secularization and has long been regarded by the West as a model of Islamic modernization. Since the Middle East is a hotspot in contemporary international relations and is closely related to China's energy security, Turkey and China also have very close security and economic cooperative relations.³⁹ Turkey's multiple characteristics are of special significance to China's implementation of the "Belt and Road" initiative. Second, economic development is also at its peak and is very active. Turkey is a member of the Group of Twenty (G20). Its economy has achieved

³⁸ 这就是“一带一路”简史！（This is the brief history of "One Belt One Road"）
http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-04/26/c_1124418156.htm（26.04.2019）

³⁹ 授权发布:推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动（Authorized release: Vision and actions to promote the joint construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road）
http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-03/28/c_1114793986.htm（28.03.2015）

leapfrog development in recent years, and it is rapidly transforming from a traditional agricultural country with a relatively backward economic foundation to a modern industrial country. In 2014, Turkey's GDP was 79.5 billion U.S. dollars (approximately 10,541.9 U.S. dollars per capita), ranking 18th in the world in terms of economic aggregate and belonging to upper middle-income countries.⁴⁰ As a result, Turkey is regarded as a medium power with a special geopolitical status.⁴¹ Brzezinski regards Turkey as one of the geopolitical “Pivot” countries on the global chessboard of Eurasia in the “Grand Chess Game”. Based on the above factors, Turkey’s active participation in the “Belt and Road” construction will have a more important impact on the implementation of this initiative.

⁴⁰ 世界银行官网数据：（World Bank official website data）<https://data.worldbank.org/cn/country/TR>

⁴¹ Renaud, Frédéric. "Adam Chapnick, The Middle Power Project: Canada and the Founding of the United Nations, 2005." *Revue québécoise de droit international* 20.1 (2007): 509-514.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPACT OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE ON TURKEY AND THE REACTION OF VARIOUS CIRCLES IN TURKEY

2.1 The Significance Of “The Belt And Road” Initiative to Turkey

2.1.1 The Historical Significance Of The Belt And Road Initiative To China And Turkey

The multidimensional effects of the Silk Road have led to the intensification of the political struggle over the region for many years. Huge empires establishing dominance over the Silk Road route region have been Asia's most dominant forces. Political balance of the Old World has also been determined on those commercial lines. Geographical and technological discoveries in the history of the world and accordingly changes on social and political structures have set aside the Silk Road in the course of history. Silk Road has lost its geopolitical sense in the course of time and only its "historical" title remains in the contemporary world.

The friendship between Turkey and China comes from the past. Two countries in the western and the eastern end of the historical Silk Road have a deep-rooted history of political, cultural and trade relations. In general, an initial date has not been determined for Turkish-Chinese relations, but it is believed that the Turkish-Chinese relations have about 3000 years of history. In other words, it can be said that these two countries share a long history between each other. The shining era within that period overlaps with the period when Silk Road was important and by losing Silk Road's function in the 16th century the relations between these two countries have lost its function and have entered an unproductive period. In this context; it is impossible to ignore Silk Road's impact when talking of the historical ties of friendship and cooperation between the people of these two countries.

It is known that Silk Road started from city of Xi'an in China and reached up to

the city of Antakya and connected to Europe from there. But as we have mentioned in the previous section, to refer to the section of the routes of the Silk Road, Silk Road makes up a whole network of civilization.⁴² Silk Road has not only been a trade route between East and the West, however it has also been a cradle of civilization. In this cradle of civilization these two cultures and nations have blended, and it has revealed a rich cultural heritage.⁴³

Silk Road's loss of function and utility with time has been a disaster for the generations of Silk Road countries and a common Silk Road heritage of those countries have been exposed as well. The region has destabilized, lost its importance and has fallen idle as well. A stable and secure environment to maintain trade and commerce could not be established after the loss of function of old Silk Road.

With the official recognition of China by Turkey in 1971; the idea of reviving the historic Silk Road has been on the agenda of the Turkish-Chinese relations in every era. Historical and cultural, mutual and common shares on the Silk Road not only form the core of the ties between two countries, but also form the content of China-Turkey strategic cooperation relationship.⁴⁴

2.1.2 Geopolitical Significance

Due to Turkey's geographical location, it is one of the world's most significant countries politically, economically and culturally. It is located in the area where three important continents in the history of world get closer to the most. Turkey provides important facilities on marine transportation thanks to its surrounding seas and straits. The surrounding waterways have the opportunity to open to the oceans through the

⁴² 李明伟. "丝绸之路研究百年历史回顾." *西北民族研究* (Li Mingwei. "A Hundred-Year Historical Review of Silk Road Studies." *Northwestern Ethnic Studies*) 2.45 (2005): 90-106.

⁴³ Liu, Xinru. *The Silk Road in world history*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁴⁴ 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. (Ding Gong. *Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: Retrospect and Prospect*) Diss. 2011.

Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. These circumstances facilitate trade activities with the countries that have coasts. Straits are of great importance in regard with economic, military and political areas. There are several areas and mineral deposits of enormous geological importance in Turkey. This is important in terms of raw material in order to meet the needs of various industries in Turkey.⁴⁵

Turkey has either an adjacent or a close position with the Middle East and Central Asian countries which own a large portion of oil and gas resources. Further, it has also a close position with the industrialized nations of Western Europe with a great need of those energy resources. As a result of this situation, both with the Middle East and the Western industrialized countries, Turkey has established a political, social and economic cooperation with these countries. Turkey functions as a bridge or a corridor geopolitically between East and West.⁴⁶ Turkey is located on a terrestrial area which hosted such major trade networks as Spice Road and King's Road in addition to the Silk Road.

Turkey's geopolitical position gains importance in the context of reviving the Silk Road. If Silk Road initiative reaches its aim; China reaches the goal of getting into European market and China will not only get into European market, but it would also reach in establishing the most direct route.⁴⁷ China's European integration process will also get over crucially.

In other words, it can be said that, if Silk Road initiative reaches its aim; Turkey will reach its goal of becoming a bridge of culture, trade and energy between East and WEST and it will also achieve the objective of the efficient use of its geopolitical

⁴⁵ 咎涛. "历史视野下的“土耳其梦”——兼谈“一带一路”下的中土合作." *西亚非洲* (Zan Tao. "The "Turkish Dream" from the Perspective of History-Also on China-Turkey Cooperation under the "One Belt One Road". " *West Asia and Africa*) 2 (2016): 65-90.

⁴⁶ Bilgin, Mert. "New prospects in the political economy of inner-Caspian hydrocarbons and western energy corridor through Turkey." *Energy Policy* 35.12 (2007): 6383-6394.

⁴⁷ Huang, Yiping. "Understanding China's Belt & Road initiative: motivation, framework and assessment." *China Economic Review* 40 (2016): 314-321.

position.

2.1.3 Economic Significance

With the end of the Cold War, the Central Asian countries gained their independence and China's economic rise that began acting with the free market principles; has initiated a transition period to carry historic Silk Road from the passive to the active position.

A new era has started with the Central Asian Turkic Nations' located on the Silk Road gaining their independence and it has revived the power struggle over the region. The power struggles that take place between USA, Russia and China as global powers and Iran, Saudi Arabia, India and Turkey as regional powers pose a danger but also offer opportunities for Central Asian countries. This multilateral power struggle has brought the opportunity to open the historic Silk Road trade route.⁴⁸

China receives itself in the center of these new economic occurrences and aims to reach on European markets more quickly. The project which has the land and the sea in consideration is expected to gain strength to the Chinese shrinking demand economy with the effects of the global crisis. In addition, with the Belt and Road Initiative, China will get the opportunity to supply the needs of its emerging economy in easier and cheaper way. China buys about more than a quarter of its oil from the Persian Gulf and invests millions of dollars to Iran's oil industry. It is a very important data to show the China's growing energy demand.⁴⁹ This project is not only limited to freight line but also aims to increase cooperation and joint investment between the countries on the Silk Road and it envisages the route to be transformed into an economic zone. With Beijing's

⁴⁸ 卫玲. "一带一路": 新型全球化的引擎." 兰州大学学报: 社会科学版 (Wei Ling. "One Belt One Road": The Engine of New Globalization." *Journal of Lanzhou University: Social Science Edition*) 3 (2017).

⁴⁹ 郑蕾, and 刘志高. "中国对“一带一路”沿线直接投资空间格局." 地理科学进展 (Zheng Lei, and Liu Zhigao. "The spatial pattern of China's direct investment along the "Belt and Road"." *Progress in Geographical Sciences*) 34.5 (2015): 563-570.

thriving Silk Road Economic Zone; China's huge market and high-performance production power will increase tremendously, Further, Europe's capital stock and technology and the energy resources of Central Asia will encompasses a multifaceted participation.⁵⁰

Under the conditions of stable economic development in China and Turkey, China is currently Turkey's largest trading partner in the far East and the world's third largest exporter; as two developing countries with rapid economic growth, both countries focus on the development of economic relations between the two countries. Both attach importance to bilateral economic interests, not only injecting real impetus into the development of bilateral relations between the two countries, but also drawing a blueprint for future development. The Belt and Road strategy will become a new artery of economic cooperation between the two countries, injecting new vitality into the strategic cooperative relationship between the two countries. The Belt and Road Initiative will not only increase the bilateral trade volume between China and Turkey, but it will also expand the economic integration between countries along the route. According to statistics from the Turkish Statistics Agency, the bilateral trade volume between China and Turkey in 2019 was 21.08 billion U.S. dollars, and there will be a significant increase in the future as well.⁵¹ Generally speaking, the cooperation between China and Turkey has its inherent geographical advantages. The two countries are located at the East and East ends of Asia, with different natural environments, strong economic complementarities, and huge economic and trade cooperation potential, broad prospects, and promising prospects. China and Turkey have obvious complementary advantages in terms of capital, technology, and markets. Further as for Turkey, by enlivening the Belt and Road initiative, both with its historical ties and geopolitical importance will enter a great economic development process. Turkey will

⁵⁰ 邓富华, 冯乾彬, and 田霖. "一带一路." 倡议下中国石油进口贸易效率及潜力研究 (Deng Fuhua, Feng Ganbin, and Tian Lin. *Research on the efficiency and potential of China's oil import trade under the "One Belt, One Road." Initiative*) 25.5 (2019): 18-29.

⁵¹ 中国与土耳其 2019 年双边经贸概况 (Overview of China-Turkey Bilateral Economic and Trade in 2019) <http://adkx.net/w81c8> (19.05.2020)

not only fulfill its mission as an East-West bridge; but it will also achieve its goal to reach the Asian market.

2.2 Turkey's Response To China's "The Belt And Road" Initiative

2.2.1 Official Reactions From Turkish Side:

After the Cold War, discussions took place between Turkey and China to improve their relations, further emphasis had usually been on the notion of Silk Road. In most of the meetings where China and Turkey came together, emphasis have been on the case of reviving the route, or on the fact that Silk Road connects these two ancient civilizations.

Although China's attempt to revive Silk Road Economic Zone became an action plan in 2013, Turkey-China relations date back to past. In 2007, PM Erdogan expressed the importance of Silk Road for Turkey with these words: "The ancient Silk Road maintains its importance as it did in the past. Turkey is right in the center of Beijing-London route. With executing the infrastructure, investments are needed, it is a must for us to achieve this opportunity to its fullest and use it for our nation and people's service. With the completion of Marmaray, we will link London with Beijing through railways. And this can be done by passing through the Bosphorus underwater route."⁵²

As Erdogan suggested in his speech, Turkey will play an effective role in the establishment of The Belt and Road initiative which connects Asia and Europe through railway and seaway. This strategic plan of Turkey is an indicator of it being harmonious with China's Asia- Europe strategy; reviving the old Silk Road, which remains on the agenda since the early nineties.

According to Turkey's Prime Ministerial Investment Agency; Turkey should

⁵² 侯隽. "土耳其总统埃尔多安:“一带一路”是共赢之路." *中国经济周刊* 2 (2017). (Hou Jun. "Turkish President Erdogan: "One Belt One Road" is the road to win-win." *China Economic Weekly*)

take the most important step in the resuscitation of the ancient Silk Road which starts from China and reaches to Europe. In 2008 International Road Transport Association Congress, hosted by Turkey's Ministry of Transportation, Turkey arranged many special sessions on resuscitation of Silk Road. In these sessions, Silk Road theme in Turkey-China relations had been emphasized.⁵³

In his 2010, China's Minister of Commerce Chen Deming during his visit to Turkey, repeated that Silk Road should be revived through collaborating with Turkey. After the meeting, State Minister Zafer Caglayan, stated that within the framework of reviving Silk Road, through standardizing the railway infrastructure, the opportunity to import and export goods from China to Turkey and from Turkey to the whole world will rise. Chinese Minister Chen Deming, stated that by the approval of PM Erdogan, Turkey and China which stand on the East and West ends of Asia, Silk Road will contribute to the transportation between these countries.⁵⁴

In September 2010, China's PM Wen Jiabao during his visit to Turkey, embodied the matter through establishing a Silk Road Workgroup between the two countries. Memorandum of understanding concerning the workgroup on New Silk Road between Prime Ministerial Foreign Trade Under secretariat and China's Ministry of Commerce will not only improve the economic and commercial relations between the two countries, but it will also constitute a regional cooperation on ground.⁵⁵

In 2012, PM Erdogan, explaining the new incentive to Chinese CEO's, said "We will turn the Ancient Silk Road into Iron Silk Road. Our doors are fully open to Chinese

⁵³ 王勇, 希望, and 罗洋. "“一带一路”倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作." *西亚非洲* 6 (2015). (Wang Yong, Xi Wang, and Luo Yang. "The strategic cooperation between China and Turkey under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative." *West Asia and Africa*)

⁵⁴ 土耳其与中国在“一带一路”背景下谈经贸合作 (Turkey and China discuss economic and trade cooperation in the context of "One Belt One Road") <http://tr.mofcom.gov.cn/article/jmxw/201504/20150400930525.shtml> (07.04.2015)

⁵⁵ 肖宪. "构建中国与土耳其新型战略合作关系." *西亚非洲* 9 (2011). (Xiao Xian. "Building a new type of strategic partnership between China and Turkey." *West Asia and Africa*)

entrepreneurs, he further stated that we should benefit from the new incentives.” He further stated that “We are working hard to turn Silk Road into Iron Silk Road, we wish that our Chinese entrepreneur friends should avail the new incentives and make use of the opportunities provided by Turkey.⁵⁶

In 2013, after the statements of Xi Jinping, Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chinese State Council Development Research Center discussed about organizing of a conference related to Silk Road namely “Visions and Opportunities” which was later held in Istanbul in 2014. In this conference, China’s ambassador to Ankara Yu Hongyang had drawn the attention on the fact that the Project Silk Road will be a win-win for all regional states. Turkish Foreign Affairs Officer Ali Resul Usul stated that resuscitation of Silk Road, starting from China and reaching all the way to the Balkans, will be the first step of stability between the two countries.⁵⁷

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited China and was warmly received by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019. This visit emphasized upon the economic relations between China and Turkey. It was stated by the officials that, that Silk Road plays an inclusive role in the relations between the two countries. In this visit, Erdogan suggested that Turkey is the supporter of this Project.⁵⁸

Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu, in his 2016 Kazakhstan Turkish Academy speech, stated that “Silk Road’s faith and reliance is in our hands. Either we will use this route for energy, or there will be no lack of conflicts on this route. We support the idea to rediscover the old Silk Road and use it to its fullest. The Silk Road will start

⁵⁶ Çinli Ceo’lar Türkiye’ye Yatırma Sıcak Bakıyor

<https://beyazgazete.com/haber/2012/4/12/cinli-ceo-lar-turkiye-ye-yatirima-sicak-bakiyor-1142443.html>
(12.04.2012)

⁵⁷ İpek Yolları: Vizyonlar ve Fırsatlar , <https://www.setav.org/etkinlikler/ipek-yollari-vizyonlar-ve-firsatlar/> (12.12.2014)

⁵⁸ 习近平与埃尔多安会谈 (Xi Jinping Holds Talks with Erdogan) http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-07/02/content_5405432.htm (02.07.2019)

from China, reaching Turkey and Europe” In 2013, after Xi Jinping’s Kazakhstan speech, Silk Road Economic Zone has gained great support from Turkish public enterprises and people. Although there were not many negative opinions, as the Lion’s share will be China’s, inequalities on economic and commercial matters were mentioned too, and Turkish side welcomed the initiative and signaled that they would provide the support needed for the establishment of this Project.⁵⁹

On June 12, 2020, Turkey’s Anadolu Agency reported that Turkey will continue to deepen cooperation with China and develop more balanced and sustainable trade cooperation under the “Belt and Road” initiative. Speaking about the “Belt and Road” initiative, Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan stated that in the past ten years, the bilateral trade volume between China and Turkey has increased from 1.1 billion US dollars in 2001 to 21.6 billion US dollars in 2019. She also cited as an example that during the epidemic, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars transnational railway loaded and transported nearly 30,000 tons of cargo. In January last year, the figure was about 4,000 tons per month, which is enough to prove the importance of the Belt and Road transport line.⁶⁰

2.2 Academic And Business Circles Views Form Turkish Side:

Many Turkish researchers, academician and journalists consider that Silk Road Economic Zone will affect Turkey-China relations positively. On this matter, it can be said that academia's are on the same page with public enterprises and individuals. According to Altay Altı, Turkish academician from Shanghai University, The Belt and Road Initiative will not only provide new openings for China, but also for the global

⁵⁹ Davutoğlu : İpek Yolu üzerine yeni bir kitap yazıyorum <https://www.haberturk.com/dunya/haber/1191611-davutoglu-ipek-yolu-uzerine-yeni-bir-kitap-yaziyorum> (06.02.2016)

⁶⁰ 土耳其贸易部长：土耳其将在“一带一路”倡议下继续深化合作 http://www.srca-info.com/srca/srca5/202006/t20200616_2820.html (16.06.2020)

economy. But turning this Project from an idea into reality is a process which demands all participants' commitment and requires sensitive equations.⁶¹

According to Altı, Chinese Economy is in a transition of structural conversion. Improving the Road and Seaways towards Europe and accelerating the trade through these ways is of great importance for China and on this issue, Turkey is going to be one of the most important partners of China.⁶² According to Dr. Selcuk Colakoglu, from International Strategic Research Association, Turkey is one of the most supportive and enthusiastic countries regarding this project. According to Colakoglu, since the 1990's, Ankara could not establish a safe and effective logistic roadway and railway with the Caucasian and Central Asian Countries. And this has been reflected negatively on the trade union with these countries. China, guaranteeing a budget of more than 40 billion dollars, provides Turkey with the opportunity to reach Southern Asia Market through building this New Silk Road.⁶³

We have to admit that there are some different voices regarding the implementation of this initiative, but generally speaking, there are still more people and institutions who support this initiative. The Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association is the biggest entrepreneurs' association that represents the firms which constitutes 50% of Turkey's economy. In 2014, Muharrem Yilmaz, the President of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association in his to China visit, stated that; Turkey and China have strong connections that date back to ancient times. Prodigious attention is given upon improving these connections on an economic basis. These connections should not be referred only as commercial and business connections; they should be referred as economic relations and economic-strategical relations. The legal and administrative grounds are ready to improve the relations between Turkey and

⁶¹ Çin ve yeni ipek yolu projesi <http://altayatlil.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Analist44IpekYolu.pdf> (06.07.2018)

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ İpek Yolu "refah kuşağı"na dönüşecek <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ipek-yolu-refah-kusagina-donusecek/48633> (11.05.2015)

China. It is now time for businessmen to get to know each other and improve their partnership relations. According to Yilmaz, Turkey is important for both China and Chinese companies that aim at working on global basis. Because Turkey is geopolitically very close to the richest markets in the world, it is in the center of a market with a population of 1, 5 billion. Furthermore, Turkey has an infrastructure that could support the investment policy. Turkey has a young population who know how to avail the modern technology. Yilmaz also stated that our Chinese businessmen friends should take advantage of these opportunities and have their place in Turkey's economy. He also alleged that a new era in Turkey-China economic relations will begin with the initiation of the New Silk Road Economic Zone.⁶⁴

According to Cansen Basaran-Symes, President of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association: "The Belt and Road" initiative, which is proposed by China, and is also known as the New Silk Road, is of grave importance for private sector and Turkey has been giving China priority for almost ten years. He stated that, in this Project that will link Asia, Europe and Africa through roads and seaways, Turkey and Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association aim at raising awareness in Turkish business world and evaluating its effect on Turkey-China economic relations. In this context, China's reviving the Silk Road Project is a process that makes Turkish business environment enthusiastic and motivated.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ TÜSİAD: İpek Yolu'nu birlikte yapmalıyız! <http://tr.china-embassy.org/tur/xwtd/t1159885.htm> (27.05.2014)

⁶⁵ "İpek Yolu Kültür Diyalogu" Erzurum'da Yapıldı <https://www.haberler.com/ipek-yolu-kultur-diyalogu-erzurum-da-yapildi-8425967-haberi/>

CHAPTER THREE

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND TURKEY UNDER THE INITIATIVE OF THE “BELT AND ROAD”

3.1 Opportunities

3.1.1 Economy And Energy Cooperation

Turkey recognized People's Republic of China officially in 1971, and even though in 1974, two countries signed a “commercial cooperation agreement”, for a long-time economic relations couldn't be rational and sustainable in the framework of mutual benefits.

In the early years of China's economy under the Socialist system, the relations with the outside world remained padlocked. However, import substitution policies and the validity of the domestic market-oriented economy paradigms were miraculously functional in Turkey. During the time Turkey recognized China, the discussions in parliament and press were about the reasons that China is far away geographically to Turkey and there are not many products to trade between two countries, therefore, there had not been much of an expectation from trade with this country. On the contrary, concerns about the political-ideological threats that were likely to result from China overshadowed economic relations.

In 1990, selling good and doing business was not easy in China. According to Turkish business circles, going China to export goods was difficult and there was a period also in Turkish and Chinese relations that instead of exporting they chose to profit by importing low-cost Chinese products to Turkey. Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC) had presented in a report regarding this topic: Turkish entrepreneurs couldn't find what they expected in Chinese market which has become a huge attraction by opening its doors to the world. Almost all Turkish businessmen who went to sell goods as exporters have returned to Turkey as importers in the face of cheap products

in Chinese market.”⁶⁶

In this period, Turkey's trade deficit against China began to increase and the vicious dilemma of whether China is a threat or opportunity had prevented analyzing economic relations with this country in short and long terms. A healthy and sustainable trade relations posited on the ground was delayed until the mid-2000s. Turkey's economic relations with the Chinese side and bilateral trade deficit gave priority to shut down, but this area did not provide a sufficient stage for trade and commerce. The number of investments made to China from Turkey was rather restricted; unfortunately for Turkey, Chinese capital stock could not be brought to Turkey.⁶⁷

Turkey and China are planning to jointly build a high-speed railway line linking the southeastern city of Kars and the western city of Edirne, which is also part of the new Silk Road. The project requires a total investment of 45 billion U.S. dollars, of which more than half will come from loans provided by China to Turkey. The New Silk Road has received positive responses from Central Asian countries along the way. In August 2012, the 2nd Turkic-Speaking Countries Cooperation Council Summit was held in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Four member states including Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Azerbaijan sent heads of state or government to the meeting. All parties at the meeting agreed to hold a meeting with the transport ministers of the member states to discuss the launch of the railway artery connecting Turkey and China through Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The completion and opening of the Ankara-Istanbul high-speed rail, an important area of China-Turkey economic and trade cooperation, has not only strengthened Turkey's domestic transportation links and improved its position in the international transportation network but it is also an important achievement of China's high-speed rail technology, Which has greatly

⁶⁶ 王勇, 希望, and 罗洋. ““一带一路” 倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作.” *西亚非洲* 6 (2015). (Wang Yong, Xi Wang, and Luo Yang. "The strategic cooperation between China and Turkey under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative." *West Asia and Africa*)

⁶⁷ AYYILDIZ, ESRA. 从土中外交与经济关系看土耳其对中国的认知. MS thesis. 厦门大学, 2014.

promoted the road connection of the "Silk Road Economic Belt", and it will further promote smooth trade between China and Central Asia, West Asia and Europe. In recent years, the economic cooperation between the two countries has continued to expand.

In 2002, after the general approach was differentiated in Turkey against China, even though it was not possible to get short time results, both the nation and business communities have adopted to a more rational and long-term relationships. In the mentioned period, AK Party government proactively put into practice new understanding of foreign policy that highlighted the economic elements and strengthen relations with the regions which were not mentioned much in Turkey's agenda earlier such as East Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This foreign policy led strategy dynamism about China as well. This dynamism which is rapidly evolving and is not limited only with policy makers, also recognized in bureaucracy, business community and academia, has led to the improvement of relations between China and Turkey in 2010 and has further gained a new dimension by levelling up to "Strategic Partnership".⁶⁸ The new Silk Road was based on the principle of mutually beneficial economic relations and is expected to be a strong acceleration of strong mutual relations.

The energy sector is a vital strategic area amongst the development policies of the countries. Turkey which has geo-strategic position in the region has become an "energy corridor". China is the world's largest consumer of petroleum products after the United States. On the other hand, it has 16 billion barrels of oil reserves. China's energy requirements consist of one-third of the world's total demand. The country's oil requirements in 2025 will reach up to 14.2 million barrels.⁶⁹ The Chinese Government's energy efficiency efforts have been put forward by 20%. China also runs oil exploration and extraction projects abroad mainly in Kazakhstan, Venezuela, Sudan,

⁶⁸ 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. Diss. 2011. (Ding Gong. Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: Retrospect and Prospect)

⁶⁹ 姚伟龙, and 邢涛. *中国能源状况与发展对策分析*. Diss. 2006. (Yao Weilong, and Xing Tao. Analysis of China's Energy Status and Development Countermeasures)

Iraq, Iran, Peru, Angola and Azerbaijan. The country has 80 trillion cubic meters of proven natural gas reserves. China also has the world's largest coal-reserves in the country.⁷⁰

On June 17, 2020, the Cloud Forum "Focusing on Asia-Europe Cooperation, Talking about the Future of China and Turkey", jointly organized by China Foreign Affairs Bureau and Turkish media, was successfully held in Beijing. More than ten guests from the media, think tanks, political circles and business circles of the two countries had a wide and in-depth discussion on the topics of steadily promoting the in-depth development of China-Turkey relations and strengthening the promotion of China-Turkey economic and trade exchanges and cooperation.

In his keynote speech, Du Zhanyuan, director of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Bureau, pointed out that in recent years, China and Turkey have not only enhanced political mutual trust, strengthened strategic communication and dovetailed development strategies at the bilateral level, but also strengthened coordination and cooperation under the G20, BRICS+ and other multilateral frameworks. Especially since this year, the cooperation between China and Turkey has withstood the test of the epidemic, and the friendship has been consolidated and sublimated. The practice of China and Turkey proves that solidarity and cooperation are the most powerful weapons for the international community to overcome the epidemic; at the same time, we firmly believe that the prospects of China-Turkey cooperation in the post-epidemic era are even broader.

Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar delivered a keynote speech on "Turkey's New Vision for Energy in China", in which he introduced the impact of the epidemic on the global energy market and shared his views

⁷⁰ 刁秀华. "中国能源安全: 现状, 特点与对策." 东北财经大学学报 (Diao Xiuhua. "China's Energy Security: Current Situation, Characteristics and Countermeasures." *Journal of Dongbei University of Finance and Economics*) 3 (2009): 50-55.

on the future of Turkey-China energy cooperation in the post-epidemic era. He noted that in the energy sector, Turkey is actively strengthening its bilateral energy cooperation with China and is continuously raising the level of cooperation. Chinese investments in Turkey during 2015-2019 received 60% of all investments in the energy sector, which not only reflects the importance of energy and energy investments for both countries, but also fully demonstrates that the two countries have many significant opportunities in the energy sector. He believes that Turkey and China have great potential for cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, and that adding nuclear energy cooperation to the energy sector cooperation would make a new contribution to the further development of a strong and healthy partnership between the two countries.

Between Turkey and China, there is technical cooperation in the field of coal mining, dam and hydroelectric power plant construction and potable water energy. In addition, recent high-level visits and meetings between two countries have taken place and, in addition to nuclear energy, renewable energy (wind, solar) could be made to cooperate in the field of human rights.⁷¹“Peaceful use of Nuclear Energy agreement”, projected to be signed between Turkey and China, was forwarded to the Chinese side through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷²China has signed an energy cooperation agreement with President Abdullah Gul, on 23-29 June during his visit to Turkey. As it can be seen in the following analysis of the text, the agreement is mainly for the cooperation.⁷³In June 25, 2009 in the capital of China, Beijing, the Republic of Turkey Energy and Natural Resources Ministry and People's Republic of China National Energy Administration signed “Memorandum in regard to Cooperation in the Field of Energy” and thus it can said that this agreement is a cooperation agreement. Herewith,

⁷¹ Türkiye, nükleer enerji eğitimi için Çin'e öğrenci gönderecek

<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/egitim/turkiye-nukleer-enerji-egitimi-icin-cine-ogrenci-gonderecek-539706.html> (20.12.2020)

⁷² 王冰. "中国与土耳其能源产业合作面临的挑战及推进策略." *对外经贸实务* (Wang Bing. "The Challenges and Promoting Strategies of China-Turkey Energy Industry Cooperation." *Foreign Economic and Trade Practices*) 9 (2017).

⁷³ Ibid

the roadmap that focuses on energy cooperation and collaboration fields between two countries has been identified and analyzed.⁷⁴

On the other hand, Turkey's increased energy demand and sustainable renewable energy source diversity to advance in the field of energy cooperation with China are strategically convenient. Turkey has developed energy cooperation with China, and it is based on mutual interests and on a win-win strategy. Above all, Turkey's benefits are to be obtained as a result of developed cooperation in the field of energy which further will produce profit for both individuals and the nation.

3.1.2. Multilateral Strategic Cooperation

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Turkey on the dates between October 8th and 9th, 2010.⁷⁵ During the meetings, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan reached a lot of agreement and exchanging their own ideas on "The Belt and Road" initiative, eight different agreements had been signed between the Prime Ministers. In the outcome of the signing ceremony, the two Prime Ministers held a conference where the questions of the journalists were rejected, and thus this indicates that the relations were carried onto a different level by stating that eight agreements were signed between two countries.⁷⁶ It was declared that especially in the field of transportation, Turkey and China have joint projects, and the cooperation for nuclear energy, thermal plants and hydroelectric power stations have also been negotiated. It has been reported to the press that Turkey also laid emphasis on developing the bilateral trade relations to the detriment of Turkey and it has agreed on the following that the volume of trade between the two countries will increase to 50

⁷⁴ 肖宪. "构建中国与土耳其新型战略合作关系." *西亚非洲* (Xiao Xian. "Building a new type of strategic partnership between China and Turkey." *West Asia and Africa*) 9 (2011).

⁷⁵ 陈相. "走进土耳其." *中国中小企业* (Chen Xiang. "Into Turkey." *Chinese SMEs*) 11 (2010).

⁷⁶ 温家宝与土耳其总理埃尔多安举行会谈 (Wen Jiabao Holds Talks with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan) <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/dtzt/37/18/Document/783116/783116.htm> (18.10.2010)

billion dollars until 2015 and 100 billion dollars until 2020.⁷⁷ It was further stated that the common grounds were laid for the bilateral relationships on the basis of Turkish Lira and Chinese Yuan. Increasing the airline transportation between China and Turkey, cooperating for the constructions of some railways and nuclear power plants, and revitalizing the Silk Road were the subjects included in the bilateral relations. The most interesting thing between two countries was reached in order to improve the strategic cooperative relationship and a joint statement was issued in this regard. As the strategic cooperation between Turkey and China has been upgraded, it gives the signals that every aspect of the relations will improve in future.⁷⁸

Regarding the Joint Declaration of the strategic cooperation relations, two countries held meetings to expand and deepen the cooperation based on different aspects with mutual interests in various aspects and both the countries shared a common opinion. Both countries are contented from the improvements and development of bilateral relations. The development of the relations between two countries and the people of two countries already have the content that proves to be useful for the prosperity and world peace, stability and development in the region. In this context, the content of the strategic cooperation relationships between Turkey and China have been taken into consideration. In a joint statement on August 4th, which was signed in 1971, Turkey-China laid emphasis on the establishment of diplomatic relations and the agreement was finally proclaimed on April 19th, 2000 in which Turkey-China jointly emphasized that reaffirms the commitment of the whole matter. In this context, decisions were taken for the establishment and development of mutual strategic cooperation. Turkey-China strategic cooperative relations consist of two main sections as bilateral relations and regional cooperation. On the basis of mutual benefit, bilateral economic and commercial cooperation will be enlarged, along with the economic

⁷⁷ 谢立忱. "引人瞩目的中土关系." *中东问题研究* (Xie Lichen. "Attractive Sino-Turkish Relations." *Research on Middle East Issues*) 1 (2015): 174-190.

⁷⁸ Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road

<https://jamestown.org/program/sino-turkish-relations-beyond-the-silk-road-2/>

development. The two countries' parliaments and political parties will promote friendly dialogue between local governments; it will increase friendly cooperation in fields such as investment, energy, education, culture, sports, tourism, media, security, defense and transportation. The regional strategic cooperation in the field of regional peace and stability together is somewhat protected. Any kind of global threat prevalent in the world⁵ will be dealt with multi-polar correspond which is to provide support for the democratization of international relations and for lasting peace, common prosperity and harmonious world. In addition to both countries' strategic cooperative relations, proposal for Cultural Year of China in Turkey in 2012 and Cultural year of Turkey in China in 2013 was held in 2011, a mechanism was proposed to be created jointly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of both countries in order to increase bilateral cultural relations.⁷⁹

The then State Minister Zafer Caglayan was introduced as the special representative of the Prime Minister Erdogan during the meeting with Chinese President. Caglayan said that the Turkish government recognizes the "One China" policy and Government of the People's Republic of China has the sole authority of all the Chinese people.⁸⁰ He continued as stating that Turkey will not allow activities that harm China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Further, Caglayan alleged that Turkey wishes respecting mutual sovereignty and territorial integrity, staying out of the internal affairs, improving top level relations on the principles of equal and mutual profit with China, expanding bilateral trade relations, and enhancing cooperation in international relations with the UN. Lastly, he stated that, the relations between the two countries will be upgraded to the level of the long-term strategic partnership.

In the same interview, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao also declared that

⁷⁹ 中土关系概况 (Overview of China-Turkey Relations)
<https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cetur/chn/ztgx/t191491.htm>

⁸⁰ 董漫远. "中国与土耳其关系的历史与未来." *阿拉伯世界研究* (Dong Manyuan. "The History and Future of the Relationship between China and Turkey." *Arab World Studies*) 4 (2010).

China has been looking forward to improving the strategic level of relationships with Turkey.⁸¹ He also stated that both China and Turkey are facing with the threat of the three issues, national separatism, religious radicalism, terrorism and they are also developing mutual relations. Consequently, he stated that the two countries should have more mutual understanding and support of each other, concerning the fundamental interests of each other, and also work together to meet these challenges. He continued by saying that being respectful towards mutual sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual interference in the internal affairs are important rules of international relations, and also they are the political basis of Chinese-Turkish friendship and cooperation.⁸² China, at the strategic level lays emphasis on its relationship with Turkey, the people of the two countries value their feelings of friendship. Furthermore, he referred to an important issue that China, along with Turkey, wishes to oppose "three issues" (national separatism, religious radicalism and terrorism) with determination. Lastly, he assured that mutual political trust and mutual cooperation should be increased, based on cultural relations which can be enhanced and should be developed so that common interests between the two countries is improved.⁸³

Finance Minister Simsek during his visit to China in September 2009 stated that China is an important country for Turkey and also an important market. Simsek had revealed the target of the relations between Turkey and China by saying: "we are setting up a strategic partnership with China".⁸⁴ Previously in June 2009, the Principal of Turkish Union of Chambers and Exchange Commodities Rıfat Hisarcıklıoğlu visited China with the President Abdullah Gül and he addressed Chinese businesspeople as "Let's be strategic partners, let's talk about the public investments." Besides the

⁸¹ 陈相. "走进土耳其." *中国中小企业* (Chen Xiang. "Into Turkey." *Chinese SMEs*) 11 (2010).

⁸² 董漫远. "中国与土耳其关系的历史与未来." *阿拉伯世界研究* (Dong Manyuan. "The History and Future of the Relationship between China and Turkey." *Arab World Studies*) 4 (2010).

⁸³ 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. (Ding Gong. *Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: Retrospect and Prospect*) Diss. 2011.

⁸⁴ Türkiye çin ilişkilerinde yeni dönem <https://tr.sputniknews.com/ekonomi/201602251021118732-turkiye-cin/> (25.02.2016)

improvement in bilateral relations, State Minister Zafer Caglayan who visited China in September 2009 made sense of the strategic cooperation by saying that we consider China not just as commercial partners but also as a country which can be a strategic partner to cooperate with and provide the economic integration. In January 2010, State Minister Zafer Caglayan spoke to Minister of Commerce of China Chen Deming during his visit to Turkey, stating that Turkey wishes to bring China to the position of strategic cooperation.⁸⁵

As it can be understood from the above, Turkey wants to set up strategic partnership with China. After the Cold War era, many countries started to establish strategic cooperation partnership with the countries that they have common interests as a foreign policy strategy.⁸⁶ Turkey also began to establish such relationships in accordance with the developing international environment. In October 2009, Turkey-Kazakhstan strategic partnership agreement was signed between President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev with President of Turkey Abdullah Gul. In this context, Ankara may have started "strategic partnership" as a foreign policy but a pragmatic foreign policy must be followed in order to start "strategic partnership" with China and also the full content and the applicability conditions are important in this "strategic partnership".⁸⁷

In terms of political relations of Turkey-China, 1999-2002, 2009-2011 years are the fastest growing periods, but at the same time it was such a period that the political relations couldn't be turned into economic and cooperation relations.⁸⁸ In addition, bilateral economic and trade relations didn't meet the expectations in terms of the levels and cooperation with the regional and global level intensity. However, China has tried

⁸⁵陈德铭与土耳其国务部长恰拉扬举行会谈 (Chen Deming held talks with Turkish Minister of State Chalayan)<https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgtur/chn/zlgxw/t673852.htm> (01.07.2010)

⁸⁶ Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinin 40 Yılı (1971-2011) <http://33h.co/w8vaq>

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. (Ding Gong. Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: *Retrospect and Prospect*.)Diss. 2011.

to improve its relations with Turkey. It was unable to develop bilateral relations because there was a lack of mutual trust, the trade interests couldn't be assured and there were security concerns as well.

The Chinese reporter Zheng Jinfu who closely followed the relations between Turkey and China for years expressed that Turkey is the partner of China with a bright future. The relations between China and Turkey can level up to "strategic cooperation and partnership" from "strategic cooperation." The only problem of such strategic partnership relations is whether the content of the strategic partnership is filled or not. To fill the content of such strategic relationship, the two countries have to understand each other.⁸⁹With the Belt and Road Initiative, the relations between the two countries are expected to move to the next level and in strategic context an increase in acceleration is expected between the two countries. Earlier described events are the proof that Turkish-Chinese relations can get to the next level when there is proper care. Turkey, at the same time, is part of the formation of Regional Cooperation for Development. This formation aims to promote regional cooperation among Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan are two important stations for the Belt and Road initiative and their relations with China are getting better day by day. Turkey is a founding member of "the Economic Cooperation Organization" and all the countries that are in the path of the Belt and Road initiative are the members of this Economic Cooperation Organization. Turkey is expected to be a powerful partner for the Belt and Road initiative when its positive relations with the European Union are taken into consideration.

In addition, during the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, China and Turkey have always understood and supported each other, which can be regarded as a model of the unity in the international community to fight the pandemic. At the beginning of the outbreak in China, Turkey was also one of the first countries to provide free medical

⁸⁹ Turkey-China Relations: From "Strategic Cooperation" to "Strategic Partnership"?

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkey-china-relations-strategic-cooperation-strategic-partnership>

supplies to China.⁹⁰ In addition, Turkey was also among one of the first countries to decide to use Chinese vaccines. Even the Minister of Health of Turkey, Fahrettin Koca and the President Erdogan took the lead in providing support to the vaccination drive in China.⁹¹⁹² Taking vaccines into consideration, cooperation between China and Turkey fully reflects the resilience and high level of China-Turkey relations, and the prospects of China-Turkey strategic cooperation are even more developing and exciting.

At the same time, On March 25, 2021, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara. During the meeting, President Erdogan proposed that “This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and China. Turkey attaches great importance to the development of relations with China, firmly opposes various forms of terrorism, and is willing to establish closer contacts and exchanges with China, and Turkey will further develop the territorial-China relations. Turkey looks forward to strengthening high-level exchanges, enhancing mutual trust, making good use of the current cooperation mechanism and pushing for synergy between Turkey's "Middle Corridor" plan and the "The Belt And Road" initiative.”⁹³

3.1.3. Cultural and Tourism Cooperation

Bilateral cultural communication and cooperation continuously improved thanks to Chinese and Turkish joint efforts. The “Cultural Cooperation Agreement”

⁹⁰ Çinlilerden Türkiye'nin desteğine teşekkür

<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/cinlilerden-turkiyenin-destegine-tesekkur-458046.html>
(01.02.2020)

⁹¹ Çin aşısı onaylandı: İlk aşığı Sağlık Bakanı oldu

https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cin-asisi-onaylandi-ilk-asiyi-saglik-bakani-oldu,3Au_B2PpTkm9T1wznf5o6Q (13.01.2021)

⁹² Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan aşı oldu

<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-asi-oldu-547272.html> (14.01.2021)

⁹³ 土耳其总统埃尔多安会见王毅 <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjzbhd/t1864372.shtml> (26.03.2021)

signed between the two countries encloses bilateral contacts including culture, science, sports, and education. With the signing of the 1980 Cultural Exchange Program, cultural communication between the two countries vectored into a healthy environment. Since then, communication and cooperation concerning culture, sports, education, science and technology have intensified continuously.

In October 2010, a Cultural Exchange and Cooperation Action Plan was signed for 2010-13 during President Wen Jiabao visit to Turkey.⁹⁴ In his visit in October 2010, Wen Jiabao stated that culture is the steady bond between the two countries' people. According to Wen Jiabao, the foundation of Turkey-China partnership are people, and culture is a powerful communication bond between the two nations. Without the cultural communication between the two countries, the foundation of their partnership and cooperation will be fragile. China and Turkey are among oldest ancient civilizations. They are different, but they can make the relationship more powerful by bilateral cooperation.

Wen Jiabao, referring to 2010-2013 Cultural Exchange and Cooperation Action Plan, Railways Cooperation Agreement and the memorandum of understanding concerning the Workgroup on New Silk Road Connection signed between Turkey's Foreign Trade Under secretariat and China's Ministry of Commerce, presented that improving cultural relations between China and Turkey is not only a need, but also it has a great potential and further it is needed to improve bilateral cultural relations.⁹⁵

The "Belt and Road" initiative is conducive to cultural cooperation between China and Turkey. In addition to tourism, film and television industry, education is a new area of cooperation that needs attention. At present, the two governments are

⁹⁴ 金昌庆. "“一带一路”背景下中-土人文交流状况.(Jin Changqing. The People-to-Turkish Exchange Situation under the Background of "One Belt One Road")" *동북아시아문화학회/국제학술대회 발표자료집* (2017): 9-15.

⁹⁵ Ibid

actively promoting the signing of cooperation agreements such as the "China-Turkey Agreement on Mutual Establishment of Cultural Centers", the "China-Turkey Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications Agreement", and the "China-Turkey Cultural Exchange Program from 2014 to 2017". These agreements will strongly push forward bilateral cultural cooperation and draw a blueprint for all-round, multi-level and multi-channel exchanges and cooperation in the fields of art, education, science and technology, media and youth sports.⁹⁶ Some Turkish scholars have proposed that China and Turkey can learn from the successful experience of the Erasmus student exchange program established by Turkey and the European Union to establish a similar exchange program among countries along the Belt and Road Initiative.⁹⁷

3.1.4. Turkey's On-Going And Similar Projects

The increasing number of the trade and economic connections of Turkey and China, the most important countries in the Silk Road Project, have to accelerate the project. China became the 19th biggest country of export and second biggest country of import of Turkey in 2019. ⁹⁸There is a close contact between Turkey and China in the context of Silk Road project and the Turkish authorities' state that they want to cooperate with China at every opportunity on this subject. In this regard, stepping into one of the most important projects of Turkey, the East-West high-speed rail line that is thought to be built from Kars to Edirne is an important development, and is also an important improvement for putting Silk Road project into practice.

In 2015, with the completion of the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line which was in construction phase, Turkey has strengthened its role of begin

⁹⁶ 王勇, 希望, and 罗洋. "“一带一路”倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作." *西亚非洲*(Wang Yong, Xi Wang, and Luo Yang. "The strategic cooperation between China and Turkey under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative." *West Asia and Africa*) 6 (2015).

⁹⁷ Colakoğlu, Selçuk. "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey's Middle Corridor: A Question of Compatibility." *Middle East Institute* (2019).

⁹⁸ 2019 年度土耳其进出口报告 (2019 Turkey Import and Export Report) <http://commerce.sz.gov.cn/attachment/0/513/513185/7268890.pdf>

a transit country that connects East to West. This way is safer and has a lower cost compared to the other options which ultimately increases the importance that China gives to Turkey. This railway line which starts from China and reaches to Turkey and Europe over Central Asia is expected to be two thousand kilometers shorter than the Trans-Siberian railway line and is anticipated to saving shipping time in half compared to the sea transportation. Therefore, with this new “Eurasia Bridge” that will become one of the most important strategic moves, high quality economic products of East Asia, Central Asia and West Asia countries which are rich in energy and mineral resources will giant an enormous market. China’s goal of economic expansion to Europe over Turkey, on the other hand, has more strategic and global importance within the context of Russia because although China involved Russia to the project recently, it is regarded as one of the biggest obstacles to develop China’s relations with countries of Central Asia.⁹⁹ It is not possible to ignore the impact of Russia on the region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For this reason, Beijing has the chance to connect to Europe directly over Turkey by using the Baku-Tbilisi- Kars railway and Kars-Edirne (the East and West ends of Turkey) high-speed railway by disabling Russia. Putting both Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and Edirne high-speed railway into operation has a great importance for China to follow its strategy. As it was mentioned before, the opening of Marmaray, which consists of an underwater tunnel and rail systems in 2013 has been an improvement to strengthen this goal. Turkey will also be able to achieve the Asian market, which Turkey is not very active in, in a fast and cheap way with the Silk Road Project. While Turkey’s recent foreign trade figures are analysed, Asia is regarded as the region that Turkey is the least effective in. Turkey not being active in the region is a concern for Turkey during a time when the international system is headed into the multi-polar from the Atlantic axis and the world economic power is moving to Asia is seen as a serious shortcoming.

3.2. CHALLENGES

⁹⁹ 共建一带一路(Building the Belt and Road Initiative) <http://ru.china-embassy.org/chn/ztbd/22aa/> (16.05.2019)

3.2.1. Different Expectations in China-Turkey Relations

China and Turkey, through times, have supported and fought each other. Having important geopolitical locations, both Turkey and China have succeeded in securing a place among strong international economic countries especially in the recent times. Their willingness and dynamic stance and having the influence on international politics makes it possible for both countries to improve even further in every area. For this reason, it is an important task for both countries to establish a long-term strategic partnership. Leaders are underlining the strategic and commercial profits for their own countries.

Although both parties have the different expectations from the resuscitation of the Belt And Road initiative, expectations and difference in opinions concerning the Belt and Road Project that can affect the dialogue between the two countries cannot be ruled out.

According to Colakoglu¹⁰⁰, Turkey's desire to get closer to China was constructed upon two basic political and economic expectations. First of these expectations was Ankara's support and demand from China concerning international conflicts in its own territory. Whereas China showed no support since the dialogue started in 1980's concerning Cyprus, PKK, and during the nineties, Montenegro, Bosnia and Kosovo conflicts. Then again, Ankara and Beijing were on the opposite sides during the process starting with the Arab spring in 2011, and lately especially about Syrian conflict as well. China, together with Russia and Iran, continued to support Assad regime, for this reason, the topic of whether to build a partnership with China or not should be reevaluated as well.

Ankara's dream of gaining a share in the huge China market turned out exactly

¹⁰⁰ Brahimi, Müjde. "Dünya Düzeninde Çin, Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri." *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika* 32 (2012): 155-159.

the opposite of what had been expected. Especially during the 2000's, bilateral trade turned into ex-parte trade times, the fact that Turkey's trade with Asian Countries and especially with China causes 80 percent deficit points in a structural problem. It's worth noting that the general public in Turkey knows less about the "The Belt and Road" initiative, and there are also voices of doubt. "Serkan Demirtas from Hurriyet Newspaper, stated that although Turkey has never positively evaluated this project, it also needs to be cautious and need to further understand China's intentions behind the specific actions.¹⁰¹

Further, Turkish people pay more attention to news about Europe or other neighboring countries, while most of the information about China comes from Western media or a limited number of Chinese Uyghurs living in Turkey. Therefore, the Turkish people's focus on China is more focused on the "Uyghur issue", and their awareness of the benefits brought by the "The belt and road" initiative is very limited.

3.2.2 Instability in China-Turkey Relations

Between 1971 and 1995, the political relations between Turkey and China were limited to some extent. There was meditation in terms of the political relations among Turkey and China between 1999 and 2002. In the years between 2009 and 2011, there was more meditation compared to the previous years. These developments can be characterized as "Low Intensity" developments. However, the political intensity of relations couldn't be reflected into other relations like in economy-trade, regional cooperation and cultural fields. However, Chinese researchers' opinion on this issue related to the bilateral relations of the two countries are not as positive as expected because of all sorts of factors affecting it. Although the diplomacy was established in 1971 between the two countries, but apart from the political interest, there is almost no

¹⁰¹ Çinden stratejik ipek yolu hamlesi. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/cin-den-stratejik-ipek-yolu-hamlesi-26744988> (05.07.2014)

real interest of the relation between China and Turkey.¹⁰² According to some other Chinese researchers, Turkey's international position of not being effective during the Cold War, the ideology differences, and the negative memories of Korea War were obstructing the development of the relations between China and Turkey.¹⁰³ Along with those problems, the focus of the foreign policy of Turkey being Western oriented is another problem. In other words, it can be said that Chinese research believe that "west-driven" ideology shapes the Turkish foreign policy.

The Uyghur issue continues to be a sensitive factor in China-Turkey relations. Turkey's position and attitude toward the issue of Uyghurs is directly related to the warmth and coldness of China-Turkey relations. Therefore, Turkey has changed its policy towards "Uighur Issue", which is a prerequisite for the friendly relations between China and Turkey, especially in the field of the strategic cooperative relationship. The intensity of the Turkey's attitude towards Uyghurs and the complete settlement of the Uyghur issue are related to the friendship between China and Turkey and even the depth of strategic cooperation depends on it.

Except for the above reasons, due to the effects of international political conjuncture, Turkey and China not recognizing each other is one of the most important factors that prevents the development of their relations. In Turkey, there is not enough research about China and the current research are insufficient as well. It is also conceivable to see a similar situation in China. While the Chinese side is trying to get to know Turkey from a western-based perspective, the Turkish side is trying to get to know China from a western-based perspective by unfortunately doing the same mistake. Nevertheless, Chinese experts look at the relations between China and Turkey positively.

¹⁰² 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. Diss. (Ding Gong. Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: Retrospect and Prospect. Diss)2011.

¹⁰³ Mihemutı, Azıgılı. "Türkiye-Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti ilişkileri (1976-2012)."

According to the experts who look through a positive perspective, the relations between China and Turkey had two important periods which can be defined as the Cold War era and post-Cold War era. Some of the features of those eras are; there was a mutual understanding and respect in politics on both sides. High-level mutual visits have become increasingly intense since diplomatic relations were established. Economy-trade relations between two countries have increased rapidly and it has provided many reimbursements for the people of both countries. The two countries are in search of cooperation against "Three Issues" (terrorism, separatism, and religious radicalism) actively. The two countries have been improving the relations in the cultural field as well.

The most important problem of the relationship between Turkey and China is the lack of mutual political trust. Chinese President Hu Jintao pointed out the political trust was on the developmental stage by emphasizing "The increased mutual political trust" in the message announced for the 40th year of the diplomatic relations of the two countries. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao during the reception of State Minister Zafer Caglayan in August 2009 stated that the mutual political trust should be strengthened by stating "the mutual political trust and cooperation based on the mutual interest should be increased."¹⁰⁴

Political trust is a code of conduct in which the predictability of the behaviors of political figures are increased within this framework of the code. In this way, the waste of the political resources will also be avoided. However, political trust is a code of conduct but not law. Further, it does not have the power of sanction, and sometimes there might be illegal developments as well. In the contemporary world, it is important to establish mutual political trust firstly in order to build a strong bilateral relationship in the interstate political relations. However, it is possible to collaborate on the political trust. Although these two countries share the common strategic interests, it is possible

¹⁰⁴ Akçay, Nurettin. "Turkey-China Relations within the concept of the new silk road project." *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi* 1.3 (2017): 73-96.

to provide each other with strategic trust as well. The political relations are the most intensive ones in the relations between Turkey and China; however, neither they could be converted to other fields nor has the aforementioned political trust been strengthened.¹⁰⁵

Another problematic situation is the different point of view on the cooperation at regional and global level as well as the international developments between Turkey and China. Although the relations between Turkey and Russia started with the involvement in the Syria crisis, however it is possible to characterize the relations between Turkey and Russia with the degree of friendship before the crisis began.

The Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan conveyed Turkey's wish to be a members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin during his visit to Russia.¹⁰⁶ President Putin shared this request with the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and received positive responses. According to President Putin, Turkey's expressed concern was an important positive signal; Kazakhstan leader Nazarbayev stated that they will be glad to see Turkey among them upon Putin's statement. Former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gul expressed the desire to be a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to the Prime Minister of People's Republic of China Wen Jiabao during his visit to China in 2005.¹⁰⁷ The Foreign Minister Gul pointed out that the two sides aim to improve the cooperation in the international organizations and stated that Turkey expressed its interest in participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Nonetheless, Turkey's application was not accepted and at the same time, Iran was

¹⁰⁵ Aksoy, Ergun. "Erdoğan'ın derdi Çin'le İlişkileri Geliştirmek." *Radikal Gazetesi* 15.

¹⁰⁶ 'Bizi Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü'ne alın'

<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/bizi-sangay-isbirligi-orgutune-alin> (18.07.2012)

¹⁰⁷ 章波. "土耳其和上海合作组织的关系研究." *阿拉伯世界研究* (Zhang Bo. "Study on the Relationship between Turkey and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization." *Arab World Studies*)6 (2014): 70-82.

accepted to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the observer status.¹⁰⁸

In July 2005, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao at a press conference answered to the question “Why wasn’t Turkey accepted to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?” he answered that he had no information whether Turkey had applied or not.¹⁰⁹

China supports Turkey’s European Union membership even if it doesn’t see the initiatives related to the cooperation of Turkey in Central Asia and Asia Pacific region. According to the statement of Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Turkey’s EU membership will contribute to the buildup of strong relationship between China and Turkey. Chinese experts consider that Turkey as a member of EU will not head to Central Asia.¹¹⁰ All of these assumptions show that there is a lack of political trust between Turkey and China. As there won’t be an assurance in the relations of these two countries where mutual political trust is missing, it will be difficult to achieve strategic cooperation. In addition, it is seen that China made good relations and established many investments policies in the countries especially in Eastern Europe and the Balkans that are in the path of European Union membership. Therefore, it can be said that in this context, China supports Turkey’s European Union membership.¹¹¹

On the global level platforms such as the UN and the G20, the cooperating subjects are remarkably low. Thus, it can be said that the relations between Turkey and China didn’t become cooperative at neither regional nor global levels. The underlying

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ 2005年7月5日外交部发言人刘建超在例行记者会上答记者问 (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Jianchao's answer to reporters' questions at the regular press conference on July 5, 2005)https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677244/fyrygth_677252/t202390.shtml

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ 王勇, 希望, and 罗洋. ““一带一路”倡议下中国与土耳其的战略合作.” *西亚非洲* (Wang Yong, Xi Wang, and Luo Yang. "The strategic cooperation between China and Turkey under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative." *West Asia and Africa*)6 (2015).

cause of that issue is the lack of common strategic interests. Both the countries need to seek for common strategic objectives and make cooperation enhances the bilateral relations and solve the shortcomings that have been stated above. In this context, as the two countries will get closer with each other and with Turkey's rise and China's Eurasia (Asia-Europe) policy, it will create the opportunity to cooperate in the field of energy, economy and geopolitical matters in Central Asia, Middle East and even Africa. To put them in practice, it is necessary to bring into consideration the mutual political trust which seems to be lacking between the two countries. ¹¹²

The Belt and Road Initiative could be a turning point in Turkish-Chinese relations and it can prepare the necessary ground for the two countries to overcome the political problems that have been singled out.

3.2.3 Imbalance Of Trade

The economic and trade relations between Turkey which has increased its impact in its region and China which has the world's second largest economic power have developed slowly than desired as compared to their economic capacities. The economic and trade relations between Turkey and China sometimes lag due to technical and implementation issues. Trade relations between Turkey and China began with "Trade Agreement" which was signed on July 16, 1974.¹¹³

According to the 6th clause of the agreement, Turkey and China's Mixed Economic Committee (Turkey and People's Republic of China Mixed Economy and Trade Committee) which was predicted to gather every year could only gather twice in 1978 and 1981. Within this framework, 14th period MEC meeting was held on April 5,

¹¹² 丁工. 中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望. (Ding Gong. Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: Retrospect and Prospect.)Diss. 2011.

¹¹³ Türkiye-Çin İlişkilerinin 40 Yılı (1971-2011)
https://acikders.ankara.edu.tr/pluginfile.php/106065/mod_resource/content/1/13.%20%20konu%20T%C3%BCrkiye-%C3%87in%20Stratejik%20%C4%B0%C5%9Fbirli%C4%9Fi%20%C4%B0i%C5%9Fkileri%20--T%C3%BCrkiye-Cin_iliskilerinin_40_Yili_%281971-2011%29-Erkin%20Ekrem.pdf

2002 in Ankara. 16th period MEC meeting between Turkey and China, on the other hand, was held on September 27, 2009 in Beijing. Similarly, many agreements have been signed making the economy and trade relations easier between Turkey and China; however, both the countries were not able to put some parts into practice.¹¹⁴

Trade capacity between Turkey and China is far behind with respect to the national and potential capacity of these two countries. Chinese specialists believe that the reason why the economy and trade relations between Turkey and China are lacking behind is related to the focus on the politics of the countries and both countries being developing countries. Other political reasons can be both countries being against the Soviets during the Cold War era and foreign trade concentrating on the developed countries. Further, Developing countries Turkey and China are not complementary in the fields of economy and technology. According to the Chinese experts, there are similarities in industry of industrial structure, some fields such as industrial, mechanical and electrical industries are more competitive rather than being complementary. Therefore, the market targeted by the two countries is kind of overlapped. The most significant example for that is the European market which is the greatest trade partner of China from 2005 and Turkey all along.¹¹⁵

The delays and the lack of grounds for legal action in the implementation of decisions has affected the bilateral economy and trade relations in a negative way. Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan who came to Turkey in January, 2001. Stressed to let the Varyag Ship pass through the Bosphorus. Both China and Turkey signed an action plan in order to develop the economy and trade relations of the two countries. However, aforementioned action plan is not fully applied. Turkey couldn't understand the logic behind the deduction of the number of Chinese tourists that was deduced in to 2 million".¹¹⁶ Another example is Turkey's unprivileged acceptance of that

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Varyag Boğaz` dan geçti ama 2.5 milyon Çinli turist gelmedi
<https://bigpara.hurriyet.com.tr/haberler/genel-haberler/varyag-bogaz-dan-gecti-ama-25-milyon-cinli->

especially during China's World Trade Organization membership.¹¹⁷ The struggle of China with World Trade Organization lasted for 15 years and China parleyed with 134 countries for the membership. In December, 1997, during the negotiations, China's seeking support for the membership had been recognized as gratuitous, whereas all the way from United States to Mexico, the countries were provided with a certain amount of concessions in the aforementioned negotiations. However, because Turkey had no concessions, it was foreseen that it will suffer a loss after accepting the membership of China, Turkey became first country to apply antidumping to China. While some products of China were applied in quota and taxed in Turkey, China's high customs duty hampers Turkey's export to some extent. Although both countries are the members of World Trade Organization, the issue related to the customs duties between Turkey and China are against the Organization's functioning. It is difficult to solve the imbalance in the trade between Turkey and China with regard to the economy and trade, without a political concession, it is not easy for Turkey to profit from those trade relations. Turkey's evolving trade imbalance problem has been lasting for 25 years and it's been seen as a problem continuously. If the problem continued for all these years, it means they couldn't find a solution to it. In this case, it is necessary to search for different methods to solve the problem. It is said in a joint statement on August 4th, signed in 1971, Turkey - China joint statement on the establishment of diplomatic relations and proclaimed on April 19 2000 in Turkey-China joint statement emphasized that reaffirms the commitment of the whole matter.¹¹⁸

In addition to input prices such as energy, raw materials and workmanship being low, the stumpy value of the Chinese currency compared to US dollar, thereby keeping it low compared to other foreign money increases the competitiveness of Chinese products and causes that are to be preferred. Thus, in this way the import continues to

[turist-gelmedi_ID559303/](#) (10.04.2006)

¹¹⁷ 丁工. *中土关系四十年: 回顾与展望*. Diss. (Ding Gong. Forty Years of Sino-Turkish Relations: *Retrospect and Prospect*.)2011.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

increase. In this case, just like the USA did, the company products that have their own origins but being manufactured in China can be preferred.

Besides, the added value of Turkey's exports products to China should be increased. Turkey exports the most raw materials to China and selling them to China as the leading marble and semi products can increase the added value. Marble is not only the raw material carrying construction sector but also there are different functions of various marble stone in China's traditional culture. Another product that Turkey exported to China the most is chicken parts and by selling it out as instant/processed product to China. Turkey can contribute to the added value in this way.

The Chinese market is a huge market for trade and commerce. The Chinese production sector is a sector that is still developing and emerging. Turkish products have the potential to establish a market presence in China. But the high customs duties undermine the competitiveness of Turkish products. At this point, onsite production could be the right decision. In this context, the establishment of organizations such as the expected industrial center in Urumqi comes into prominence. As a strategy to access the market, industrial centers can be founded in China's different areas especially in its coastal areas. With similar thoughts, Malaysia founded an industrial center in the autonomous region of Ningxia Huizu which is Muslim-dominated area.¹¹⁹

China's economy should be analyzed with respect to sectors and it should be made useful by any country to get the grab of the opportunities. Turkey and China, as being developing countries, may be targeting the same market by producing similar products. If the volume of trade between the two countries increases to 300 billion dollars and a certain part of imported products is produced by the Turkish companies in

¹¹⁹ “一带一路”助中马清真产业合作提速 (“Belt and Road" helps China-Malaysia halal industry cooperation speed up)

<http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2015-07-15/200132111527.shtml> (07.05.2015)

2025, it won't be necessary to worry about the trade imbalance on the Turkish side.

With the formation of the Belt and Road Initiative, the economic relations between China and Turkey can progress at an egalitarian level. Although these are considered in the "might be a problem" category, there could be solutions to these problems later on and platforms in which both countries have a mutual benefit can be formed as well.

3.2.4 The Influence of The Other Powers: U.S and Russia

China with the idea of Silk Road tries to create a stable economic zone both on land and in the sea while trying to establish a dialogue with the countries on the zone to expand its "living space". However, we cannot ignore the impact of US and Russia on the countries that are taking part in the Silk Road route initiative. Many Chinese believe that the Belt and Road initiative, in particular, is a brand new global initiative against the conception of America's unipolar order. This initiative will secure China as an active international agent by using its economic stability and power. This project will strengthen China's presence in the region and will stabilize the agents like the United States and Russia. Therefore, the project is followed with interest by the United States and Russia.

On the other hand, especially Western experts comparing China's "The Belt and Road" initiative with the USA's Marshall Plan made criticism against this initiative as it's a one-sided initiative where China puts itself in the center. In contrast, for example, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has stated that this initiative is a product of the partnership of the container, not a geopolitical tool and will not be evaluated with an outdated cold war mentality.¹²⁰ China's Ambassador to Ankara, Hongyang stated against these criticisms that the project didn't form around a corporate structure as in European

¹²⁰ 《习近平谈“一带一路”》主要篇目介绍(Introduction to the main articles of "Xi Jinping on "One Belt, One Road"")http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-12/11/c_1123838560.htm

Union and that he was aware of all countries to be associated with each other.¹²¹ Accordingly, the project doesn't aim for a hierarchical mechanism with delegation authority.

With the support of the United States, Turkey is a stakeholder in the Central Asian strategic game with China, which regards Central Asia as one of the important strategic areas, and tries to establish a geo-strategic advantage over Central Asia through historical, cultural and economic ties. This is also an important reason for Turkey's interest in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Therefore, the game between China and the United States in Central Asia and NATO's military defenses against China may become unfavorable factors restricting China-Turkey cooperation. In recent years, Turkey's negative image in the Middle East and neighboring countries' fear of political imbalance may also damage China's image in the country and cast a shadow over China-Turkey cooperation. In addition, Turkey's tense relations with Syria, Syrian refugees' influx into Turkey due to the Syrian civil war, and Kurdish issues have greatly increased the risk of Chinese companies investing in Turkey.

When we look at Russia in a more detailed way about The Belt and Road Initiative, Russia has been committed to strengthening its influence in Central Asia. Despite the struggle between China and Russia on Central Asia about the influence and domains, with Nazarbayev's support in particular, a more friendly dialogue is established on The Belt and Road Initiative compared to the past. The most tangible step for the project between two countries was made during Russian leader Putin's visit to China in February 6, 2014.¹²² Although Putin had some reservations during negotiations with China, they reached compromise on the general lines of the project and further explained his country's attitude is positive towards the Beijing's The Belt

¹²¹ Yeni İpek Yolu için türkiye kilit olacak, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/ekonomi/yeni-ipek-yolu-icin-turkiye-kilit-olacak-2050114> (27.04.2015)

¹²² “一带一路”背景下中俄经贸合作研究(Research on Sino-Russian Economic and Trade Cooperation under the Background of "One Belt One Road")

<http://33h.co/w8p71> (12.09.2017)

and Road Initiative proposal and has expressed its willingness to connect Trans-Eurasian Railway to the project.¹²³ Finally, in February 5th, 2015, China, Russia and India Foreign Ministers got together in Beijing and reached the agreement over The Belt and Road Initiative.¹²⁴ Making a statement after the meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russia and India are ready for the Belt and Road Initiative construction and both the countries agreed to cooperate within the framework of the principle “The Belt and Road” in the economic field.¹²⁵

As a result, in the early period, Russia acted cautiously towards the Belt and Road initiative, and then because of the possibility that it becomes unmanageable to control the project from outside in the following years, Russia decided to make a deal with China. By contrast, China needs the support of Russia to convince especially Central Asian countries completely directed both China and Russia into the “mandatory” process about the Silk Road. And in this kind of context this attitudes can effect Turkey-China cooperation in The Belt and Road Initiative.¹²⁶

¹²³ 百 度 百 科 ， 一 带 一 路 (Baidu Encyclopedia, One Belt One Road)<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%80%E5%B8%A6%E4%B8%80%E8%B7%AF/13132427>

¹²⁴ 【俄罗斯研究】俄罗斯“大欧亚”VS 中国“一带一路”(Russian Studies,Russia's "Greater Eurasia" VS China's "One Belt One Road")

https://www.sohu.com/a/220245741_619333

¹²⁵ 于丹红. "俄罗斯国家电视台消息频道 “一带一路” 报道评析." *西伯利亚研究*(Yu Danhong. "Review and Analysis of the "One Belt One Road" Report on the News Channel of Russian State Television." *Siberian Studies*) 6 (2017).

¹²⁶ Ibid

CONCLUSION

In this study, China-Turkey relations have been evaluated through the Belt And Road initiative. The Belt and Road initiative is a multi-faceted global initiative that aims to bring together the cheap labor and broad market network in China with the capital stock of Europe and Central Asia's resources. China aims to accelerate the process of integration with both the regional and world economy by improving cross-border transport and infrastructure projects particularly in Central Asian countries with the Belt and Road initiative. With these steps taken in the framework of a strategic objective, Beijing will become a more effective actor by expanding beyond the western border both in regional and global terms. The project is expected to revitalize the economic and cultural life of 70 countries on the route which have reached 21 trillion dollars economy. This project which is conceived as “Welfare Belt” by Beijing is expected to increase cooperation between countries, joint investments and cultural communication. If the initiative succeeds, it will re-establish the Eurasian region as the world's largest economic market, and may even change the US dollar-dominated world financial system. The "Belt and Road" initiative has far-reaching geopolitical and developmental significance. Therefore, it will form a competitive situation with the "Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement" and the "Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement" actively promoted by the United States.

However, there are some obstacles to put the Belt and Road initiative into practice in its entirety which is currently in process of consideration.

Firstly, even though China designs the project by taking itself into the center, the high investment cost of the project obliges regional and international support. In this context, China needs partners with whom it can invest in the region to reduce resistance to the Belt and Road Initiative, and Turkey, as an emerging power and an important pivot point along the ancient Silk Road, has been seen as an important country in this initiative. The proliferation of commercial and economic relations in

recent years between the most important countries of the Belt and Road, Turkey and China are also considering strengthening their cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative. And in 2014, China became Turkey's 19th biggest exporting country and 2nd importing country.

Secondly, the different expectations of the initiative between Turkey and China are also a potential risk factor. Turkey wants to increase its regional influence through the initiative, but China is more interested in using Turkey as a springboard to facilitate access to European markets. Although both parties have the different expectations from the resuscitation of the Belt And Road initiative, expectations and difference in opinions concerning the Belt and road Project that can affect the dialogue between the two countries cannot be ruled out.

Finally, there are still some unstable factors in the relations between Turkey and China, such as the "Uighur issue", which has been affecting the development of relations between China and Turkey for a long time. However, with the frequent economic and humanistic activities between the two sides in recent years, these misunderstandings are slowly being eliminated and the two sides are developing in a better direction. In addition, the trade imbalance between the two sides and the influence of external forces, such as the U.S. and Russian influence on Turkey's economic and foreign policy, are inevitable risk factors in the relationship between China and Turkey. But as far as the Belt and Road Initiative is concerned, on the whole, the advantages of cooperation between the two sides far outweigh the disadvantages. Strengthening exchanges between the two sides, jointly promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and participating in the construction of the Belt and Road policy will be a win-win situation for both China and Turkey.

In the context of the Belt and Road initiative, there is a close dialogue between China and Turkey, Turkish authorities stated that they want to cooperate at every opportunity with China. Generally speaking, Turkey's attitude toward the Belt and Road

policy is positive, both from the academic and business sectors, as well as from the economic community and at the official level. Turkey strongly believes that by the revival of the East-West corridor and with the implementation of the project, it will achieve its goal to have an easier access to the South Asian market. Turkey, with The Belt and Road Initiative, will take the opportunity to reach Asian market in a quicker and cheaper way which it has not been very active. At the same time the lack of transportation between the region and Turkey was considered as a disadvantage. Turkey's direct economic contraction with the countries of the region is quite costly in terms of logistics, and quite risky in terms of security. Therefore, Turkey's involvement to the Silk Road will facilitate to reach progressively developing Asian market. As for Turkey, it can also actively improve the policies for the Belt and Road Initiative, and cooperate with the ongoing infrastructure construction projects in the country to realize the docking with the Belt and Road Initiative, and introduce relevant policies and regulations to support the construction of the Belt and Road.

Due to information asymmetry and Turkey's complex geopolitical and economic relations, China-Turkey cooperation faces many risks, but these risks can be eliminated by strengthening communication between the two countries, because essentially speaking there is no fundamental conflict of interests between the two countries. Moreover, we can clearly see that the ties between China and Turkey have become closer and closer in recent years, and many cooperation agreements have been signed between the two countries. I believe that these misunderstandings will be slowly removed in the future as the degree of cooperation between the two countries is strengthened. At the same time, the Belt and Road Initiative can also be seen as a turning point in China-Turkey relations, as Turkey is an emerging power and China is one of the most important countries in the world, and the relationship between the two countries is at its best in history. The relationship between China and Turkey will become better and better and it will lay the foundations for more robust cooperation between two countries.

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