

**TÜRKİYE-CHINA RELATIONS:
ON THE BASIS OF BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION
COMMON VISION AND STRATEGIC
COOPERATION FOR HUMANITY**



ANKASAM
Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4GI	Four Global Initiatives
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa Community
CICPEC	China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
e-CNY	China Digital Central Bank Currency (Digital Yuan)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCI	Global Civilization Initiative
GDI	Global Development Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSC	Global Security Initiative
HANBAN	International Chinese Language Council
MCI	Middle Corridor Initiative
MENA	Middle East and North Africa Region
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RMB	Renminbi
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
TCMB	Central Bank of Türkiye
TOGG	Türkiye's Automobile Initiative Group
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USD	US Dollar
YÖK	Higher Education Council

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FOREWORD

Crises around the world and ever-increasing geopolitical risks make cooperation between Türkiye and China inevitable in the economic sphere, especially in transport corridors. The two peaceful actors, Türkiye and China, who advocate multilateralism, will help to develop their connections with the world and cooperate on a win-win basis, as well as boost their positions in the global system.

The current global geopolitical conditions enable Türkiye to enhance its cooperation with China, on Belt and Road projects. Indeed, these global challenges make Türkiye a “main link” or “strategic hub” in China’s connection to Europe. In this context, the Middle Corridor stands at the forefront as a sustainable option.

This period can be seen as an opportunity for improving transportation and telecommunications infrastructure in Türkiye and other economic investments under China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These co-operations with China are also highly consistent with Türkiye’s Asia Anew Initiative.

Geopolitical risks in the world are rapidly increasing. In this context, security problems, crises, geopolitical risks and other major developments in Europe, Africa, Asia and the seas can affect different continents of the world as a domino effect. In such a conflicting global context, it is of paramount importance for decision-makers to address, reassess, identify, foresee and make recommendations for the land and sea corridors of Belt and Road projects in 2024. I hope, the study will open a door into Turkish-Chinese relations and co-operations in the BRI.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL
The President of ANKASAM

SUMMARY

- More than 2,000 years ago, the Silk Road brought together two ancient civilizations, bridging the vast distance of tens of thousands of kilometers and connecting their peoples. Today, in 2024, these two civilizations continue to strengthen their cooperation, not only for their own benefit but for the betterment of all humanity.
- Following their official recognition of each other in 1971, China-Türkiye relations have taken a significant step towards maturity and stability, after more than half a century of development. Over the past 53 years, both countries have successfully navigated shifting international crises, attaining prominent positions in global dynamics across political, economic, and social spheres.
- In this context, the development of a healthy and stable relationship between China and Türkiye has become crucial not only to the fundamental interests of both nations but also to the development and progress of the entire region and the world. As the global order transforms and new starting points for shaping the international system emerge, the longstanding history of China-Türkiye relations offers a hopeful foundation for deepening bilateral ties and magnifying their global impact for the benefit of humanity.
- This process has been marked by a growing political trust between the two countries. In recent years, the interactions between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Chinese President Xi Jinping, along with their shared perspectives on the future and the evolving global order, have been key factors advancing the relationship.
- Both nations resolutely support each other's efforts to safeguard national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as their respective pursuits of development paths aligned with their national conditions. Furthermore, they are committed to enhancing strategic mutual trust. At the same time, China and Türkiye maintain communication and coordination on regional matters, promoting the political resolution of key issues, and making positive contributions to the preservation of international and regional peace, stability, and development.
- The Republic of Türkiye and the People's Republic of China both advocate for a multipolar world order.
- In pursuit of a more equitable and multipolar global order, Chinese President Xi Jinping has introduced the "Four Key Global Initiatives," which promote concepts such as "development," "civilization," and "equality," offering a vision independent of Western-centric models. These initiatives emphasize cooperation and shared prosperity and are viewed as an alternative to the West's current Cold War mentality. In this regard, there are significant overlaps between the foreign policy strategies of China and Türkiye.

- Investment and trade volume between China and Türkiye have seen notable growth in recent years. China has been involved in financing major infrastructure projects such as Istanbul Airport, the Marmaray Tunnel, and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge. Key sectors for Chinese investment in Türkiye include energy, transportation, and telecommunications. Currently, around 1,200 Chinese companies operate in Türkiye, and trade volume reached \$49 billion in 2023. Additionally, the relationship between the peoples of China and Türkiye is reinforced through 25 sister city agreements and the establishment of cultural centers in both countries.
- BRI has significantly accelerated China-Türkiye relations. With the integration of the Middle Corridor into the BRI, it is expected that multidimensional strategic cooperation will deepen and expand further.

INTRODUCTION

Türkiye's foreign policy, centered on its call for a multipolar world order and a more equitable global system, continues to evolve in alignment with China's global initiatives. Türkiye's "Century of Türkiye" vision and its "Asia Anew Initiative" present a strong potential for cooperation between the two countries. Türkiye's regional influence, combined with its relations with China, contributes to resolving global crises and strengthens the two nations' shared security strategies.

The collaboration between Türkiye and China in regions such as the Middle East and Africa is aimed at enhancing regional stability and security. The developments in Türkiye-China relations are driving both nations toward a multidimensional and balanced foreign policy approach. These relations are not only economically significant but also critical to global security and regional stability. The cooperation between the two countries is poised to play a key role in future international diplomacy and crisis management.

This study aims to examine, analyze, and make projections regarding Türkiye-China relations in the context of the BRI ultimately providing a policy guide for decision-makers.

1. Relations at a Glance

1.1. Historical Milestones (1971-2013)

- In 1971, Türkiye officially recognized the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China and established diplomatic relations.
- In 1978, the opening-up policy initiated by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping significantly strengthened the economic dimension of Türkiye-China relations, which had been minimal at the time, and led to accelerated trade, investment, and bilateral ties.
- In 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to Türkiye, during which the "Joint Declaration on the Establishment and Development of Strategic Cooperative Relationship the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Türkiye" was issued, elevating bilateral relations to a much higher level.
- In 2012, Xi Jinping, then Vice President of China, visited Türkiye.
- Also in 2012, then Prime Minister Erdoğan made an official visit to China, resulting in the signing of cooperation agreements in several areas, including economic collaboration, energy, transportation, and infrastructure.

1.2. A New Beginning (2013- 2023)

On November 14, 2015, during the G20 Summit in Antalya, a "Memorandum of Understanding on the Alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative with the Middle Corridor Initiative" was signed under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Erdoğan.



This agreement marked a significant new phase in bilateral relations, elevating cooperation to a whole new level.

1.2.1. Diplomatic Relations

- In 2016, President Erdoğan visited China to attend the G20 Hangzhou Summit and met with Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- In 2017, President Erdoğan visited China to participate in the First Belt and Road Forum For International Cooperation.
- In 2018, President Erdoğan met with Chinese President Xi Jinping met at the BRICS and G20 summits.
- In 2019, President Erdoğan made an official visit to China, where both leaders emphasized their commitment to strengthening relations across all areas with a long-term and strategic approach.
- In April 2020 and July 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping had two telephone conversations with President Erdoğan.
- In August 2021, the two leaders exchanged congratulatory messages to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Türkiye.
- In March 2021, to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made an official visit to Türkiye.
- In January 2022, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu made an official visit to China.
- In September 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with President Erdoğan during the Samarkand Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- In May 2023, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a congratulatory phone call after Erdoğan's re-election.
- In July 2023, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made an official visit to Türkiye. The visit included discussions on bilateral relations as well as current regional and international issues.
- In June 2024, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan made an official visit to China. During this visit, Wang Yi described the two countries as “representatives of developing large countries and emerging market economies” and highlighted the potential for strengthening cooperation within multilateral frameworks such as the SCO.
- In July 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with President Erdoğan during the Astana Summit of the SCO.

1.2.2. Economic Relations

With over 1,000 Chinese companies currently active in Türkiye's logistics, electronics, energy, tourism, finance, and real estate sectors, expectations for increased investments in renewable energy from China are growing. It is anticipated that renewables will become a key focus for Chinese investments in the near future. Chinese firms are already familiar with Türkiye's energy sector, having invested in thermal power plants.

Türkiye's collaboration with China in the nuclear energy sector dates back to 2016, when a partnership agreement was signed with a Chinese company. Since then, both countries have been engaged in discussions to construct four nuclear reactors in the Thrace region, which is one of Türkiye's key consumption areas. In 2017, Turkish and Chinese companies jointly established Emba Elektrik Üretim A.Ş., to be managed a lignite-powered thermal power plant in Adana, located in southern Türkiye.

As Türkiye relies on petroleum product imports, there is also a need to expand its gas storage facilities and ensure the security of supply lines. In response, Türkiye has been working on enhancing the Salt Lake Gas Storage Facility. This effort is supported by funding from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), of which Türkiye is a founding member, as well as the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank. The Gas Storage Expansion Project has already commenced with this financial backing.

During the pre-BRI period, Türkiye's imports from China exhibited a steady upward trend. From 2000 to 2008, imports grew rapidly, indicating an increasing economic relationship between the two countries.

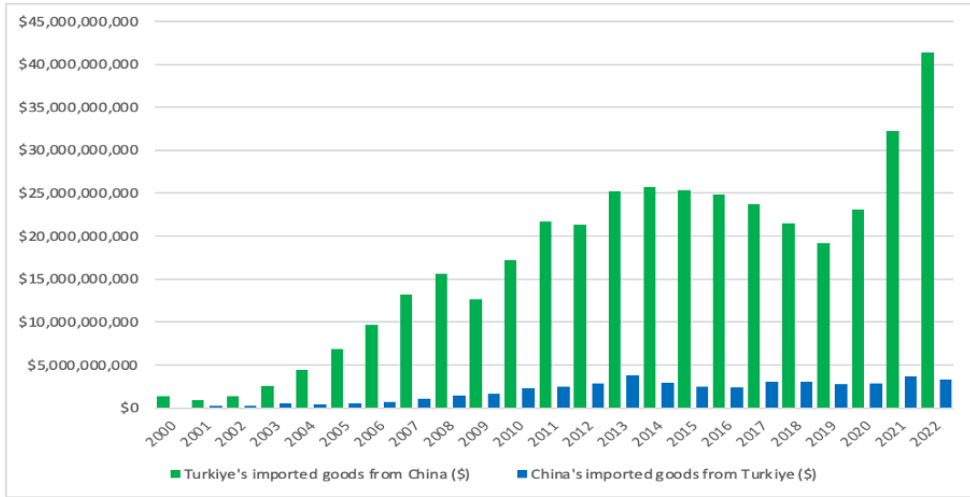
After the global financial crisis in 2008, growth slowed slightly, but Türkiye's imports from China remained substantial and continued to rise, stabilizing around 2011-2013.

Throughout the pre-BRI years, a significant trade imbalance was evident, with Türkiye consistently importing more from China than it exported. This imbalance continued to grow as trade volumes increased on both sides.

Following the launch of the BRI in 2013, Türkiye's imports from China surged significantly. This growth became particularly pronounced after 2020, with a sharp increase in imports in 2021 and 2022. The BRI likely facilitated this growth by improving infrastructure and trade routes, making it easier and more efficient for China to export goods to Türkiye.

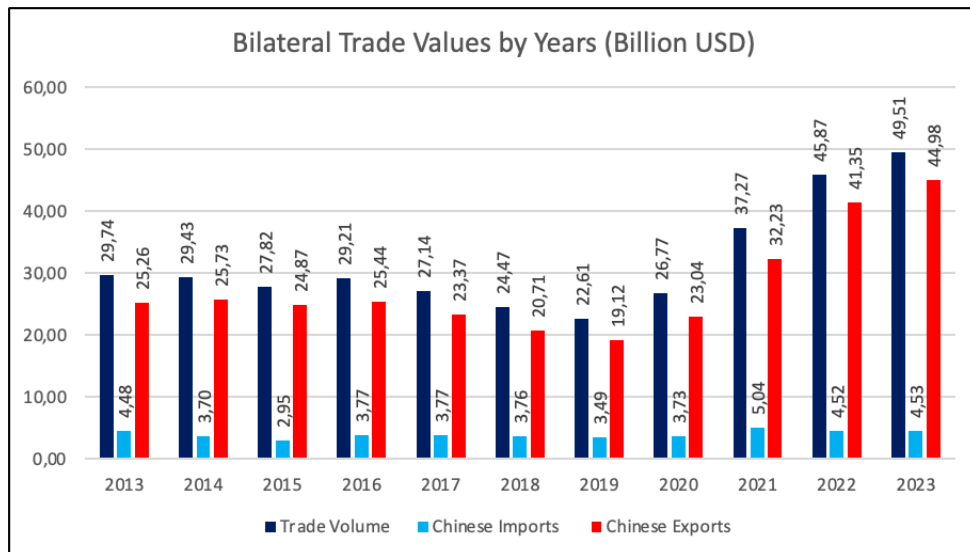
By 2022, Türkiye's imports from China exceeded 40 billion US dollars, highlighting the deepening economic ties between the two nations under the BRI framework.

Chart 1. China-Türkiye Bilateral Trade Figure, 2000-2022

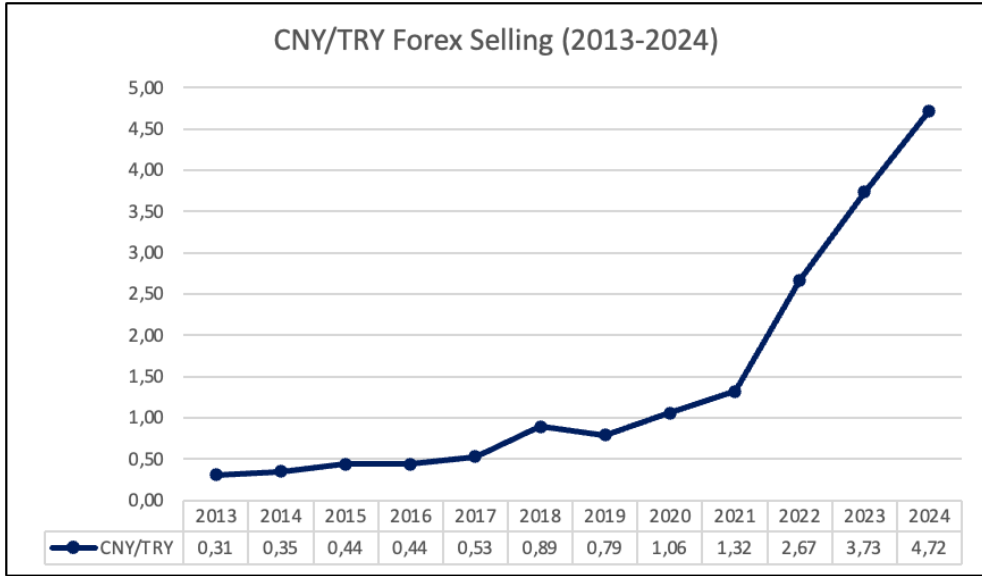


Source: UN Comtrade, sorted by ANKASAM according to data obtained from open sources

Chart 2. Bilateral Trade Values by Years (Billion USD)



Source: Trademap, sorted by ANKASAM according to data obtained from open sources

Chart 3. CNY/TRY Forex Selling (2013-2024)

Source: Central Bank of Türkiye, 2024.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to China on July 2, 2019[1] is seen as a continuation of efforts to strengthen strategic cooperation between Türkiye and China. During the same week, Turkish National Day events were organized in China under the coordination of the Turkish Ministry of Commerce with the theme “Embrace the Future with Green”, and Türkiye’s seven geographical regions were introduced at the Expo 2019 Beijing event area. Such opportunities allow Turkish companies to communicate directly with Chinese customers, allowing Türkiye to become a country that exports rather than just imports to China. During the President’s visit, the issues of placing Türkiye-China trade on a fair and sustainable basis for both parties and, accordingly, attracting more investments from China to Türkiye came to the fore.

More than a thousand Chinese companies currently operate in Türkiye. During the meetings, China’s role in providing both financing and investment support in areas such as tube passage, nuclear energy, Canal Istanbul and railway projects was discussed. It was stated that Türkiye could export more agricultural products to China and the good news was given that cherry exports to China had started. Other agricultural products that can be exported include pomegranates, hazelnuts, citrus fruits, olive oil, milk and dairy products, aquatic products and poultry. The progress of Türkiye-China relations on a healthy basis depends on Türkiye’s openness to cooperation with China in strategic cooperation, especially in areas such as renewable energy, information technologies, robotics and 5G. However, China’s insistence on employing Chinese workers in its investments in foreign countries and its attitude towards bringing the materials used from China are among the issues that should be taken into consideration.

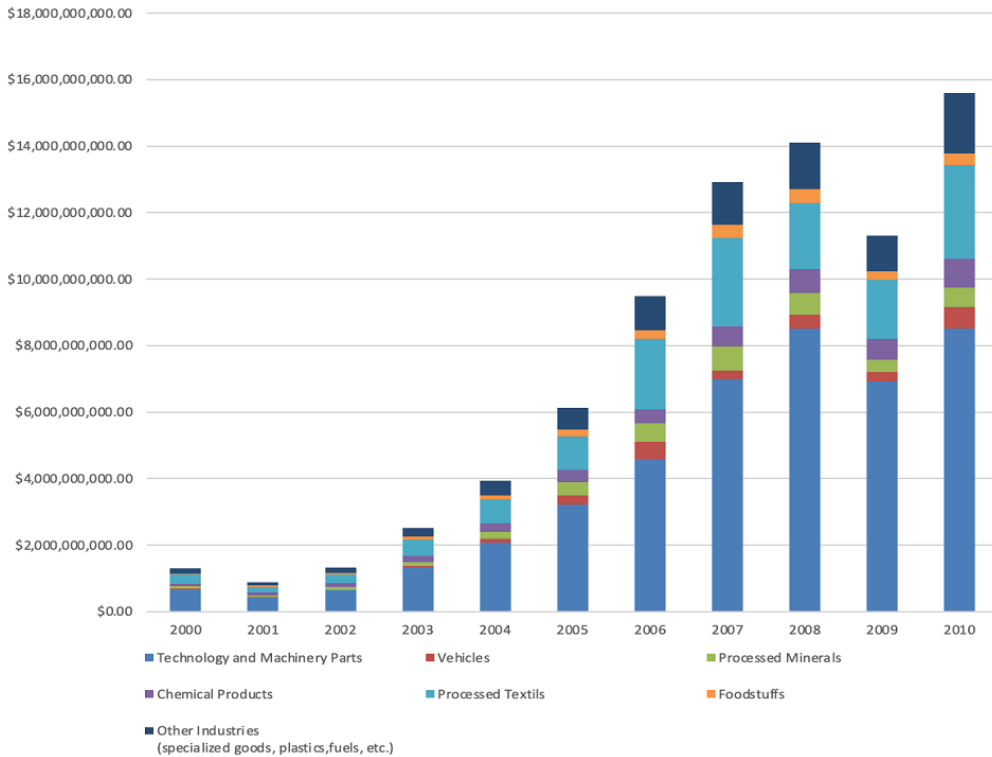
[1] “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Türkiye-Çin İş Birliğinin Güçlendirilmesi için Potansiyel Büyük”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-turkiye-cin-is-birliginin-guclendirilmesi-icin-potansiyel-buyuk/1521166>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

1.2.2.1. Sectoral Distribution of Trade Relations

During the pre-BRI period, there is a consistent increase in Türkiye’s imports from China across all sectors. The total value of imports rises sharply, particularly after 2003, indicating a growing economic relationship between the two countries.

Technology and Machinery Parts dominate the imports, highlighting Türkiye’s reliance on China for industrial goods and manufacturing equipment.

Chart 4. Distribution of Imports from China to Türkiye in dollars, 2000-2010



Source: BACI, sorted by ANKASAM according to data obtained from open sources

Post-BRI, the overall upward trend in imports continues, but with more fluctuations compared to the pre-BRI period. This suggests that while the BRI has maintained the trade relationship, external factors such as economic conditions and global trade tensions may have influenced the consistency of growth.

Despite these fluctuations, Technology and Machinery Parts remain the dominant sector, reaffirming the importance of Chinese industrial goods to Türkiye’s economy.

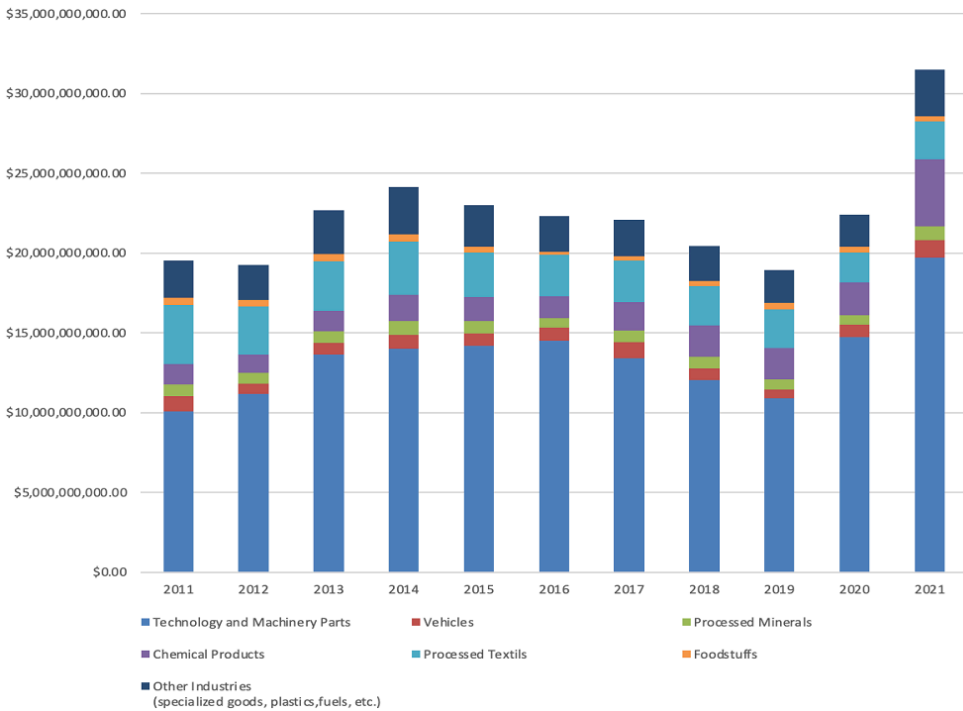
Compared to the pre-BRI period, there is noticeable growth in imports of Chemical Products and Processed Minerals. This shift suggests a deepening of industrial and manufacturing-related imports from China, possibly due to the infrastructure projects initiated under the BRI.

Türkiye's Major Export Products: Marble and travertine, other valuable metal ores and concentrates, lead, chrome, copper, iron, zinc, natural borate ores, boron oxides, and boric acids.

Türkiye's Major Import Products: Phones for cellular or other wireless networks, engines, electrical equipment, mechanical devices, and vehicles.

Particularly between 2016 and 2019, bilateral investment and trade experienced rapid growth. China has also been involved in the financing of major infrastructure projects in Türkiye, such as Istanbul Airport, Marmaray, and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge. Sectors like energy, transportation, and telecommunications have been prominent areas where China has increased its investments in Türkiye. Furthermore, there are currently more than 1,200 Chinese companies operating in Türkiye.

Chart 5. Distribution of Imports from China to Türkiye in dollars, 2011-2021



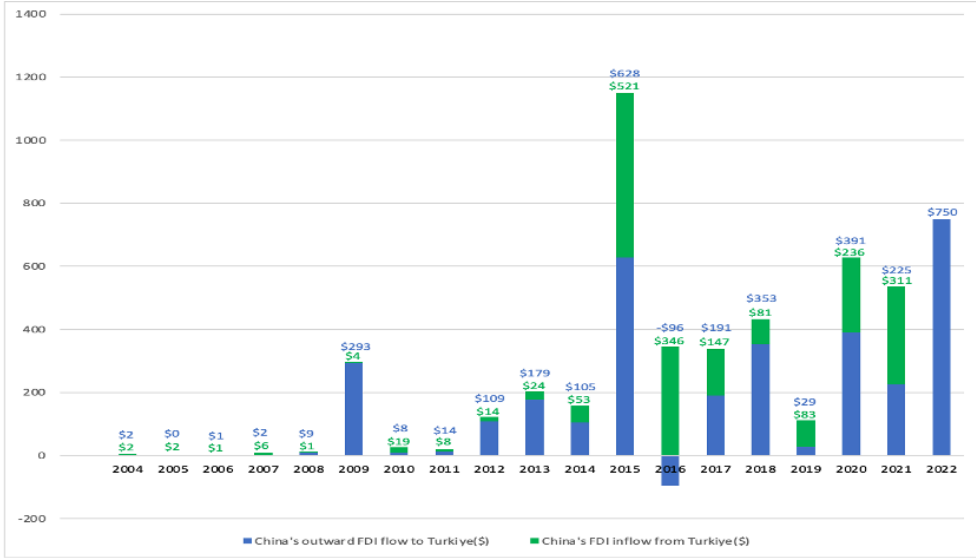
Source: BACI, sorted by ANKASAM according to data obtained from open sources

1.2.2.2. Evolution of Bilateral Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Between China and Türkiye

During the pre-BRI period, the FDI flows between China and Türkiye were relatively modest. China’s FDI to Türkiye remained small, reflecting limited Chinese investment in Türkiye. Similarly, Türkiye’s FDI inflow to China green bars was also minimal during this time.

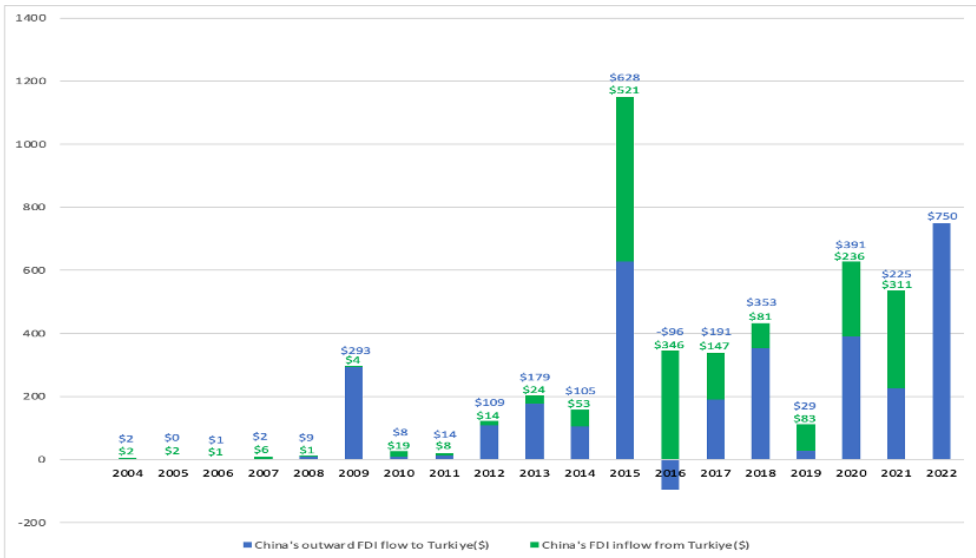
After the launch of the BRI in 2013, there is a notable increase in FDI activity between China and Türkiye. The most dramatic spike occurred in 2015, with China’s FDI to Türkiye reaching 628 million US dollars, and Türkiye’s FDI to China at 521 million US dollars. This year marked a major turning point, likely reflecting Türkiye’s officially joining BRI.

Chart 6. China-Türkiye Bilateral FDI Flow in Million Dollars, 2004-2022



Source: OECD China's FDI inflow from Türkiye, sorted by ANKASAM according to data obtained from open sources; China Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment

Chart 7. Foreign Direct Investment from China to Türkiye by Years (Million USD)



Source: Central Bank of Türkiye, 2024.

- **Notable Economic Collaborations**

2012: Aksa Jeneratör, a subsidiary of Kazan Holding, established then world's highest-capacity generator factory in Changzhou, China, on a 100,000 square meter area, making significant investments in the region.

2012: TAB Gıda, part of Ata Holding, began its operations in China under the Burger King brand with 64 restaurants in 2012 and has since expanded to 1,500 locations.

2015: The Hunutlu coal-fired thermal power plant in Adana, with a capacity of 1,320 MW and a fixed investment amount of 3.5 billion Turkish Liras, is the largest Chinese investment in Türkiye and one of the most significant investments in the sector. [2]

2015: The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China commenced operations in Türkiye.

2015: During the G20 Antalya Summit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Türkiye to align the BRI with Türkiye's "Middle Corridor" Project. This agreement marked a significant step toward harmonizing the two initiatives.

2017: Huawei, celebrating its 15th year in Türkiye, invests an additional 20 million USD annually in its R&D center in Türkiye. [3]

2017: Bank of China began its operations in Türkiye.

2017: The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, a key component of the Middle Corridor, was officially opened on October 30, 2017.

2018: Alibaba made a significant investment by acquiring Trendyol for \$728 million.

2019: A bilateral currency swap agreement signed between Türkiye's Central Bank (TCMB) and the People's Bank of China on May 30, 2019, increased from 35.1 billion TRY and 23 billion Chinese Yuan to a total of 46 billion TRY and 35 billion Chinese Yuan. [4]

2020: China's leading payment system, WeChat Pay, was introduced in Türkiye through POS devices and mobile applications at Istanbul Airport in collaboration with ICBC Türkiye, and later expanded to other tourist regions in cooperation with ICBC Türkiye and İş Bankası. [5]

[2] "Industrial And Commercial Bank Of China's Floundering Coal Investment in Turkey", *350.org*, <https://350.org/press-release/icbcs-floundering-coal-investment-in-turkey/>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[3] "Başarı Hikayeleri Huawei", *TC Cumhurbaşkanlığı Yatırım Ofisi*, <https://www.invest.gov.tr/tr/whyturkey/successstories/sayfalar/huawei.aspx>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[4] "Press Release On The Swap Agreement Between TCMB And People's Bank Of China (2021-24)", *TCMB*, <http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/EN/TCMB>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[5] "WeChat Pay İstanbul Havalimanı'nda Kullanılabilecek", *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/isdunyasi/ulasim/wechat-pay-istanbul-havalimaninda-kullanilabilecek/658581>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

2021: Chinese tech giant Xiaomi began production at its factory in Istanbul, with an annual capacity of 5 million smartphones. [6]

2021: Ziraat Bankası signed a \$400 million loan agreement with China's leading financial institution, China Eximbank.[7]

July 2024: Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer BYD announced a \$1 billion investment in Türkiye to establish a production facility in Manisa.

August 2024: Chinese Ganfeng Lithium Group, one of the world's largest lithium battery producers with a \$26 billion valuation on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, announced a \$500 million investment in Türkiye through a joint venture with Turkish battery manufacturer Yiğit Akü.

1.2.3. Cultural Relations

The BRI seeks to enhance cultural connections in addition to its economic goals. In line with this, Türkiye designated 2012 as the “Chinese Year of Culture” highlighting the theme “The Beginning of the Silk Road: Fascinating China.”

In 2013, China celebrated the “Turkish Culture Year” by hosting a variety of activities. These cultural exchange initiatives have played a significant role in fostering positive relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

In 2018, “Turkish Tourism Year” was declared in China, leading to a significant increase in Chinese visitors to Türkiye. That year, the number of Chinese tourists reached 394,109 marking a 59.38% rise compared to the previous year.[8]

In July 2019, Turkish culture, history, and industrial capabilities were showcased during the Turkish National Day activities at the Expo 2019 event in Beijing. During this event, Turkish representatives expressed their commitment to enhancing cultural ties between Türkiye and China, while also maintaining the positive momentum in bilateral trade and investments. The event also highlighted Türkiye's intention to increase exports to China. Furthermore, in September 2019, China was set to participate as a partner country in the 88th Izmir International Fair.[9]

[6] “Chinese Tech Giant Xiaomi Opens Factory in Turkey”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/chinese-tech-giant-xiaomi-opens-factory-in-turkey/2191361>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

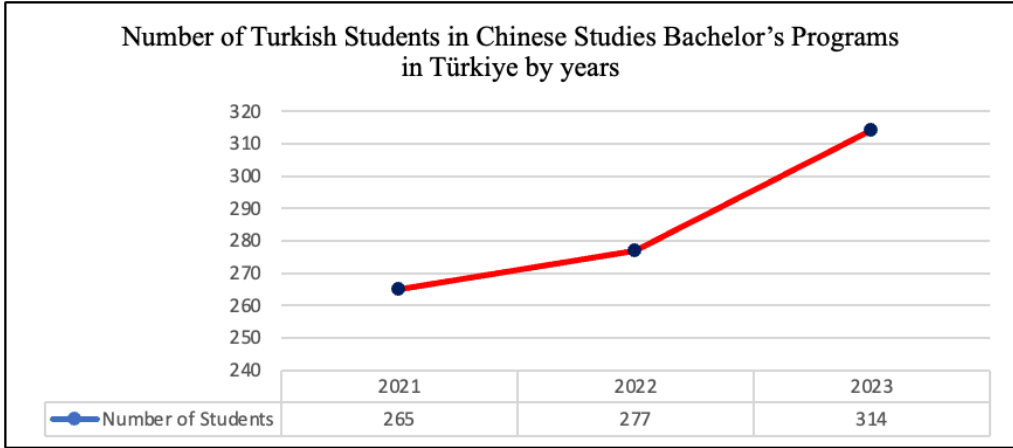
[7] “An Assessment of 2021: Developments and Targets for the Future”, *Ziraat Bankası*, <https://www.ziraatbank.com.tr/SitePages/InteraktifRaporlar/2021/en/m-3-3.html>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[8] “Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri Birçok Alanda Gelişiyor”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkiye-cin-iliskileri-bircok-alanda-gelisiyor/2186643>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[9] “Turkey China Business Development Support Association Attended The 88th Izmir International Fair”, *Türkiye Çin İş Geliştirme ve Destekleme Derneği*, <https://www.tc-isged.org.tr/en/news-announcements/turkey-china-business-development-support-association-attended-the-88th-izmir-international-fair.html>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

As part of the cultural exchange program, Türkiye collaborated with China to establish the Confucius Institute, which offers Chinese language learning. Students enrolled in these courses are eligible for scholarships to study in China. Additionally, Türkiye recognizes China's university entrance exam results, ensuring that Chinese students do not encounter institutional barriers when pursuing higher education in Türkiye.[10]

Chart 8. Number of Turkish Students in Chinese Studies Bachelor's Programs in Türkiye by years



Source: Prepared by the author according to YÖK Atlas data. [11]

- **Notable Cultural Collaborations**

2013: The year 2013 was celebrated as the “Turkish Cultural Year” in China.

2013: The Istanbul Okan University Confucius Institute, which was established based on the agreement signed on June 18, 2012, in Beijing between the International Chinese Language Council (HANBAN) and Istanbul Okan University, began operations in May 2013. [12] Thus, another Confucius Institute was added to those previously established at Middle East Technical University and Boğaziçi University.

2017: In partnership with Nankai University from the People's Republic of China, the Confucius Institute at Yeditepe University was inaugurated on September 27, 2017.[13] With this, the number of Confucius Institutes in Türkiye increased to four.

[10] Tao Zan, “Turkey Dream” And The China-Turkish Cooperation Under One Belt And One Road Initiative.”, *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 2016, pp. 50-72.

[11] This has been prepared based on the number of students enrolled in the Sinology, Chinese Language and Literature, and Chinese Translation and Interpretation Departments at Ankara University, Istanbul University, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Erciyes University, and Okan University, which currently have higher education programs in Türkiye.

[12] “Confucius Institute”, *Okan University*, <https://www.okan.edu.tr/en/c/>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[13] “Confucius Institute at Yeditepe University”, *Yeditepe University*, <https://confucius.yeditepe.edu.tr/en/about-us>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

2018: The year 2018 was celebrated as the “Turkish Tourism Year” in China, and various cultural events were organized to mark the occasion. The number of Chinese tourists visiting Türkiye increased by 60% compared to the previous year, reaching 394,000 in 2018, and exceeded 565,000 in 2019. [14]

2019: At the end of 2019, the global COVID-19 pandemic led to a focus on bilateral relations, particularly in the field of health. China provided significant support to Türkiye with vaccines and hygienic health products. From the beginning of the pandemic until May 2021, China sent 27 million doses of vaccines to Türkiye. With this number, Türkiye became the country that received the most vaccines from China during the pandemic. [15]

2019: The number of tourists from China, a country with high growth potential in the global tourism sector, reached 426,000 in 2019 from 28,000 in 2002, thanks to Türkiye’s promotional campaigns. [16]

2021: The Yunus Emre Institute began its activities in Beijing in May 2021.

2023: In February 2023, following the devastating earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş that affected 11 provinces, China sent search and rescue personnel, disaster tents, 40 million Yuan, and 200,000 USD in emergency humanitarian aid to Türkiye. Many technical equipment sent by China for searching for survivors under the rubble was also made available to the rescue teams in the disaster area. This assistance also brought the people of China and Türkiye closer together.

2023: With the impact of COVID-19 causing a decline in the number of Chinese tourists to 26,000 in 2021, the number reached 89,515 in 2022. With the complete lifting of travel restrictions in 2023, the number of Chinese tourists increased rapidly, reaching 198,807 during the period from January to October 2023. [17]

2024: In April 2024, the world-renowned Turkish dance group Anadolu Ateşi performed Turkish dances for Chinese audiences in Beijing and Shanghai as part of their China tour.

2024: In June 2024, the ‘Poetic Dance Drama: The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting,’ performed by the China Eastern Dance and Music Troupe and honoring China’s cultural heritage, was showcased to Turkish audiences at the Atatürk Cultural Center.

[14]“Growing Number of Flights From China To Turkey Boosts Tourism”, *Daily Sabah*, <https://www.dailysabah.com/tourism/2019/04/29/growing-number-of-flights-from-china-to-turkey-boosts-tourism>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[15] “Çin'den Türkiye'ye Gelen Aşı Sayısı 27 Milyon Doz Olarak Açıklandı”, *T24*, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/cin-den-turkiye-ye-gelen-asi-sayisi-27-milyon-doz-olarak-aciklandi,952062>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[16] “Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri Birçok Alanda Gelişiyor”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkiye-cin-iliskileri-bircok-alanda-gelisiyor/2186643>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

[17] *Ibid.*

2024: In August 2024, China Southern Airlines' flight CZ6035 from Urumqi landed at Istanbul Airport on the evening of August 17. This flight, the third direct route from China to Türkiye after the Beijing Daxing and Guangzhou-Istanbul routes, was marked as the official inauguration of another direct flight from China to Türkiye.[18]

2. From Deep-Rooted Ties to Modern Partnerships

2.1. *Shaping Tomorrow's World*

In the second half of the 20th century, the global political dynamics were constrained by the intensity of ideological differences and conflicts, limiting many countries' ability to freely develop bilateral and multilateral relationships. This ideological division and conflict, particularly prevalent during the Cold War, continued to affect the post-Cold War era. The global order that emerged after the Cold War, which ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, marked a transition from a bipolar to a unipolar system, accompanied by inevitable globalization and an enhancement of U.S. global leadership. Economic development statuses also experienced the effects of globalization, especially as a result of major economic crises like that of 2008. However, this economic globalization, which seemed strong under the control of a few countries based on some economic indicators, failed to contribute to a shared development that benefited everyone. Instead, it exacerbated the income disparities between the rich and the poor, developed and developing countries, and even within developed countries themselves. Many developing countries reaped minimal benefits from economic globalization and even lost their independent development capacities, making their path to modernization more challenging. Some countries have also been observed to employ unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonic strategies by obstructing economic globalization and posing a threat of global economic stagnation.

However, since the early 21st century, the rise of new powers such as China and Russia have opened the door to new alternatives for the global community and made a transition to a multipolar world order possible. Observing that other powers, different from themselves, could rapidly develop and gain strength by creating models tailored to their own national dynamics rather than relying on Western-centric development models, hegemonic states have shifted towards strategies of regional destabilization and crisis creation to protect their existing power. Given all these factors, it can be considered that the contemporary world is undergoing a profound transformation seen only once in a century. In response to this changing global situation and the expectations of the international community, and with a focus on humanity's future and common interests, China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, has proposed four key initiatives (4GI) aimed at addressing global security and development issues. These initiatives are designed to promote the equal distribution of concepts such as development, civilization, and progress across all of humanity, rather than concentrating them in specific countries. Universal cooperation, equality, the win-win principle, and a shared future for humanity are essential elements of these initiatives.

18] "China Southern Airlines Launches Guangzhou-Istanbul Direct Flight Route", *Xinhua*, <https://english.news.cn/20240629/b71101a5226642fd932b58bde580dd9b/c.html>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

Xi Jinping's Concept of “Joint Construction of a Community of Common Destiny for Humanity”

In his 2013 speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping first articulated his vision of a global community sharing a common future. Over the past decade, this vision has become increasingly enriched. In 2015, in his speech at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly, he elaborated this vision in a five-point proposal. These five points are as follows:

- 1. We must build partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals, engage in broad consultations and foster mutual understanding.*
- 2. We must create a security environment based on justice, equality, common endeavor and shared interests.*
- 3. Promote an open, innovative and inclusive model of development for the benefit of all.*
- 4. We must increase civilizational exchange to promote harmony, inclusion and respect for differences.*
- 5. Build an ecosystem that prioritizes Mother Nature and green development.*

In his 2017 speech at the UN Office in Geneva, Xi Jinping proposed five goals for the world:

- 1. We must build a world of lasting peace through dialogue and consultation.*
- 2. We must build a world that ensures security for all through joint efforts.*
- 3. We must build a world of shared prosperity through win-win cooperation.*
- 4. Build an open and inclusive world through mutual exchange and learning.*
- 5. Make our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon development.*

Published on September 26, 2023, both the Chinese and English versions of the white paper “Global Community Sharing a Common Future: China's Proposals and Actions” were prepared by the Information Office of the State Council of China. This white paper introduces in depth Xi Jinping's “idea and practice of building a global community sharing a common future”. Its purpose is to help the international community better understand this concept and to promote a broader consensus among different countries on expanding joint efforts to build this community.

2.2. A Common Vision for Mankind, Belt and Road

China's BRI stands as a cornerstone of its economic and diplomatic strategy, with a primary focus on enhancing regional cooperation, stimulating economic growth, and fostering regional development. Unveiled by President Xi Jinping in 2013 as a global infrastructure development plan, the BRI is a manifestation of China's “Major Country Diplomacy.”[19]

[19] Stephen N. Smith, "China's “Major Country Diplomacy: Legitimation and foreign policy change.”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, <https://academic.oup.com/fpa/article-abstract/17/2/orab002/6139347>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

This ambitious initiative aims to deepen and expand connections across Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Europe, and Africa by revitalizing the ancient Silk Road's trade routes, both over land (the Belt) and by sea (the Road). Through the BRI, China seeks to broaden its network of trade partners, get access to diverse economic opportunities, and increase its influence in international trade. To date, over 200 BRI Memorandum of Understanding have been signed by China with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations.[20]

BRI aims to spread values such as “harmonious society,” “mutual benefit,” and “mutual respect and learning” across the globe through economic ventures. These principles are deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and historical traditions. Confucianism, in particular, emphasizes leadership through moral authority rather than physical force. It advocates for fostering peaceful relations with neighboring countries by leveraging the appeal of China's cultural and civilizational values rather than resorting to coercion, even when dealing with adversarial nations. The BRI offers China an opportunity to project these soft power resources and enhance global interconnectivity. This interconnectivity under the BRI focuses on policy coordination, financial integration, infrastructural cooperation, trade and investment promotion, and cultural exchanges.

Within the framework of the BRI, China has proposed six economic corridors aimed at connecting it with Central Asia, Russia, Mongolia, Indochina, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. Of these six corridors, four—the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor—are integral components of the Maritime Silk Road. In contrast, the China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor and the New Eurasian Land Bridge form part of the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). Geopolitically, China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has emerged as a critical hub, hosting three of these six corridors: the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the CPEC, and the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor. The latter corridor begins in Xinjiang (northwest China) and traverses through Central Asian states, reaching Türkiye via Iran, the Gulf region, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Institutionally, the Chinese government, in partnership with various stakeholders, has established key financial entities such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank, and the Silk Road Fund to support the BRI. Notably, Türkiye is a founding member of the AIIB and also holds the status of a dialogue partner in the SCO. Türkiye officially became part of the BRI by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Chinese government during President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's state visit to Beijing in 2015. Since then, both countries have collaborated within the BRI framework, focusing on the implementation of various infrastructure projects in and around Türkiye.

[20] “China's Belt and Road Initiative turns 10. Here's what to know”, *The World Economic Forum*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/11/china-belt-road-initiative-trade-bri-silk-road/>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

Xi Jinping's 4 Initiatives

1. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the most prominent and perhaps the best-known component of Xi Jinping's vision for a globally shared future. Launched in 2013, this initiative is designed as a global infrastructure development cooperation project led by China. BRI aims to create a network of land and sea trade routes connecting Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. To date, over 150 countries and 30 global organizations have signed cooperation agreements with the BRI. The initiative is strategically aligned with regional and multilateral development efforts such as the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the European Union's Connecting Europe and Asia Strategy.

The BRI integrates the world economically and logistically through global infrastructure projects. It is expected that, in the coming decade, BRI will increasingly focus on green and digital investments. This new direction will encompass five key areas: policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties.

2. Global Development Initiative (GDI)

The Global Development Initiative (GDI) was proposed by Xi Jinping during the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in 2021. The GDI aims to accelerate the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and promote stronger, greener, more inclusive, and balanced global development. The initiative focuses on addressing developmental imbalances and identifies eight priority areas: poverty reduction, food security, combating COVID-19, development financing, climate change and green development, industrialization, digital economy, and connectivity.

The GDI is part of China's efforts to strengthen cooperation with developing countries in the Global South and aims to play a leading role in meeting these countries' development needs. In this context, China has committed to \$3 billion in international aid and launched initiatives such as the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund. The GDI seeks to deepen development partnerships in a multipolar world and provide solutions to global development challenges.

3. Global Security Initiative (GSI)

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) was introduced by Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum for Asia in 2022. The GSI aims to address global security issues and promote peace and stability through international cooperation, dialogue, and partnerships. It views security as a prerequisite for development and advocates for respect for national sovereignty, adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, rejection of Cold War thinking, and consideration of legitimate security concerns.

The GSI facilitates China's more active role in the global security agenda while promoting cooperation to maintain global peace and security. This initiative has played a significant role in diplomatic rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. The success of the GSI could enhance China's role in ensuring peace and stability in a multipolar world order.

4. Global Civilization Initiative (GCI)

The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) was proposed by Xi Jinping at the High-Level Meeting of the World Political Parties in 2023. The GCI emphasizes respect for the diversity of civilizations, shared human values, and the heritage and innovation of civilizations, and it promotes cultural exchange and mutual learning. The ultimate goal of the GCI is to build a global community with a shared future.

In line with other global initiatives, the GCI aims to strengthen international solidarity in solving global issues and foster cultural cooperation and inter-civilizational dialogue. Through this initiative, China seeks to contribute to a more harmonious and multipolar world order by enhancing understanding among different civilizations.

Over the 11 years since its launch, through the joint efforts of all parties, cooperation under BRI has transcended China's borders to become a global endeavor. It has transformed from ideas into actions, from vision into reality, and from a general framework into concrete projects. It has united civilizations not just through bridges and railways, but also through ideas and cultures. The international community has welcomed it both as a public benefit and a collaboration platform, achieving substantial results.

In its concrete aspects, the BRI is considered one of the largest initiatives in history. As of 2023, the initiative has spread across a vast geography covering one-third of the world's population and 40% of global GDP. The scope of the BRI has attracted the attention of many major powers worldwide. It is expected that approximately 4 billion people in this extensive geography will be directly affected by the BRI.

The geographical scope of the BRI was not clearly defined initially, which has allowed the initiative to evolve. For example, despite the absence of an official map for the BRI, the list of countries and definitions covered by the initiative have enabled scholars and policymakers to conduct their own analyses.

- *Over two thousand years ago, inspired by a sincere desire for friendship, people traversed the steppes and deserts to create the land Silk Road, connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, initiating a period of comprehensive cultural exchange for the world.*
- *By venturing into the sea to establish the maritime Silk Road connecting the East and West, they ushered in a new era of closer communication among peoples, overcoming the waves.*
- *Stretching across thousands of miles and years, the ancient Silk Roads became not just trade routes, but also meeting points for cultures and civilizations. These routes made significant contributions to human progress.*
- *In the 1980s, the United Nations and several countries began envisioning the Eurasian Land Bridge, the Silk Road Initiative, and other plans, seen as a common reflection of the desire for communication and cooperation.*
- *Today, two thousand years later, in response to China's call, all equals have come together to reunite ancient civilizations with far more advanced opportunities. At the intersection of these belts and roads, the story of humanity is beginning to be rewritten.*

China has signed over 200 cooperation agreements with 152 countries across five continents under the BRI. The BRI encompasses:

- Sub-Saharan Africa: 46 countries
- Europe and Central Asia: 35 countries
- East Asia and the Pacific: 25 countries
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 21 countries
- Middle East and North Africa: 18 countries
- Southeast Asia: 6 countries

The BRI places great emphasis on people-to-people relations and soft power elements such as cultural, civilizational, and political integration. However, it also requires large infrastructure projects such as railways, bridges, dams, and ports to physically connect the countries. These projects represent some of the BRI's largest investments. As of 2023, the total investment in the BRI has reached \$1.53 trillion, with \$67.8 billion invested in 2022 alone. [21] In 2024, the BRI continues to play a significant role in global economic and political balances with its massive investments and extensive geographical scope.

- *BRI aligns with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in terms of concepts, measures, and goals. In accordance with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the BRI promotes coordinated progress in economic, social, and ecological environmental development. Its goal is to eliminate the fundamental causes and barriers to development and to support the self-sustaining development of participating countries. In this regard, it is fully in harmony with the UN goals.*

The BRI adopts a human-centered approach, focusing on poverty eradication, job creation, and enhancing people's well-being, ensuring that the benefits of cooperation reach all individuals and segments of society. It encourages deeper cooperation in areas such as public health, poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, green development, science and technology, education, culture, the arts, and healthcare services.

BRI, contrary to popular belief, not only encompasses trade routes but also brings with it a global vision. It emphasizes that historical Western hegemony is not the only path and underscores that common development is possible through global cooperation, without leaving any country behind. It rejects the desired Cold War mentality and can be seen as an antithesis within the framework of Xi's "Four Global Initiatives". This antithesis represents an initiative and approach centered on cooperation and equality in response to the West's crisis and chaos driven new world order. In other words, Xi envisioned a vision where countries or regions collaborate for a shared destiny, without distinctions between rich and poor nations. This vision fosters regional and global cooperation, making the promise of common security through shared prosperity achievable.

[21] "China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Investment Report 2023", *Green Finance & Development Center*, <https://greenfdc.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-investment-report-2023/>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

In this context, the ultimate goal of BRI is to build a global community with a shared future. The BRI is based on the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. It advocates for win-win cooperation in pursuit of greater good and common interests. It emphasizes that all countries are equal participants, contributors, and beneficiaries, promoting economic integration, interconnected development, and the sharing of successes.

What is Belt and Road Initiative?

- *The Path to Global Prosperity*
- *The Path to Peace*
- *The Path to Openness*
- *The Path to Innovation*
- *The Path to Social Progress*

2.3. Türkiye's Role in the BRI

The year 2023 can be considered a turning point for the Republic of Türkiye. The significance of this year arises not from a single major event, but from the centennial anniversary initiated by the government through its election campaign, which envisions a new shape for Türkiye. In particular, the government's branding of the "Türkiye Century" concept during the election period has become a source of motivation for the country's progress in various sectors. In this context, the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye, established in 1923, is projected as the beginning of a new era marked by more active policies, a stance more independent from major Western powers like the U.S., and a modern, advanced, and contemporary new period. Developments such as the production of the first national and domestic car TOGG, the opening of the Istanbul Financial Center, the launch of Türkiye's first astronaut Alper Gezeravcı into space, and accelerated advancements in the defense industry are among the developments supporting the envisioned profile for this new century.

Recent developments in Türkiye's foreign policy demonstrate a significant alignment with China's Four Global Initiatives (4GI's), indicating a strong potential for cooperation between the two countries in the international system. Türkiye's "Türkiye Century" vision, new foreign policy approaches, efforts to pursue a more independent foreign policy, and the "Asia Anew Initiative" highlight Türkiye's aim to play a more active role on the global stage. In this context, there are notable similarities between the foreign policy strategies of Türkiye and China.

• Global Development

Türkiye's new foreign policy vision aims to play a more active role in development, humanitarian diplomacy, and the resolution of global issues. This vision positions Türkiye as a global actor in development aid and humanitarian support. Similarly, China's Global Development Initiative (GDI) seeks to achieve global development goals and build a sustainable future. Both countries have the potential to produce positive global outcomes through cooperation in development collaboration, poverty reduction, food security, and climate change.

In this context, Türkiye's role in initiatives is not merely that of a bridging region. Once confined by the West to the role of a bridge, Türkiye is now assuming a much more active and inclusive role. China views Türkiye not only as a bridge but also as a significant investment and logistics hub and an important regional power. President Erdoğan has supported this view by stating, "An investment in Türkiye is not only an investment in the world's 17th largest economy with its 82 million young and dynamic population, but also an investment in a region with a population of 1.6 billion and a gross national product of 24 trillion dollars. Most importantly, an investment in Türkiye is an investment in the Belt and Road project and in our shared dream of creating a new future for all of us." [22]

Financial Integration

Financial integration is also a significant area of cooperation between Türkiye and China. Within the scope of BRI, the goal of financial integration is to reduce the dominance of the US dollar in the international financial system, promote the globalization of local currencies, and support financial transactions in local currencies. In this context, most BRI projects are financed using RMB or the local currencies of partner countries. Through these integration efforts, China aims to expand the global economic system by supporting not only its own economy but also the economic growth of BRI countries.

Türkiye's trend towards shifting from the Washington Consensus to the Beijing Consensus and its desire to establish its own development model presents an opportunity for financial cooperation with China. In this context, Türkiye's goal of establishing a financial center in Istanbul could play a key role in this process. The establishment of the Istanbul Financial Center could enhance Türkiye's role in international financial markets and contribute to the globalization of the e-CNY. Türkiye also views its desire to join BRICS as part of these strategic financial integration goals.

China's efforts to promote regional and global financial integration through financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS New Development Bank could help Türkiye achieve a stronger position within this new global financial structure. This strategy will strengthen Türkiye's role in financial integration and global economic dynamics, while also consolidating its relations with China and providing mutual economic benefits.

Türkiye's recent tendency towards a more independent foreign policy reflects a focus on national interests and multilateral diplomacy. This approach parallels China's Global Security Initiative (GSI), which emphasizes multilateral cooperation and respect for national sovereignty in addressing global security issues. Stronger security cooperation between the two countries could also impact the existing power dynamics in the international system.

The "Asia Anew Initiative" aims to revive Türkiye's historical and cultural ties with Asia and strengthen relations with Asia's rising economic power. This initiative aligns with China's Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), which promotes intercultural dialogue, cultural exchange, and mutual learning.

[22] "Erdoğan: Türkiye, China share a vision for future", *The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications*, https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/cumhurbaskanimizin_kaleminden/detay/erdogan-turkey-china-share-a-vision-for-future-global-times, (Date of Access: 28.08.2024).

The “Asia Anew Initiative”, in collaboration with GCI, could more strongly represent Asia’s cultural richness and diversity on the international stage.

Relations between Türkiye and China have gained significant momentum in line with BRI’s goals of uninterrupted trade and infrastructure connectivity. Türkiye became the first country to launch an export train service from Istanbul to China on December 4, 2020, using the Marmaray and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line. This development has reinforced Türkiye’s strategic position and role within the BRI framework.

The importance of the Middle Corridor collaboration is clearly highlighted by President Erdoğan in his article titled “Two Countries Sharing a Common Vision of the Future”. In the article, Erdoğan describes the Middle Corridor initiative led by Türkiye as the heart of the BRI.

The Middle Corridor is approximately 2,000 km shorter and more favorable in terms of climate conditions compared to the Trans-Siberian Railway. This route offers a faster alternative for transportation from China to Europe, reducing travel time by one-third compared to sea routes. Türkiye’s ports have the capacity to transport goods from Asia to North Africa and Southern Europe via this corridor. In this context, Türkiye’s role in the Caspian region as part of BRI’s future is crucial for the success of the BRI-Middle Corridor integration. Additionally, Türkiye’s strong port infrastructure in cities like İskenderun, Mersin, İzmir, and Bandırma can contribute to the expansion of the BRI. Türkiye aims to enhance its air cargo capacity and establish Istanbul Airport as a global air cargo hub. Furthermore, projects such as the Edirne-Kars high-speed train and other infrastructure developments will increase the efficiency of the Middle Corridor.

Within the framework of the BRI, Türkiye’s logistical capacity and strategic location can significantly contribute to strengthening regional and global trade networks. In this context, Türkiye’s historical and geographical advantages offer potential for deepening cooperation with China and enhancing global economic connections.

The increasing attention of many states towards the provocative actions that promote crises in certain regions and the interventions aimed at disrupting regional peace and stability is not limited to Türkiye or China but has become a broader concern. States troubled by this situation have started to revise their foreign policy perspectives in response to these changes. Türkiye’s approach to these shifts and its recent policies have been directed towards platforms that aim for collective development while respecting diverse national values and cultures. Specifically, the regional tensions created by the US in Türkiye’s neighboring countries, such as Greece and Syria, have compelled Türkiye to adopt a more balanced and multidimensional policy. Both the government and the public have emphasized the importance of anti-imperialist policies and values, leading to increased opportunities for collaboration with various countries, including Russia and China. The desire to include another powerful Asian country, such as China, alongside Russia in recent foreign policy collaborations signals Türkiye’s intention to turn its focus from the West to the East.

From these perspectives, Türkiye's new foreign policy vision closely aligns with the trajectory demonstrated by China and its four global initiatives. The most well-known of these initiatives, BRI will revive the ancient Silk Road, which has historically been one of the most concrete examples of Turkish-Chinese alignment. Regional platforms that both countries are members of will be crucial in shaping bilateral relations within the framework of global security, development, and civilization initiatives.

“Türkiye and China are countries that aim to close the development gap with Western countries by catching up in the 21st century. In other words, achieving the place our countries deserve in the world this century is the ‘Chinese Dream’ for the Chinese and the ‘Turkish Dream’ for us Turks. Just as China has development goals for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China in 2021 and the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China in 2049, Türkiye has its own goals for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Türkiye in 2023 and for 2053. These goals to transform our countries into prosperous societies are another common vision for the future shared by Türkiye and China.”
(President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan)

Overall, Türkiye-China relations do not contain any inherent issues, which creates a more conducive environment for the development of these relations. This suitability is evident not only in bilateral relations but also in the global crisis resolution process. For instance, in the recent Russia-Ukraine crisis, both China and Türkiye, unlike other countries, have made numerous efforts to resolve the crisis through peaceful means without siding with any party. The Grain Corridor Agreement, signed under Türkiye's leadership, has not only led negotiations to address the Russia-Ukraine crisis but also minimized the humanitarian and material damage of the crisis on a global scale. Another recent example of China and Türkiye's similar approach to resolving global crises is the Palestine-Israel conflict. Since the escalation of the crisis on October 7, both countries have proposed various peaceful solutions and plans at different times to the parties involved. On July 23, China facilitated the signing of the Beijing Declaration by bringing together 14 Palestinian groups, including Fatah and Hamas, contributing to the resolution of another crisis and benefiting humanity. Such crises highlight the potential positive contributions of Türkiye-China cooperation to global dynamics and encourage both parties to work together more extensively.

Türkiye's influence, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, is also significant for China in terms of countering potential destabilizing policies by the United States and maintaining regional stability. Specifically, in the context of the Middle East, Türkiye has deep historical and value-based ties with the region, and its extensive experience with countries such as Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—countries of importance to both itself and China—represents a strong collaboration potential for China. China's regional mediation efforts, which have gained momentum with the resolution of the Iran-Saudi Arabia crisis, continue with the processes to address the Palestine-Israel conflict and the Red Sea crisis. In this context, the diplomatic infrastructure possessed by regionally influential countries like Türkiye provides an advantage in these processes.



Therefore, Türkiye-China relations are critically important not only for bilateral ties but also for the future of the Islamic world and the developing nations.

Since 2013, the increasing importance that China and Türkiye have placed on their bilateral relations has been revealing greater potentials over time. The significant alignment of Xi Jinping's four global initiatives with Türkiye's recent foreign policy approach is a major indicator that the bilateral relationship will deepen further in the near future. The overlapping visions of the Türkiye Century, the Turkic World Century, and the Chinese Dream position both countries in a pivotal role in shaping the diplomacy of tomorrow. For these initiatives to be realized and to support the development of equals for humanity, regional security and stability are crucial elements. Therefore, Türkiye-China relations have become critically important not only in terms of economic relations but also in proactive crisis policies for global security, ensuring stability in regions such as the Middle East and Africa, and making the sun rise again from the East. In this context, recent developments in Turkish-Chinese relations are expected to continue strengthening both countries' foreign policies by focusing on multidimensionality, balance, and versatility.

2.4. Türkiye and China's Middle Corridor Cooperation

The BRI, initiated by China in 2013 and aiming to create an uninterrupted trade route from Beijing to London by revitalizing the historical Silk Road, gained the support of Türkiye in the same year. China has started to provide financial and technical support to create the necessary infrastructure in the countries involved in this project. The BRI consists of two main components: the Silk Road Economic Belt, which is based on the road and railway network, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which includes the sea route. Türkiye has chosen to become an integral part of this initiative by supporting the project with the Middle Corridor Initiative. The Middle Corridor starts from Türkiye and extends by rail to Georgia and Azerbaijan, then crosses the Caspian Sea and extends to China via Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, Yavuz Sultan Selim and Osman Gazi bridges, Marmaray and Eurasia tunnels, 1915 Çanakkale Bridge, divided roads, highways, high-speed train lines, logistics bases and communication infrastructures within Türkiye are also important infrastructure investments made within the scope of the Middle Corridor Project. It is located between. [23]

With the BRI, it is planned to build 234 railway centers and the Eurasian Land Bridges connected to these centers and 2,378 ports that will serve approximately 600,000 ships on the Maritime Silk Road route. In this route, it is necessary to develop the infrastructure for the global supply chain and create regional cooperation strategies. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which is located in the middle belt of the railway line connecting Beijing and London and opened on October 30, 2017, and the Marmaray Tube Passage, which opened on October 29, 2013, are the important links of the Project. Thanks to this project, Türkiye will have the opportunity to invest more in China and will contribute to employment and economic growth. [24]

[23] "Kuşak-Yol Projesi Çerçevesinde Türkiye-Çin İlişkileri", AA, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/kusak-yol-projesi-cercevesinde-turkiye-cin-iliskileri/1538112>. (Date of Access: 25.08.2024)

[24] Nur Jale Ece, "Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Projesi'nin Türkiye ve Türk Cumhuriyetleri Açısından Önemi", *Mersin Üniversitesi ve Lojistik Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2023, 5(1) pp. 38-56. <https://doi.org/10.54410/denlojad.1297932>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

Supporting Türkiye's strategic geographical position with infrastructure investments will contribute to the realization of the BRI, allowing it to benefit from the economic opportunities to be obtained from this project at the highest level. It is known that the cities and countries through which trade routes have passed throughout history have achieved both material and cultural gains.

Today, 96% of the 10 million containers sent from China to Europe are transported by sea, and 4% are transported via the Trans-Siberian railway line known as the Northern Corridor. The Central Corridor is 2,000 kilometers shorter than the Northern Corridor, more advantageous in terms of cost and more favorable in terms of climatic conditions. In this way, it will reduce the transportation time by a third compared to sea transportation and ensure that the products reach their destination 15 days earlier. Türkiye continues the Dardanelles Bridge, 3-Storey Tube Passage Project, the construction of Filyos, Çandarlı and Mersin ports, and the Edirne-Kars high-speed train and connected railway projects within the framework of the agreement signed with China in 2015, and the geographical location that has been taught in geography books for a long time but cannot be fully evaluated. It tries to turn its advantage into an opportunity. [25]

Additionally, when Türkiye's foreign trade data is examined, it is seen that trade between Türkiye and Asian countries is insufficient and costly. Once the BRI Project is implemented, Türkiye will be able to reach Western, Central and South Asian markets more easily and supply raw materials at more affordable costs. As a result of efficient work in the fields of logistics, R&D, production and distribution, it is estimated that Türkiye's exports will increase by 15% with the BRI. In addition, it is anticipated that the industry will develop, specialization will increase and market shares will expand in the countries along the project route.

Within the framework of the BRI, China will increase cooperation between Türkiye and the Turkic Republics and other countries along the route in the fields of transportation, energy, trade, culture and tourism and will encourage foreign capital. China aims to further consolidate this cooperation by creating the Northern Corridor with Russia, the Southern Corridor with Iran, and the Central Corridor connecting Türkiye and Central Asia. The Middle Corridor will improve trade relations by including the Türkiye-Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan transit transportation corridor. [26]

[25] Zhangxu Ye, "Kuşak ve Yol Girişim Bağlamında Çin ve Doğu Akdeniz Ülkeleri Arasında İşbirliği: Güncel Durum, Fırsatlar ve Zorluklar", *BRIQ Kuşak ve Yol Girişim Dergisi*, 2023, 4(2), s. 66.

[26] "The World Bank in Türkiye", *World Bank*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024)

2.5. Belt and Road Investments in Türkiye

Türkiye, ranked as the 17th largest economy globally [27], has become an increasingly significant destination for Chinese investment. Due to its strategic location as a gateway to the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa, Türkiye holds a crucial position in BRI particularly in terms of land, sea, and air transportation routes. Several agreements have been established between China and Türkiye under the BRI framework, focusing on the enhancement of railway infrastructure, utilization of ports, and the development of highway connections.

Significant steps between China and Türkiye have resulted in several key agreements, including a memorandum of understanding to “Establish a Joint Working Group for the New Silk Road Connection,” a “Railway Cooperation Agreement,” and a memorandum of understanding on “Transport Infrastructure and Maritime Cooperation.” In 2010, the two nations advanced their relationship by fostering a “Strategic Cooperative Relationship,” reflecting a long-term and constructive vision for their future collaboration. Under the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” initiative, Chinese companies have invested in Turkish ports since 2015. In this regard, Kumport, Çandarlı, and Mersin ports have attracted significant Chinese interest.

From Türkiye’s perspective, the BRI offers significant advantages, including the enhancement of the nation’s domestic transportation and logistics infrastructure. Moreover, it promises to strengthen Türkiye’s external transportation networks, improving their efficiency and, consequently, boosting the country’s export potential.

Türkiye holds a significant position within the Modern Silk Road project, serving as a key player due to its attraction of large-scale investments in infrastructure. Türkiye is situated on the “Middle Corridor” among the corridor projects. The work on this project is currently ongoing, with the goal of completion by 2049. The aspects of the project that concern Türkiye include both international and domestic efforts such as the TRACECA Project, Pan-European Transport Corridors, Trans-European Transport Network, Black Sea Economic Network, Economic Cooperation Organization Network, TEM Project, TER Project, Asian Highway, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Line, and Marmaray Projects.

The Middle Corridor project, officially known as the Trans-Caspian East-West-Middle Corridor Initiative, involves rail and road routes passing through Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea, eventually reaching China via Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Key ports facilitating multimodal transport along this Caspian transit corridor include Baku/Alat in Azerbaijan, Aktau/Kuryk in Kazakhstan, and Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan. In addition to the countries directly along the route, the Middle Corridor initiative also receives support from Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

[27] “Çin’i Anlamak, Çin ile İş Yapmak, Konulu Bir Konferans Düzenledi”, *TÜSİAD*, <https://tusiad.org/tr/basimbultenleri/item/8595-tusiad-cin--anlamak-icin-ile-is-yapmak-konulu-br-konferans-duzenledi>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024)

BRI and the Middle Corridor Initiative (MCI) hold substantial importance for promoting transregional economic collaboration and market integration. These initiatives have the potential to act as driving forces in achieving the objectives outlined within both the BRI and MCI frameworks.

In terms of infrastructure, shared understanding and dedication have led to the completion of several projects, including the Eurasia Tunnel, the Marmaray (the first submarine railway in the world), Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge (the third bridge on the Bosphorus Strait), Istanbul Airport, and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge.

2.5.1. Ports and Maritime Routes: Kumport Container Port

Kumport is Türkiye's third-largest container terminal, situated in the Ambarlı Port Zone along the northwestern Marmara Sea. Positioned on the European side of Istanbul, approximately 35 kilometers from the Bosphorus Strait, it serves as a key access point to the Black Sea region.

As far as the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) project is concerned, in 2015, a consortium of Chinese companies, headed by Cosco Pacific, purchased a 65% stake in Kumport for 940 million dollars.[28] In the years that followed, the port's capacity was further enhanced through additional investments. Today, Kumport is a vital component of Türkiye's logistics infrastructure and plays a significant role in the BRI. It is integrated into a broader network of Chinese port projects across the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, including those in Piraeus, Haifa, and Iskenderun.

2.5.2. Railway Connections

Railway connections and high-speed railway lines are central to many BRI projects. Strengthening cooperation between Türkiye and China in the area of rail connections within the BRI framework is expected to enhance Türkiye's railway infrastructure. By linking ports to the railway network and improving both the quantity and quality of the country's external rail links, this collaboration will likely boost Türkiye's export potential. In 2015, Türkiye and China signed a "Railway Agreement," which came into force in 2017, providing a solid foundation for cooperation in this sector.

- **Edirne-Kars High Speed Railway**

Estimated to cost 30 billion dollars, the Kars-Edirne high-speed railway project aims to link the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line to Europe, thereby enhancing regional connectivity. However, its implementation remains pending, as negotiations between Türkiye and China are still ongoing.

[28] "The Belt and Road Initiative and the Middle Corridor: Complementarity or Competition?", *Insight Turkey*, <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-middle-corridor-complementarity-or-competition>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024)

[29] *Ibid.*

- **Istanbul-Ankara High-Speed Railway Line**

The Istanbul-Ankara high-speed railway, completed in 2014 with 750 million dollars in Chinese funding, has played a pivotal role in testing China's BRI[29] Although initially financed by the European Investment Bank, this railway now forms a key component of Türkiye's Middle Corridor plan, which aims to strengthen west-east connectivity and integration with the Caucasus and Central Asia. The line is 533 km long and high-speed trains run up to 250 km/h. This railway project holds the distinction of being the first high-speed railway initiative undertaken by a Chinese company abroad.[30]

- **Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Line**

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway line, often referred to as the "Iron Silk Road," became operational in October 2017, marking a significant advancement in linking Türkiye, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This railway line is a crucial component of the Middle Corridor, a central route within the broader Silk Road revival project. It stretches 838.6 kilometers, connecting Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye, with 76 kilometers passing through Türkiye, 259 kilometers through Georgia, and 503 kilometers through Azerbaijan. The total cost of the project is estimated at 450 million dollars.

The BTK railway aims to reduce the reliance on Russian railways for cargo transport between China and Europe. By enabling goods to travel from China via Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye, the BTK line significantly shortens the transportation route between Asia and Europe by approximately 7,000 kilometers. This reduction allows for cargo to reach Europe from China in just two weeks, compared to the previous two-month timeframe. The railway line, with an initial capacity of 1 million passengers and 6.5 million tons of cargo per year, is projected to handle 3 million passengers and 17 million tons of cargo by 2034, reducing rail travel between Europe and Asia to just 15 days.

- **Marmaray**

Marmaray is a railway project that links the rail networks on the European and Asian sides of Istanbul through an underwater tunnel beneath the Bosphorus Strait. On November 6, 2019, the China Express Railway, which became the first freight train to travel from China to Europe, completed its journey between Xi'an and the Czech Republic. After departing from China, the route passed through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Upon entering Türkiye, the China Express used the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line. From Kars, it followed the route through Erzurum, Erzincan, Sivas, Kayseri, and Kırıkkale, reaching Ankara. From Ankara, the train continued through Eskişehir and Kocaeli before arriving in Istanbul. In Istanbul, the train utilized the Marmaray line, connecting to the Çerkezköy railway line via Halkalı and eventually reaching Kapıkule, opening the gateway to Europe.[31] The Marmaray line, serving as a transit corridor, is recognized as the first stage of the railway connection from Türkiye to Europe.

[30] Ömer Özkan, ve İsmail Cem Ay. "Marmaray Hattı'nın Bir Kuşak Bir Yol Kapsamında Değerlendirilmesi", *Anadolu Bil Meslek Yüksekokulu Dergisi*, 2020, 15(60), pp. 353-362.

[31] "Economic Relations Between Turkey And China", *TÜSİAD*, <https://l24.im/yhHTz>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024)

The Marmaray line has emerged as a crucial “export tunnel” within the BRI, prompting increased investment in rail freight transportation between Asia and Europe. In the absence of the Marmaray line, cargo arriving on Istanbul’s Asian side via rail would have required transfer to the European side by sea or road. The direct rail connection now allows for uninterrupted transportation of goods from Asia to Europe, reducing both additional transportation costs and delays. Consequently, the Marmaray line, which facilitates cost-efficient rail logistics, strengthens Türkiye’s competitive edge by offering a pricing advantage over air, sea, and road transport.

2.5.3. Road Connections

In 2017, Türkiye and China concluded the “Treaty on International Freight and Passenger Transport by Road” to advance road transport cooperation between the two nations.[32] Türkiye ratified the agreement in 2021. In scope of the agreement, The Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the People’s Republic of China have agreed to enhance road freight and passenger transportation between their countries, as well as transit transportation to and from third countries through their territories, with the aim of contributing to the development of commercial and economic relations between the two nations.

3. New Opportunities in Türkiye-China Relations

As one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China is one of the five countries that are influential in critical issues of the global system. This status of China may constitute an important opportunity and area of cooperation for Türkiye-China relations. Thanks to its location close to two critical regions of China’s strategic interest, the Middle East and Europe, Türkiye has the potential to further expand and deepen its relations with China. Türkiye and the People’s Republic of China, within the framework of the BRI; It has the potential to progress towards increasing cooperation with multilateral institutions and organizations, especially in transportation, energy, trade, culture and tourism.[33]

Although Türkiye and China’s economic development models are different, both countries aim to expand their economic influence first in their own regions and then on a global scale. China is implementing a new economic development strategy in this direction. These two countries, which have different population, geographical location, political structure and socio-cultural structures, can meet on the basis of cooperation based on economic development. In this context, new institutional arrangements should be made on the basis of existing economic relations. The most important of these regulations should be to reduce the trade deficit, increase direct foreign investments and carry out research and development activities based on high technology products.[34]

Türkiye, a strategic center on the historical Silk Road, can experience a more effective integration process and benefit from the opportunities offered by combining its own development strategies with the BRI initiated by China. Within the scope of the BRI, the potentials that Türkiye can benefit from include inter-country policy coordination, development of infrastructure connections, barrier-free trade, financial integration and increasing human interactions.

[32] Sefa Çatal, “Kuşak ve Yol İnisyatifi’nin Türkiye’nin Ekonomi Güvenliğine Etkileri” *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 19, 2019, pp. 101-124.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

Türkiye plays a key role in minimizing social and cultural differences in the wide geography covered by the project. While Türkiye is in an active position in the Balkans and the European Union hinterland in terms of European Union membership negotiations and NATO membership, it constitutes a social and cultural intersection point for the project, considering its socio-cultural influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Considering Türkiye's trade rates with the Asian continent, this project has an important place in terms of increasing the trade volume with the region. Thanks to the project, infrastructure and connection networks in the fields of energy, transportation, communication and trade will play a role in promoting trade in the center of Asia by bringing the continents together.[35]

In the field of transportation, Türkiye aims to increase the total railway network to 29,940 km by creating 10,000 km of High Speed Train lines and 4,000 km of conventional lines in 2023, and to increase the total railway network to 28,376 km by creating 11,840 km of High Speed Train and 4,480 km of conventional lines by 2035. aims. The targeted highway length for 2023 is 8,000 km. Additionally, Türkiye aims to include at least one of its ports among the ten largest ports in the world.[36]

Edirne-Kars high-speed train line, which constitutes an important leg of Türkiye's 10,000 km High Speed Train line project, will depart from China and use Marmaray to pass to Europe. The first freight train, China Railway Express, entered Türkiye via Kars. The train reached Ankara on November 6, 2019.[37]

In line with Türkiye's 2023 goal of having a port become one of the ten largest ports in the world, cooperation can be made with the People's Republic of China, which aims to revitalize the Silk Road from the sea. Çandarlı Port, planned to be built in the North Aegean Sea, has a significant potential towards this goal. If Çandarlı Port, which requires large investments, is included in the scope of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the necessary financing can be provided by the People's Republic of China.

Türkiye, which has a high dependence on foreign energy in the field of energy, has become the country where energy demand has increased most rapidly in the last 15 years among the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Only approximately 26% of the country's total energy demand can be met from domestic resources. Since 2002, Türkiye has been the second largest economy with the highest increase in electricity and natural gas demand, after China. In order to reduce foreign dependency in the field of energy, a multi-dimensional energy policy should be followed, resource diversity should be ensured and the share of renewable energy sources in energy supply should be increased. In order to provide resource diversity, Türkiye aims to benefit from nuclear energy and considers the People's Republic of China as a potential partner in this context. A cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries in 2016 on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and in this context, it was announced that a partnership would be made with China for the third nuclear power plant planned to be built in Thrace. There are opportunities for cooperation with China in renewable energy fields such as solar and wind energy. China, which holds global leadership with its investments in the renewable energy sector, is making major energy investments abroad through strategically supported companies within the scope of the BRI.[38]

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] "Tarihi Tren, Çin'den Yola Çıktı, Türkiye'ye Ulaştı", *Utikad*, <https://www.utikad.org.tr/Detay/Sektor-Haberleri/26598/tarihi-tren-cin-den-yola-cikti-turkiye-ye-ulasti>, (Date of Access: 28.08.2024).

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] "Turkey and China Seek Rapprochement, Though It Will Be Limited in Scope", *Stimson*, <https://www.stimson.org/2024/turkey-and-china-seek-rapprochement-though-it-will-be-limited-in-scope>, (Date of Access: 17.09.2024).

Key Developments

- **Anadolu Agency's 100th Anniversary Report (2023):** In an interview with Anadolu Agency, Chinese Ambassador Liu Shaobin highlighted the deep historical ties between Türkiye and China, emphasizing that the relationship spans over two millennia. He noted that since 2010, cooperation between the two countries has expanded significantly across politics, economics, culture, technology, education, and security.
- **Positive Roles in Global Peace and Stability:** Ambassador Liu emphasized that Türkiye and China, as nations with significant global influence, can play positive roles in promoting international and regional peace, stability, development, and prosperity. He stressed that mutual respect and support have created a strong political foundation for their relationship.
- **Leaders' Guidance Enhances Bilateral Relations:** Ambassador Liu acknowledged that under the guidance of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye-China relations have deepened, with high-level political contacts becoming more frequent. He mentioned the recent face-to-face meeting between Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on July 26, 2023, as a significant development.
- **Support for Sovereignty and Independence:** Liu stated that both Türkiye and China are committed to supporting each other in safeguarding their sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, in line with their respective national circumstances. He highlighted that China is Türkiye's largest trading partner in Asia and the third largest globally.
- **China's Economic Presence in Türkiye:** With over 1,000 Chinese companies operating in Türkiye, Liu emphasized that numerous projects are successfully underway in Türkiye through the alignment of China's Belt and Road Initiative with Türkiye's Middle Corridor Project.
- **Message to the Turkish People:** On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye, Ambassador Liu conveyed warm congratulations from the Chinese people, recognizing the Turkish nation's unwavering commitment to independence and its success in finding a development path suited to its national conditions.
- **Shared Aspirations for the Future:** Liu expressed optimism about the future, wishing Türkiye continued prosperity and happiness for its people. He also noted the importance of further strengthening Türkiye-China cooperation to benefit both nations, stressing that both countries are on a journey to achieve their "great dreams" and will continue to support each other in this process.

In June 2024, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan paid a visit to China to discuss bilateral relations with China and met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. This visit reflects a strong Turkish desire to improve traditionally frosty relations between Ankara and Beijing. During Fidan's visit, Beijing expressed its desire to increase its investments in Türkiye. In 2022, China's direct foreign investment in Türkiye was 1.7 billion dollars; Although this was a significant increase compared to the past, it was still well below investments from Europe. Türkiye needs foreign investment to cope with economic challenges such as the historic depreciation of the lira.[39]

On July 8, BYD, China's largest electric vehicle manufacturer, announced that it will invest \$1 billion to establish a new factory in Türkiye with an annual production capacity of 150,000 electric and hybrid vehicles. The factory is planned to open in the Manisa province of Western Türkiye in 2026 and employ 5,000 workers. This announcement comes as both the United States and the European Union are increasing barriers to imports of Chinese electric vehicles. In May, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar visited Beijing to discuss nuclear and renewable energy, mining and minerals. The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding on energy cooperation. This agreement is of great importance, especially at a time when Türkiye wants China to take a role in the construction of its third nuclear power plant.[40]

Türkiye-China relations followed a positive course after the two countries reached Strategic Cooperative Relationship Agreement in 2010. Ankara quickly joined Beijing's expanding BRI in 2015. These steps were taken in parallel with a change in foreign policy towards Eurasia after Türkiye rejected its application for membership of the European Union. In this context, Ankara has sought alternative financial sources. Since 2016, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, managed by Beijing, has provided approximately 4.3 billion dollars of loans to Türkiye, and Türkiye is the third largest recipient of these loans. However, differences remain due to a large trade deficit between the two countries. China is Türkiye's third largest trade partner, but while Ankara imported \$45 billion from China in 2023, China's imports from Türkiye remained at only \$3.3 billion. Türkiye's commercial ties with the West are much more important.[41]

Additionally, immediately after Fidan's visit to China, Türkiye imposed a 40% customs duty on cheap electric vehicles of Chinese origin in order to protect domestic automobile manufacturers. Beijing criticized this decision and demanded that the tariffs be removed immediately, and this highlights the challenges facing both sides in strengthening cooperation.

Türkiye is seeking closer cooperation with China not only in order to attract Chinese investments, but also because of an expanding trade route called the Central Corridor, which stretches from the Black Sea and Türkiye's eastern provinces to Central Asia via the South Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. This corridor has the potential to attract 20% of the total containerized land trade between China and the EU. China's recent initiatives to build a major deep-sea port in Georgia and accelerate work on the China-Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan railway line reflect Beijing's growing interest in the Black Sea region. In this context, it is thought that Türkiye's cooperation with Beijing could be beneficial for both parties.[42]

[39] "Turkish-Chinese ties contribute to global peace, prosperity: Turkish foreign minister", AA, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkish-chinese-ties-contribute-to-global-peace-prosperity-turkish-foreign-minister/323943>, (Date of Access: 17.09.2024).

[40] *Stimson, Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Building Comprehensive, High-Level China-Türkiye Ties In Fundamental Interests Of Both Countries: Wang Yi, *Global Times*, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202406/1313639.shtml>, (Date of Access: 25.08.2024).

For Türkiye, close relations with China paves the way for greater interaction with the region at a time when Beijing's influence is increasing in Central Asia. China is also actively investing in Iraq, and close relations with China for Ankara's vision of a Trade Route to the Persian Gulf could increase the chances of this project. This project serves Türkiye's goals of becoming a transit center in Eurasia. The developing rapprochement between Türkiye and China also reflects Ankara's desire for a general shift towards Asia. Since at least 2016, Türkiye has sought stronger cooperation with BRICS+ and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, both of which China plays a central role. Ankara has indicated that it may apply for official membership in both groups. Türkiye and China also have similar views on the Gaza War; both countries have criticized the Israeli government and US support for Tel Aviv.[43]

Signaling closer ties with Beijing could also serve Ankara's goals of gaining more room to maneuver with Washington. Similar to the foreign policy maneuvers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye is not seeking a major rupture in relations with the United States, a key NATO ally, but aims to raise its profile as an important middle power capable of acting independently and mediating conflict. Indeed, this approach is based on the idea of a multilateral foreign policy and is seen in the behavior of other regional countries long before Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7. Ankara believes in the rise of a multipolar world in which China is a power center and Türkiye is a key middle power. Improving relations with China could help Türkiye further increase its influence in the Black Sea. Türkiye can share its experiences as a mediator between China and Russia and Ukraine.[44] But ultimately, Türkiye's room for maneuver in foreign policy is limited. Over-dependence on China could jeopardize already strained relations with the US and EU; because these countries continue to be Türkiye's largest trade and investment partners. China could provide a valuable cash flow to Türkiye's troubled economy, but further fueling competition between the EU and China or the US and China could have negative consequences for Ankara.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The development of R&D activities between Türkiye and China can be enhanced, and the participation of relevant institutions or organizations, especially from the private sector, can be ensured in this context.
- Steps can be taken to strengthen political and economic cooperation between Türkiye and China in the prevention and resolution of international and regional crises through platforms such as the SCO, BRICS, etc.
- Constructive cooperation and dialogue between the two countries can be accelerated in terms of implementing the BRI and the Middle Corridor projects.
- It can be suggested to continue the search for joint cooperation in the context of the implementation of projects such as the Development Road and similar corridors.
- A “Joint History, Culture, and Language Research Workshop-Institute” could be established between the two countries. The aim here is to explore the commonalities in Turkish and Chinese culture and language, to transform the findings into joint academic works, and to publish them. The goal is to improve bilateral relations by establishing connections between the academic communities of the two countries.
- A workshop or conference on “The Contributions of the BRI to the Turkish World and Türkiye” can be organized. Experts and academics from the Central Asian Turkic republics, as well as from Türkiye and China, can be invited to this event.
- To strengthen the educational cooperation between Türkiye and China, it could be suggested to implement student and academic exchanges, establish a joint digital library, publish international peer-reviewed journals, and create a new analysis-news platform that publishes in Chinese and Turkish.
- A platform called “Türkiye-China Global Development and Cooperation Community” can be established to emphasize the joint support of both countries for world peace and development. In this context, it can be emphasized that both countries support peaceful plans.
- A conference themed “Building Collective Security in Western-Türkiye-China Cooperation” can be organized. Experts from both the West and from Russia and China can be invited to this event.
- An online event themed “The Rise of the Asian Century” could be organized, featuring presentations by academics from Türkiye, China, and other Asian countries.

- The Chinese government has released four strategic "White Papers" to date: (1) BRI: A Cornerstone for Global Shared Future" (October 10, 2023), (2) Community of Shared Future for Mankind: China's Proposals and Actions" (September 26, 2023), (3) "China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era" (January 10, 2021), (4) "China and the New Era of the World" (September 27, 2019). These documents could be utilized to support the promotion of the BRI in Türkiye. In this context, a joint report could be prepared incorporating the principles outlined in China's White Papers. This report could then be presented to the governments of both countries.
- A project themed "Digitalization and Economic Development in the Middle Corridor" could be proposed. The aim here is to support the export of technological products that will promote digitalization and economic development in China, Central Asia, and the Caspian, Caucasus, and Türkiye.

CONCLUSION

Since 1971, Türkiye-China relations have always played a critical role in managing the ongoing rivalry, geopolitical axes, regional and global competition in the international arena. During the Cold War, Türkiye was seen by the West as a balancing factor against the Soviet Union. Likewise, the West supported the development of relations with China and its opening to the world in the face of the Soviets.

In the post-1990 “so-called” unipolar new world order, Türkiye and China's interests and attitudes have continued to be compatible. Some of these compatible interests and policies are that both countries strictly adhere to the principle of non-interference in the sovereignty, territorial integrity and internal affairs of other states, envision and strive for a peaceful world and contribute to the resolution of existing world conflicts.

In the context of the construction of a multipolar world at the beginning of the 21st century, Türkiye and China's highly harmonized global political stances have been the most important factor that pushed them to establish a “Strategic Cooperative Relationship”. In 2013, China's announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative, with the idea of revitalizing the Historic Silk Road, was one of the main factors that accelerated Türkiye-China relations. The Anatolian geography is considered to be the most important transit route of the Ancient Silk Road. Today, Türkiye plays a similar strategic role in China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Having participated in the 1st Belt and Road Forum in 2017 at the leader level, Türkiye's lower level of participation in the forums in 2019 and 2023 is undoubtedly closely related to the increasing pressure on China in the global system. It is time for Türkiye and China to open a new chapter in bilateral relations to break these pressures. The West's ongoing bloc politics and the domino effect of crises in different continents of the world are the most important geopolitical challenges that necessitate cooperation between the two states. Based on this awareness, especially in 2024, there have been very important developments in bilateral relations at the diplomatic level.

In June 2024, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan visited China and met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During the meeting, the Chinese side expressed its willingness to continue maintaining multi-level relations with Türkiye, play an active role in mechanisms such as the China-Türkiye Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee, effectively connect the Belt and Road Initiative with Türkiye's Middle Corridor Initiative, expand areas of cooperation, and explore cooperation potential. China also indicated its intention to increase the import of high-quality agricultural products from Türkiye, continuously improve the level of business cooperation and technological content between the two countries, and strengthen collaboration in areas such as culture, education, tourism, and aviation.

Wang emphasized that both sides should strengthen coordination and cooperation within the United Nations and other multilateral frameworks, support the United Nations to play a central role in the global governance system, oppose hegemony and power politics, oppose the monopolization of international affairs by a few countries, oppose efforts to build walls and barriers, “rupture” and “cut supply chains”, aim to ensure the stable operation of the global supply chain and industrial chain, and promote the establishment of a fair and reasonable global governance system. Mr. Fidan noted that Türkiye and China have a significant influence in their respective regions and on a global scale. The Turkish government attaches great importance to its relations with China, adheres to the one-China principle and supports China's efforts to protect its core interests and major concerns.

Mr. Fidan stated that China's development is vital for world peace and prosperity, Türkiye is against inter-bloc conflicts, does not support wrongful actions that hinder China's development, and does not allow activities that harm China's sovereignty and security to be carried out on Turkish territory.

The Middle Corridor Initiative is highly compatible with the Belt and Road Initiative and Türkiye has expressed its willingness to cooperate closely with China in trade, investment, finance, agriculture, tourism, education and other areas to achieve more tangible results.

As both emerging market powers and G20 members, Türkiye and China have broad common interests in promoting international justice and equity. Türkiye appreciates China's fair and balanced stance on issues related to Ukraine and the Middle East and looks forward to working constructively with China to further contribute to the prosperity and stability of the region and the world.

As a result, Türkiye is one of China's strategic partners in building a multipolar world, sharing a common vision of the future and supporting China's four global initiatives, particularly the security principle. Both countries need to act together to prevent existing and potential crises in their immediate neighborhood from moving towards them in a domino effect. In the face of the new geopolitical risks in the world and the West's bloc-pressure policies, Türkiye and China will demonstrate a common stance and the power to resist together, as they have done before.

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Crises around the world and ever-increasing geopolitical risks make cooperation between Türkiye and China inevitable in the economic sphere, especially in transport corridors. The two peaceful actors, Türkiye and China, who advocate multilateralism, will help to develop their connections with the world and cooperate on a win-win basis, as well as boost their positions in the global system.

The current global geopolitical conditions enable Türkiye to enhance its co-operation with China, on Belt and Road projects. Indeed, these global challenges make Türkiye a “main link” or “strategic hub” in China’s connection to Europe. In this context, the Middle Corridor stands at the forefront as a sustainable option.

This period can be seen as an opportunity for improving transportation and telecommunications infrastructure in Türkiye and other economic investments under China’s BRI. These co-operations with China are also highly consistent with Türkiye’s Asia Anew Initiative.

Geopolitical risks in the world are rapidly increasing. In this context, security problems, crises, geopolitical risks and other major developments in Europe, Africa, Asia and the seas can affect different continents of the world as a domino effect. In such a conflicting global context, it is of paramount importance for decision-makers to address, reassess, identify, foresee and make recommendations for the land and sea corridors of Belt and Road projects in 2024.