

# On the Misperceptions between the Peoples of Turkey and China

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**Abstract:** *Nations' misperception causes misinterpretations of reciprocal demands, actions; the other side's expectations, inadequacies and priorities; and may form biases. But scholars, especially those studying international relations, generally attach utmost importance to the bilateral relations of politics, economy, culture and military. Foreign policy analysts and makers often disregard the impact of public opinion. This article tries to analyze the impact of the perceptions between Turkish and Chinese peoples to the relations of both countries. In case of this the main question of this presentation is whether the public's attitude became a major hinder and heavily influenced the decision-makers or not on the basis of Turkish-Chinese relations. Diplomatic relations between Turkey and China in political and economic field have improved significantly in recent years. But the degree of favorability to people to people exchange is extremely low because of the influential factors, which are mostly stemmed from the issue of 'Eastern Turkistan', the thoughts of the past, the trade imbalance and the media's negative and adverse approach to the issues. In order to solve the low favorability problem, both sides not only should depend on exchange and dialogue institutionally, but also rely on social and cultural interactions*

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*informally to enhance the mutual understanding accordingly.*

**Key Words:** *Turkey-China Relations; Perception; Public Opinion; Foreign Policy; China and the Middle East*

## **I. Introduction**

Perception, in a socio-cultural context, is the process of interpreting and understanding the world. A person assesses everything based on his/her previous knowledge and experiences from the point of social and cultural structures in which he/she was born and raised, and with the ethos (system of values and beliefs). During this assessment, not only the process of prejudice takes place (Ertürk, Y., 2010: 226-227), but also empathy and effective communication may emerge. In terms of interpersonal relations, misperception may cause wrong attitudes and behaviors.

In terms of intercultural relations, perception is also the process of a culture's interpretation of the other culture's structures, attitudes, actions/reactions, etc. depending on whether the historical and previous experiences/liaisons with each other were positive or negative. This is called transformation. The cultures' expectations and demands from each other are as important as the information gained during transformation (İnceoğlu, M., 2004: 92-93).

In terms of intercultural relations, a nation's perception of the other can be perceived from the national narratives, artworks, news, sayings etc. referring to the other. Biases and sympathy for each other is formed and reproduced by these interpretations.

Cultural, economic, political and educational cooperation between the two nations partly indicate the nations' perceptions of each other. Misperceiving the other's military capabilities, motives, domestic politics, public opinion, decision makers' situation and power balance does not necessarily lead to a conflict or a limitation of

relations; but it may create a negative and sometimes even a different environment and circumstances (Jervis, J., 1988: 675-678; Stein, A., 1982: 505-526).

Nations' misperception causes misinterpretation of reciprocal demands, actions; the other side's expectations, inadequacies and priorities and may form biases. But, the scholars, especially those studying international relations, generally attach utmost importance to the bilateral relations of politics, economy, culture and military. The publications mostly do not give any attention to how the people of the two countries perceive each other.

Foreign policy analysts and makers often disregard the impact of public opinion. But we know that decision-makers need public support. National decisions need to be taken by an accurate reading of what the public wants. In fact, policymakers' assumptions about what citizens think often notify, force, or enable foreign policy choices (Council on Foreign Relations).

In addition to these, we often emphasize that, after the cold war, the non-governmental organizations and individuals become very important actors in decision-making processes. These arguments have many examples, such as Chinese-Japanese and Turkish-Greek relations. They are exactly the case. But the main question of this presentation is whether the public's attitude became a major hindrance and heavily influenced the decision-makers on the basis of Turkish-Chinese relations.

## **II. A Glance at Turkish Foreign Policy to China**

The establishment of a relationship between Turks and Chinese dated back to the 6th century B.C., but the relationship after the fall of empires is not very far away. In Turkey, The Hadith, read as "seek knowledge, even if you have to go to China", is very popular. But this

hadith shows not only the importance of science but also how China is far away from Turkey. This idea affects Turkey's policies to China directly. Within this context, the first conclusion I reached after seeing the most of the region is that Turkey had hardly developed policies towards Asia. I don't deny the fact that Soviets had become a barrier on the way of Turkey's wish to develop policy towards the region.<sup>①</sup>

The second conclusion I reached is that there are similarities between China and Turkey and the Chinese and Turkish history have constantly overlapped. Especially similarities between the events which took place in both countries in the 19th century amazed me.

As well as similarities of family life and dynasty restructuring, there were many similarities between the Ottoman and Chinese empires such as the idea of feudalism in both countries -which was different from the Western feudalism- the policies pursued in the enlightenment period, same attitude towards foreigners, capitulations included the same concessions, revolts raising due to a combination of the same problems, financial systems falling into the hands of foreigners and the agreements in that period.<sup>②</sup>

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<sup>①</sup> For more information see also; Kamuran Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri (1920-1953) (Turkey-Soviet Relations 1920-1953)*, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2010; Cemil Hasanlı, *Tarafsızlıktan Soğuk Savaşa Doğru Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri (1939-1953), (Turk-Soviet Relations, from impartiality to Cold War 1939-1945)*, İstanbul: Bilgi Publishing, 2011; Nicholas Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey and the Soviet Union, 1940-45: Strategy, Diplomacy and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009; Robert M. Cutler, "[Russian Imperial and] Soviet Relations with Greece and Turkey: A [Comparative International] Systems Perspective," in Dimitri Conostas, ed., *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s*, London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 183-206.

<sup>②</sup> For more information on Ottoman Empire history see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008; Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 1, Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; Stanford J. Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

China appears to be an important actor for Turkey as a permanent member of the United Nations. What is more, the dynamism of the Asian market affects Turkey's approach to China which would be beneficial for Turkish foreign policy objectives. Today, Turkey is one of the key strategic players of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia while China is a rising power with a view of becoming a global player in the new century. So Turkey and China, as the emerging powers need to enhance the level of their mutual understanding and trust. Hence, in recent years, the barriers in the Turkish-Chinese relations are slowly tearing down. The relations between the governments are continuously improving.

### **III. Turkey-China Diplomatic and Economic Relations in Recent Years**

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and China have improved significantly in recent years both in the political and economic field. Turkey and China signed seven bilateral documents on cooperation in foreign affairs, energy, cultural heritage, mass media and trade finance during the visit of Turkish President Abdullah Gül to China in 2009 (Zhang, X., 2009: June 25; Xinhua News, 2009: June 26). Turkey and China signed *Joint Declaration on the Establishment and Development of the Strategic Relationship of Cooperation* during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to Turkey in 2010 (*People's Daily*, 2010: October 9). This was the first strategic cooperation agreement that China signed with any country in the West Asia and North Africa.

Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Yang Jiechi visited Turkey in January 2010 and his Turkish counterpart Minister Davutoğlu also paid a visit to China in late 2010. The visit of the then Chinese Vice President (Now President) Xi Jinping and the visit of Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2012 increased the bilateral relations. Xi was

accompanied by the representatives of almost 100 Chinese companies during his visit to Istanbul (Gbtimes, 2012: February 20). Çolakoğlu emphasized that these visits are a clear indication of a historical turning point in the bilateral relations and can be interpreted as a sign of striking developments in the Turkish-Chinese relations in the near future (Çolakoğlu, S., 2012: April 17).

As a result of all these visits, Turkey-China relations have taken on a new dimension. It is seen that these initiatives eliminate the loss of trust between the governments. Turkey's accession to Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a dialog partner is the best example of this situation.

The economic and commercial relations have developed in tandem with the political process. China was Turkey's 16th largest export partner in 2011 and 1st export destination among Asia-Pacific countries. Turkey's exports to China were \$ 2.4 billion in 2011 with an increase of 9% (\$2.2 billion) from 2010. China ranked as Turkey's 3rd largest import partner in 2011. Turkey's imports from China realized as \$21.7 billion in 2011, with an increase of 40% (\$17.1 billion) compared to 2010. Total trade volume between Turkey and China amounted to \$24.1 billion in 2011. Turkey had a trade deficit of \$19.2 billion in 2011 (Ministry of Economic of Turkey). And the investment cooperation improves as well. China's contribution in various infrastructure projects in Turkey is increasing day by day. Moreover, Turkish companies undertake joint projects with Chinese companies in the third world countries. Foreign direct investment stock of China in Turkey amounts to \$50 million, Turkish foreign direct investment stock in China amounts to \$7 million in 2002-2011 (Ministry of Economic of Turkey).

Furthermore, the military relations of two countries have been improving in recent years.<sup>①</sup>The official relations between the two

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<sup>①</sup> For more information on Turkish-Chinese military relations, see Eyüp Ersoy,

countries continuously accelerate. However, we cannot say the same thing for the people-to-people relationship.

#### **IV. People-to-People Relationship**

On public opinion issues, the favorable degree (or favorability) is an important indicator to gauge bilateral people-to-people perceptions. It is also an important way to testify bilateral strategic cooperation, social communication, media promotion and psychological identity of the people from different countries. What are the Chinese's perceptions about Turkey?

The author emphasizes that this section is based largely on the study of my friend Professor Liu. He cooperated with huanqiu.com to conduct the relevant online survey. The survey was carried out from December 2011 to March 2012 and Chinese people's knowledge of and favorability to Turkey were included.

The survey showed those Chinese citizens put forward two aspects: "the camps of East Turkistan Islamic Movement" (12.2%) and "the inheritor of the empire" (11.3%).

**Table I: View of Chinese Citizens on Turkey<sup>①</sup>**

Key Words	%	Key Words	%
"East Turkistan Islamic Movement" Issue	12.2%	Separation of Religion from Politics	1.7%
Ottoman Empire	11.3%	Troy	1.7%
Between Asia and Europe	9.6%	Ankara	1.6%
Istanbul	9.0%	Kemal	1.4%
Pro-America	6.9%	Weight Lifting	1.4%

*Turkish-Chinese Military Relations Spinning More Moving Less*, Ankara: Publication of International Strategic Research Organization, 2008.

<sup>①</sup> <http://survey.huanqiu.com/result.php?s=SFFzdXJ2ZXIlfNDI5NQ@`5^1@@`5^1@>

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The Turks	6.8%	Football	1.3%
NATO Member	6.4%	Dirty and Messy	1.1%
Minority Issue	6.0%	Beautiful Girl	1.0%
Muslim	4.6%	Spice	0.9%
Silk Road	3.6%	Dance	0.9%
The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Strait	3.3%	Ankara Sheep	0.7%
The Byzantine	3.2%	Spy	0.4%
Developing Country	1.9%	Handsome Boy	0.2%

The problem of Xinjiang dominated the knowledge of Chinese people about Turkey. The key words, Pro-America, NATO Member, Muslim etc. show the Chinese people's perception, which reflects dissimilarity of two countries. On the other hand, it may be asserted that Chinese people have correct information about Turkey, its history, location and characteristics. In sum, in the eyes of Chinese people, Turkey and China are two countries that lack common sense.

Huanqiu.com conducted the survey on Chinese favorability on March 19-20, 2012. There are altogether 2357 respondents that wrote down their degree of favorability to Turkey.

**Table II: Chinese Favorability to Turkish People<sup>①</sup>**

Degree of favorability	Percentage
Very favorable	3.1%
Somewhat favorable	14.6%
Somewhat unfavorable	45.5%
Very unfavorable	22.0%
Do not know	14.8%

<sup>①</sup> <http://survey.huanqiu.com/result.php?s=SFFzdXJ2ZXIlfNDI5NQ@`5^1@@`5^1@>.

From Table II, we can find that the “Somewhat Unfavorable” occupied the highest rank which accounted for 45.5%, and the second is “Very Unfavorable” which accounted for 22%. In sum, the Chinese degree of unfavorability to Turkey occupied 67.5%. Concerning the causes of Chinese unfavorability to Turkey, Professor Liu categorized them and conducted relevant survey. The outcome is the following:

**Table III: The Reasons for Chinese Unfavourability to Turkey<sup>①</sup>**

No	Reasons	Percentage
1	Turkish government and non-governmental circles are always supporting the separation forces of Xinjiang in the bright or dark	29.2%
2	Not good history memory: Turkey once infiltrated Pan-Turkism into Xinjiang, China; China and Turkey joined different camps in the Cold War and fought with each other in the Korean War; China considered Turkey as the accomplice of US imperialism.	26.0%
3	Turkish media are deeply influenced by western media and gives very unfavorable comments on China for many matters.	22.3%
4	Turkey often launched economic attacks on China by virtue of trade imbalance.	7.9%
5	Turkey is remote to China geographically and China does not have full knowledge or definite impressions on Turkey.	6.2%
6	There are differences in social systems and values between two countries.	4.6%
7	The others	3.9%

<sup>①</sup> <http://survey.huanqiu.com/result.php?s=SFFzdXJ2ZXIlfNDI5NQ@`5^1@@`5^1@>.

The main source of negativity comes from the so-called “East Turkistan” issue. The others are connected with this issue. And also, historical distrusts come to the fore. Moreover, the Chinese accused the Turkish media of being influenced by western media. It is a correct deduction that Chinese people are deeply concerned about Turkey-Chinese relations.

What are the Turkish’s perceptions of China? The Turkish people only get the initial impressions about China from the newspapers, Internet and TV. I have been studying on China and followed Turkish media since 1999. Approximately 90% of news is about the economic growing of China and how it affects Turkey.

Learning Chinese is limited in Turkey. The books on China are very few. It is almost impossible to find reports written by Chinese in Turkish. When I started to prepare my master’s degree thesis on China in 1999, I realized that Turkish literature on China on my subject consisted of only two economic reports and nine or ten books. And three of those books had been published before 1980.

So the Turkish’s perception of China depends on western reports, books, etc. For this reason, we have so few researches on Turkish perceptions of China. Therefore, the images of China are not complete in Turkey. I have not any documents, reports or papers reflecting the Turkish perception to China. But I really insist that the main unfavorability of Turkish people towards China derives from the Xinjiang issue.

Due to the shortage of relevant surveys on Turkish perceptions towards China, I cited the survey data of an American company, Pew. According to Pew Research Center, the Turkish reflection towards China is worse than the Indian reflection. Turkey is the worst favorable country to China in the G-20 block. But, on the other hand, the Turkish reflection to US and EU is worse than that to China.<sup>①</sup> So,

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<sup>①</sup> <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=1&country=224>.

according to this data, I can assert that China is the most favorable country in the reflection of Turkish people in comparison with US, EU and Russia.

**Table IV: Turkish favourability to the World Powers**

Turkish Favorability to ..... (%)				
Country	PRC	USA	Russia	EU
Year				
2005	40	23		
2006	33	12		
2007	25	9	27	17
2008	24	12		
2009	16	14	22	13
2010	20	17	28	16
2011	18	10	23	18
2012	22	15	21	16

If we compare these results with the data of Chinese citizens' views on Turkey, we can state that NATO membership, US alliance or possibility to become a European Union member does not have any importance in the reflection of Turkish people.

## **V. Arguments against the Reasons for Chinese Unfavorability to Turkey**

In this section, I try to produce arguments against the reasons for Chinese unfavorability to Turkey, especially three of which have 77.5% of all in Table III.

The Chinese people's first choice why they are unfavorable to Turkey is "Turkish government and non-governmental circles that are always supporting the separation forces of Xinjiang in the bright or

dark”.

Territorial integrity is one of the core interests and concerns of a country. National division is the greatest pain for all countries in the world. Turkey gives these arguments the highest priority. It is almost impossible for Turkey to conduct foreign policies, which plan to divide a country because of its main problem. Also, there has been no single example of such foreign policy in Turkish history. Besides, Turkey recognized China officially in 1971 and accepted one China policy and unity of China. After this date, all the Turkish government officials who visited China stressed that Turkey welcomed one China policy and unity of China.

“Not good history memory: Turkey once infiltrated Pan-Turkism into Xin Jiang, China; China and Turkey joined different camps in the cold war and fought with each other in the Korean War; China considered the Turkey as the accomplice of US imperialism”.

I have come across some speeches of Chinese scholars, military officials or bureaucrats, which accused Turkey of following “Pan Turkism” policies. Maybe, our Chinese friends need to research and study what the Turkish governments have thought on “Pan-Turkism” since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Pan Islamic policies followed by Sultan Abdulhamid II 50 years before the establishment of modern Turkey raised doubts over the new government. Sultan Abdulhamid II thought that his predecessors were wrong about their policies on getting close to European Christian states and the basis of doubts to new Turkey was the fact that the thought of Sultan Abdulhamid II was characterized with the war against Western imperialists during the Salvation War. However, it would not be correct to accept that Sultan Abdulhamid II referred the Muslim Association to the war against Christianity.<sup>①</sup> Likewise, the

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<sup>①</sup> For more information on Islamism trend see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı (Islamism Trend)*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Publishing, 2003.

friendly relations with Germany removed this possibility. His idea of being the religious leader of all Muslims who were living under the rule of Christians (80%) could be explained as a desire to present himself to the West (Hülagü, M., 1993: 184-197). At this point, it can be asserted that the effort to spread “Pan Islamism” failed in that period. In fact, after the revolution of 1908, Pan Islamism was defined as unrealistic. Revolutionaries of 1908 predicted a scheme for the continuation of the Empire, which all the subjects of the Empire could have joint action (Jorga, N., 2009: 517).<sup>①</sup> However, in an empire with a population of 15 million which did not have a common race, language, culture, religion or economic bonding, the realization of this idea would remain only as a thought (Jorga, N., 2009: 510).

After the Balkan Wars, it became very clear that the aim was not be able to realize. That’s why Committee of Union and Progress formulated Turkism policies in order to prevent the collapse of the Empire (Ahmad, F., 1969). This would lead the country to drift into the World War I. The fact that the founders of new republic had taken part in the Committee of Union and Progress led to raise questions about the new policies of New Turkey.

It must be clearly stated that the term “Turkish World” does not refer to the concept of a homeland but it refers to a cultural geography and it has a great importance. Since its establishment in 1923, the Republic of Turkey has estranged itself from policies, which may sound like “Pan-Turkism” or “Pan-Islamism”. Turkish history has shown that these kinds of policies would not have any historical or sociological foundations. Researchers have found many examples which reflect this idea. Especially what the leader of modern Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk thought coincided with this idea.

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<sup>①</sup> The Ottoman Parliament in 1909 consisted of 107 Turks, 45 Arabs, 27 Greeks, 22 Albanians, 10 Armenians, 5 Bulgarians, 4 Serbians, 3 Jews, 2 Kurts, one Romanian, Druze and Marunite.

Atatürk deemphasized Pan-Turkism and instead encouraged Turkish identity within Turkey. Even at the very beginning of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk stated that they would defend their sovereignty rights only within the borders of national pack in his Great Speech in 1927 (Kemal, G., 1929: 378; Atatürk, M., 2005)<sup>①</sup>;

“To unite different nations under one common name, to give these different elements equal rights, subject them to the same conditions and thus to found a mighty State is a brilliant and attractive political ideal; but it is a misleading one. It is an unrealizable aim to attempt to unite in one tribe the various races existing on the earth, thereby abolishing all boundaries. Herein lies a truth which the centuries that have gone by and the men who have lived during these centuries have clearly shown in dark and sanguinary events. There is nothing in history to show how the policy of Pan-Islamism could have succeeded or how it could have found a basis for its realization on this earth.”

Another indicator of Turkish policies against Pan-Turkism emerged in 1998. According to a secret circular by Turkish Prime Minister, Ankara recognizes Xinjiang as an inseparable part of China’s territory and Turkey does not allow any person or group to stage anti-China activities within Turkey’s jurisdiction (*Hürriyet Daily*, 1999: February 4). <sup>②</sup>

It is acceptable that some nationalist groups in Turkey try to prevent the improving of Turkish-Chinese relations, but these small groups do not have much support. Also the leader of nationalist party Bahçeli emphasized the importance of “one-China” policy and unity

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<sup>①</sup> The Speech, which relates events in the Turkish War of Independence, the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the carrying out of revolutionary reforms, is a work that the founder of the Turkish Republic Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself wrote and left to history.

<sup>②</sup> The number of the circular is 1998/36.

of China when he visited China in 2002 as Deputy PM of Turkey. During the official visit, he met with the Zhu Rongji, the then Prime Minister of People's Republic of China. Zhu made statements about Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and mentioned the sensitivity of this issue and thanked Turkey for following open policy in this regard. He also expressed that Al Qaeda militants settled in the said region after the 9/11 attacks. Zhu requested Bahçeli to "go to the region and convey your impressions to us" and in reply to his request, Bahçeli said "We are against any kind of terrorist actions as a country suffered a lot from terror; in addition, it is not a matter of question for us to support any action against the territorial integrity of China" (Yılmaz, Ö, 2002: May 30).

One other source of the misunderstandings between the two countries is the speeches of politicians. However, it should be kept in mind that a politician aims to address both domestic and foreign public opinion considering the present conditions. So and therefore, the fact that Chinese specialists only consider the political discourses when they criticize the policies of Turkey regarding the Xinjiang issue is in a matter of fact increasing the misunderstandings for the people of the two countries. Likewise the following examples bear out this argument.

When Turkey discussed establishment of diplomatic relations with PRC in 1971, Süleyman Demirel, the then leader of the Justice Party, declared that Turkey was no benefit from the recognition of Red China (*Cumhuriyet Daily*, 1971: August 9). Using the idea of the US newspapers that dismantling of the Soviets would make Turkey an economic and political attention center from the Adriatic to the Great Wall as the leverage point, Demirel used the phrase of "Great Turkish World from Adriatic to Great Wall" (Press Center of Prime Ministry, 1992). Ironically after 3 years, Demirel, as a President, paid an official visit to China, and stressed that Turkey respects the territorial unity of

China. Turkish people know very well that Demirel did not have or would not be able to have “Pan Turkism” ideas. But these statements cause misunderstandings for other people. And also China and Turkey, during the presidential term of Süleyman Demirel, signed a joint communiqué. Both of them decided to forge closer ties of partnership on the basis of mutual respect, trust and benefit, as well as equality and common development (*People’s Daily*, 2000: April 20).

During the visit of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (before his term of office as Prime Minister) to China in 2003 he stated as follows: “We, as the Republic of Turkey, support “One-China” policy. Turkey has no hesitation for the territorial integrity of China; we have respect for it and we oppose all forms of terrorism as well” (Karakuş, A., 2003: January 15). But Erdoğan made a statement and claimed, after the “July 5th 2009 incident”, that “this behavior is almost a kind of genocide.” And also he promised the granting of entry visa to Rebiya Kadeer (*Today’s Zaman*, 2009: July 15). In parallel with the shift in tone in Turkish media towards the 7/5 events, Erdoğan has also downplayed his criticism against Beijing.

During this period it is noteworthy that the Turkish Foreign Ministry expressed regrets to all Chinese people due to the losses. The following expressions are used in a written statement. “..... We believe that the necessary measures will be taken to prevent these kinds of incidents in the future in China, a country on the way to becoming more stable and prosperous. We extend our condolences to the people of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in particular and to the people of China in general, to the families of those who lost their lives and wish speedy recovery to those who were injured.” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009: July 6).

Three years after the statement that accused China of implementing “almost a kind of genocide”, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan resurrected the possible membership in the

SCO, in which China has a leading and dominant role, as an alternative especially at a time when the EU's future looks increasingly dim (*Today's Zaman*, 2013: January 31). The point this paper tries to highlight with all these examples that such kind of discourses of politicians are not very effective in practice.

At this point, I must emphasize that although the US Government does not recognize any so-called "East Turkistan" government-in-exile, nor do they provide support for any such entity, but exile government of the so-called "East Turkistan" was established in the United States in 2004 (US Department of State, 2004: November 22). And also Japan organized many activities (*Japan Times*, 2012: May 15). Chinese authorities constantly ignore the Wahhabi and Iranian influence on the Uyghur people. The question which comes to Turkish people's minds is as follows: Is the reason of this ignorance the fact that China provides almost 45% of its energy imports from these countries? (Karaca, R., 2012: 93-118).

The fact that Turkey and China were in different camps during the Cold War and that they fought in Korea do not mean that we carry or will carry the same old thoughts of the past even today when almost all the borders have been removed. If it would be the case, China should not have set up any relationship with Japan or Turkey should not have set up any kind of relationships with Greece or Russia.

"The Turkish media are deeply influenced by western media and gives very unfavorable comments on China for many matters".

This paper states again that the author has been studying on China and following Turkish media since 1999. Approximately 90% of news on China has been about economic growth of China and how it affects Turkey. I have not come across any news which is directly unflattering about China. Even during the events in 2009, the negative news against China was limited in numbers in the mainstream media.

As a result, relationships which have been developed and gradually accelerated between the administrations of these two countries do not reflect the perceptions of Turkish people and Chinese people of each other. It is possible to shorten this distance by eliminating the lack of knowledge between the people of the two countries. But how? In this case, what can we do?

## **VI. Conclusion: How to Solve the Unfavorability?**

First, Cultural activities which can take place in both countries will play an important role in bringing closer the Turkish people and the Chinese together. Likewise, we should take into consideration the statement which President Abdullah Gül made during the visit of Chinese Vice President Xi in 2012 regarding the celebrating 2012 as “Chinese Culture Year” in Turkey and celebrating 2013 as “Turkish Culture Year” in China.

China has considered launching more Confucius Institutes, and the institutions are for foreigners to learn the Chinese language and culture overseas and also in Turkey. In return, Turkey should open departments of Turkish language and culture in China.

We should increase the number of exchange students and faculty members. Our Chinese friends should perform promotional activities about their universities just like Europeans. And Turkey should do the same.

Second, Tourism should be promoted more effectively in both countries. The recently increasing number of Chinese tourists is very pleasing for Turkey. Tourism may also help to balance the trade deficit which is a source of dissatisfaction between the two countries.

Third, there are many areas in the Middle East, Caucasus and Africa on which China and Turkey can cooperate with each other. Identifying these areas and preparing joint projects will develop the

bilateral relations.

Fourth, the two countries should send media groups for providing more information about the other and thereby enhancing understanding of the two peoples. Also if media takes news directly, it can prevent the people from getting false impressions.

The biggest challenge for the academics who work on China is the language barrier. Unfortunately, Most of the researchers are directed to Western resources, due to the fact that English is the international academic language. If our Chinese colleagues publish much more work in English, these publications in English will provide an easy way for China to prevent other academics from directing to the Western resources.

It is also required to conduct public opinion surveys. These kinds of surveys will help to develop a way to provide mutual understanding.

Finally, the fundamental problem between these two countries is Xinjiang problem, which is apparently the internal affair of Chinese people. China should not confuse the feelings of Turkish people towards Uyghur people with "Pan-Turkism". While "Pan-Turkism" refers to a policy pursued by the state, feelings of Turkish people towards Uyghur people specify only a humanitarian thought. At this point, Chinese people should acknowledge that Pan-Turkism is not a state policy of the Republic of Turkey. Here the responsibility of providing this acknowledgement to Chinese people falls in the hands of Chinese media, academics and government officials. Transparent policies followed by China will be replied by the Turkish people. Also, Turkish people should be aware of the fact that Xinjiang problem is an internal affair of China. Here, too, the responsibility falls in our hands and in the hands of Turkish media. Lastly, Turkish leaders should consider the effect of their speeches on foreign public opinion, and should stick the principle of moderation.

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