

## Turkish Studies in China: Language, Academia and Multidisciplinary Perspectives

### Çin'de Türkiye Araştırmaları: Dil, Akademi ve Disiplinlerarası Yaklaşımlar

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#### ABSTRACT

This article provides a comprehensive examination of the historical evolution and interdisciplinary expansion of Turkish Studies in China. Türkiye's strategic importance in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly intensified Chinese academic interest, contributing to the emergence of Turkish Studies as a dynamic and evolving field. This study analyzes five core areas of development—Turkish language education, research centers, book and journal publications, graduate theses, and translation work—offering a structured evaluation of academic progress from 1949 to 2024. Originally limited to language and historical topics, Turkish Studies in China have increasingly incorporated disciplines such as political science, economics, cultural studies, and international relations. In particular, the post-2013 period has witnessed notable growth in scholarly output, institutional infrastructure, and student engagement, underscoring the field's maturation and sustainability. By situating academic trends within the broader trajectory of Sino-Turkish relations, this article illustrates how scholarly production mirrors diplomatic, cultural, and geopolitical shifts. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate the central role of knowledge production and academic collaboration in fostering cross-cultural understanding and strategic partnerships between China and Türkiye. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on area studies in non-Western contexts and highlights the unique path of Turkish Studies in contemporary Chinese academia.

**Keywords:** Turkish Studies, Sino-Turkish Relations, Belt and Road Initiative, Area Studies

#### ÖZ

Bu makale, Çin'deki Türkiye çalışmalarının tarihsel gelişimini, kurumsallaşma sürecini ve disiplinler arası açılımını kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Çin ile Türkiye arasındaki etkileşimler, antik İpek Yolu'na dayanan kültürel ve ekonomik ilişkilerle şekillenmiş; iki ülke 20. yüzyılda benzer modernleşme süreçlerinden geçmiş, fakat akademik düzeydeki ilişkiler uzun süre sınırlı kalmıştır. 1971 yılında diplomatik ilişkilerin kurulması ve ardından 2013'te Türkiye'nin Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nde stratejik ortak olarak öne çıkması, Çin akademisinde Türkiye'ye

yönelik ilgiyi belirgin şekilde artırmıştır. Bu doğrultuda makale, Türkiye çalışmalarının Çin'deki gelişimini beş temel eksenle analiz etmektedir: Türk dili eğitimi, araştırma merkezlerinin kuruluşu, akademik yayınlar, lisansüstü tez çalışmaları ve çeviri faaliyetleri. 1949'dan 2024'e kadar uzanan dönemsel değerlendirme, alanın yalnızca dil ve tarih araştırmalarına dayalı bir çerçeveden çıkıp siyaset, ekonomi, uluslararası ilişkiler, kültürel çalışmalar gibi çokboyutlu bir yapıya dönüştüğünü göstermektedir. Özellikle son on yılda yayın sayısındaki hızlı artış, araştırma merkezlerinin çeşitlenmesi ve disiplinler arası yaklaşımların benimsenmesi, Türkiye çalışmalarının Çin'de olgunlaşan bir alan haline geldiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, Çin-Türkiye ilişkilerinin akademik düzlemde nasıl yankı bulduğunu ve bu bağlamda alan çalışmalarının Çin'deki dönüşümünü yansıtmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Türkiye Çalışmaları, Çin-Türkiye İlişkileri, Kuşak ve Yol, Bölge Çalışmaları

## Introduction

The relationship between China and Türkiye is deeply rooted in history, tracing back to the ancient Silk Road era, where the Han and Turkic peoples engaged in early interactions. As endpoints of this historic trade route, the two nations fostered connections through commerce and cultural exchanges spanning centuries. The exquisite Chinese porcelain preserved in the *Topkapı* Museum in Türkiye, ranging from Tang dynasty bronzeware to Ming and Qing dynasty ceramics, serves as a testament to these historical ties. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, both the Qing Empire and the Ottoman Empire underwent Westernization reforms, constitutional transitions, and faced colonial pressures. Both nations emerged as independent sovereign states following periods of struggle—Türkiye in 1923 and China in 1949.

In the early 20th century, the interactions between the two nations were minimal. However, in 1971, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations marked the beginning of a new era of political, economic, and cultural exchanges. Over the years, state visits and exchanges of high-level officials, including heads of state, prime ministers, and military leaders, have strengthened mutual understanding and political trust. For instance, in April 2000, President Jiang Zemin's state visit to Türkiye resulted in agreements to build closer partnerships based on mutual respect, trust, and shared development goals. In 2001, Türkiye was designated as an approved destination for Chinese tourists, further enhancing people-to-people exchanges.<sup>1</sup>

In 2012 and 2013, the reciprocal “Years of Culture” initiative between the two nations served as a milestone in cultural exchanges. The joint declaration, “Strategic Cooperation Partnership between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Türkiye,” highlighted their shared aspirations for collaboration<sup>2</sup>. Türkiye’s geopolitical significance as a transcontinental nation and its active participation in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have deepened bilateral ties. This partnership has fostered political, economic, and cultural exchanges, marking a new chapter in Sino-Turkish relations.<sup>3</sup>

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Ankara University inaugurated its Sinology department in 1935, producing numerous experts proficient in Chinese history, language, and culture. Conversely, prior to the normalization of Sino-Turkish diplomatic relations, Chinese

1 舒景林, 盛睿. “中土战略合作伙伴关系研究”. 社会科学论坛, 2014, (05): 235-240. (Shu Jinglin and Sheng Rui. “A Study on the Strategic Partnership Between China and Türkiye.” *Social Sciences Forum*, no. 05 (2014): 235–240.)

2 “中华人民共和国和土耳其共和国关于建立和发展战略合作关系的联合声明” (Joint Declaration on the Establishment and Development of Strategic Cooperation Between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Türkiye), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, October 8, 2010. [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676956/1207\\_676968/201010/t20101009\\_8001554.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676956/1207_676968/201010/t20101009_8001554.shtml)

3 “中国、土耳其共建“一带一路”倡议和“中间走廊”倡议对接合作工作组第一次会议成功召开”(First Meeting of the China-Türkiye Cooperation Working Group on the Alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Middle Corridor Initiative Successfully Held), National Development and Reform Commission of the People’s Republic of China, November 6, 2024. [https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/202411/t20241112\\_1394407.html](https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/202411/t20241112_1394407.html)

engagement with Türkiye was primarily linguistic in nature: Turkish language courses were introduced through Soviet resources, and the first bachelor's program in Turkish was launched at Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1985. Before the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Chinese studies on Türkiye remained relatively underdeveloped, focusing largely on language instruction and select topics in Turkish history and diplomacy, often mediated through English-language materials.

The most substantial academic survey before this study was Shen and Işık's 2020 article, which provided a valuable institutional overview of Turcology programs in China<sup>4</sup>. However, their focus was largely restricted to Turkish language education—such as faculty numbers, university departments, and literary translations—and did not contextualize these developments within the broader arc of Sino-Turkish relations or the evolution of area studies in China. Their research, while informative, offered a snapshot rather than a longitudinal analysis, and did not explore the multidisciplinary expansion of Turkish studies.

This article builds upon and significantly deepens that earlier work by introducing a stronger sense of historical depth and by situating the development of Turkish studies in China within the changing dynamics of bilateral relations. It traces nearly a century of intellectual engagement, from early literary translations in the Republican period to the institutional expansion following diplomatic normalization in 1971, and finally to the strategic intensification under the BRI. In doing so, the study demonstrates how Chinese academic interest in Türkiye has closely mirrored political, economic, and cultural shifts in the relationship between the two countries.

Moreover, the present study expands the field's scope by examining not only language and literature, but also research output in political science, economics, cultural studies, and international relations. It integrates new data on graduate theses, scholarly publications, and the emergence of dedicated research centers, offering a comprehensive and empirically grounded portrait of a rapidly maturing field. In contrast to previous work, which treated Turcology as a primarily linguistic endeavor, this study redefines it as a multidisciplinary and strategically significant area of scholarship closely tied to the evolving Sino-Turkish partnership.

## 1. Methodology and Scope

This study examines the historical evolution, current status, and future trends of Chinese studies on Türkiye. The analysis focuses on publications in Chinese, including books, academic papers, and educational efforts related to Türkiye, from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the present.

The bibliographic search utilized the keywords “Türkiye”, “Turkish Studies”, and “Ottoman” across major databases, including the China-America Digital Academic Library (CADAL)<sup>5</sup>

4 Işık, Ömer Faruk, and Zhixing Shen. 2020. “Turcology Studies in China.” *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi / Journal of Turkish Language and Literature*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2020, 587–608.

5 The China-America Digital Academic Library (CADAL) originated from the Million Book Digital Library Project (MBP), initiated in December 2000 as a collaborative effort between computer scientists from China

and Dangdang.com, China's largest online bookstore. For journal articles, a keyword search was conducted on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) and categorized into journal articles, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations without restricting the scope of relevant journals.

Additionally, this study investigates Turkish language education and the establishment of Turkish studies centers in Chinese universities. Turkish language programs are critical for developing expertise in Turkish studies and fostering bilateral relations. The data sources include official university reports and an internal peer-reviewed survey conducted by the author, who has experience teaching Turkish at two universities<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Undergraduate Education and Study Centers

### 1) Development of Turkish Language Education in China

The cultivation of Turkish language professionals plays a vital role in advancing Turkish studies in China and promoting the development of Sino-Turkish relations. First and foremost, language serves as the foundation for understanding culture, history, and society. Turkish language experts are equipped to directly access and study primary sources from Türkiye, providing Chinese academia with the linguistic support needed for in-depth research. This capability not only enhances the depth and breadth of Turkish studies but also enables Chinese scholars to participate more effectively in international academic discussions.

Moreover, graduates of Turkish language programs serve as essential bridges in diplomacy, trade cooperation, and cultural exchange between China and Türkiye. As an important node along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Türkiye has seen increasing demand for Turkish language professionals in areas such as diplomacy, business, and cultural activities. These professionals provide linguistic and cultural support for practical collaborations between the two countries. Additionally, their contributions help enhance China's overall understanding of Turkish society, culture, and politics, offering intellectual support for China's foreign policy formulation.

Currently, multiple Chinese universities offer undergraduate Turkish language programs, including Beijing Foreign Studies University<sup>7</sup>, Shanghai International Studies University<sup>8</sup>,

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and the United States. This project evolved into the Universal Digital Library (UDL) with significant support from the Ministry of Education of China (MOE), the National Science Foundation of the United States, and the Indian Academy of Sciences.

6 The author worked as lecturer of undergraduate program of Turkology at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (2017–2020) and at Beijing Language and Culture University (2020–2021).

7 Introduction of the major could be seen from on the official website of the School of Asian Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University, available at: <https://asian.bfsu.edu.cn/info/1050/1236.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)

8 The School of Oriental Languages, Shanghai International Studies University, available at: <http://www.saas.shisu.edu.cn/92/d8/c15584a168664/page.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)

Beijing Language and Culture University<sup>9</sup>, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies<sup>10</sup>, Beijing International Studies University<sup>11</sup>, Communication University of China<sup>12</sup>, Xi'an International Studies University<sup>13</sup>, Sichuan International Studies University<sup>14</sup>, Zhejiang International Studies University<sup>15</sup>, and Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages<sup>16</sup>. These universities have developed Turkish language programs based on their academic resources and institutional goals, with varying enrollment scales and frequencies.

For example, the Communication University of China was among the earliest institutions to establish a Turkish language program, but the initial training efforts were primarily aimed at meeting the needs of external propaganda rather than systematic language instruction. Beijing Foreign Studies University, recognized as China's premier institution for foreign language education and research, began admitting Turkish language students in 1985 as part of a comprehensive and systematic program, with one cohort enrolled every four years. Most other universities began offering Turkish language programs after 2010, reflecting the growing depth of Sino-Turkish relations and China's increasing interest in global engagement. As *Shen & Işık* documented in 2020, the opening of 12 Turcology departments by 2019 was in parallel with diplomatic ties, but most programs lacked academic maturity and experienced faculty (only 1 full professor and 3 associate professors in total)<sup>17</sup>.

The frequency of admissions varies across universities, with most programs admitting students every 2 to 4 years, and only a few institutions enrolling annually. Each cohort typically includes 10 to 25 students. Universities in northern China (north of the Qinling-Huaihe line) host the majority of Turkish language programs and have a longer history in this field, while those in southern China are primarily newer entrants to Turkish language education. Based on enrollment data, it is estimated that approximately 60 to 100 students graduate from Turkish language programs nationwide each year, amounting to a total of 240 to 400 graduates every four years. Although the overall number of graduates is modest, their contributions have become increasingly significant in supporting the development of Sino-Turkish relations.

- 9 Beijing Language and Culture University Website, available at: [https://zsb.blcu.edu.cn/art/2021/6/24/art\\_16228\\_1162961.html](https://zsb.blcu.edu.cn/art/2021/6/24/art_16228_1162961.html). (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 10 The School of Asian and African Languages and Cultures, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, available at: <https://faas.gdufs.edu.cn/info/1047/1346.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 11 The School of Middle Eastern Studies, Beijing International Studies University, available at: <https://zhongdong.bisu.edu.cn/#/newsDetail/666a5ac660b2c61adea0e5a0/WS666e6c8260b2c61adea10b69>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 12 The School of International Studies, Communication University of China, available at: <https://sis.cuc.edu.cn/104/listm.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 13 The School of Asian and African Studies, Xi'an International Studies University, available at: <https://dyxy.xisu.edu.cn/info/1055/1007.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 14 The School of Oriental Languages and Cultures, Sichuan International Studies University, available at: <https://dfxy.sisu.edu.cn/bkfy/teqzy/4547c74b52a541dd911bc4c3fbb39ef1.htm> (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 15 The School of Oriental Languages and Cultures, Zhejiang International Studies University, available at: <https://salc.zisu.edu.cn/xyyl/zyjs.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 16 The School of Oriental Languages, Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages, available at: <https://dy.zyuf.edu.cn/2020/0314/c664a31148/page.htm>. (Access date: 20th Dec,2024)
- 17 Işık, Ömer Faruk, and Zhixing Shen. 2020. "Turcology Studies in China": 595-596.

No	Chinese Name	English Name	Program Start Year	Admission Cycle(year)	Students per Batch	Location
1	北京外国语大学	Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)	1985	2	14-20	Beijing
2	上海外国语大学	Shanghai International Studies University (SISU)	2011	4	15	Shanghai
3	北京语言大学	Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU)	2015	2	14-18	Beijing
4	广东外语外贸大学	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS)	2017	2	12-15	Guangzhou
5	北京第二外国语学院	Beijing International Studies University (BISU)	2015	2	15	Beijing
6	中国传媒大学	Communication University of China (CUC)	2001	4	15-20	Beijing
7	天津外国语大学	Tianjin Foreign Studies University (TFSU)	2017	4	10-12	Tianjin
8	西安外国语大学	Xi'an International Studies University (XISU)	2012	4	25	Xi'an
9	四川外国语大学	Sichuan International Studies University (SISU)	2020	2	14	Chongqing
10	浙江外国语学院	Zhejiang International Studies University	2018	1	14-18	Hangzhou
11	浙江越秀外国语学院	Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages (ZISU)	2019	2	20-25	Shaoxing

(Source: Compiled by the author.)

## 2) Turkish Studies Centers in Chinese Universities

In contrast to earlier reviews of *Shen&Işık*, which examined only university departments, this study also considers the emergence of specialized Turkish Studies research centers across China. It is worth noting that some universities, despite lacking dedicated Turkish studies centers, have achieved significant results in Turkish-related research within broader academic frameworks. These achievements often build upon existing institutional expertise and resources, particularly in China's two major Middle Eastern studies hubs: the Yangtze River Delta and

the Northwest Region. Notable institutions in these regions include the Institute of West Asian and African Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing)<sup>18</sup>, the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies at Tsinghua University (Beijing)<sup>19</sup>, the Middle East Studies Institutes at Shanghai International Studies University<sup>20</sup>, and Fudan University<sup>21</sup>, and the Middle East Research Institute at Northwest University<sup>22</sup>.

With the increasing demand for Turkish expertise and the rising prominence of area studies in China, several specialized Turkish studies centers have been established. There are currently five Turkish studies centers in China, distributed across Beijing, Shanghai, Shaanxi, and Zhejiang provinces, primarily in northern China. These centers play an essential role in advancing academic research and fostering international collaboration.

### a) Shanghai University Turkish Studies Center<sup>23</sup>

Established in 2012, this center is affiliated with the Ministry of Education's National and Regional Studies Program and operates under the Institute of International Issues at Shanghai University. Led by Professor Guo Changgang, the center has developed a comprehensive research agenda, encompassing Turkish history, politics, economics, foreign policy, and Türkiye's interactions with the U.S. and Eurasia. It places particular emphasis on Sino-Turkish relations within the Belt and Road Initiative framework. The center regularly recruits doctoral students, publishes academic collections, and hosts international conferences.

### b) Shaanxi Normal University Turkish Studies Center<sup>24</sup>

Founded in September 2016 and recognized by the Ministry of Education in 2017, this center specializes in Turkish history, cultural studies, and Türkiye's role in Middle Eastern geopolitics. Under the leadership of Professor Li Bingzhong, the center has published the journal *Turkish Studies*, organized academic exchanges, and promoted university partnerships. It also publishes research findings in the *Journal of Xi'an International Studies University* and maintains a strong presence on social media via its official website and WeChat account.

18 Institute of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), official English website: <http://waas.cssn.cn/index/>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

19 Institute for International and Area Studies (IIAS), Tsinghua University, official English website: <https://ias.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

20 Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, official English website: <http://en.mideast.shisu.edu.cn/>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

21 Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Fudan University, official English website: <https://iis.fudan.edu.cn/en/cmest/list.htm>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

22 Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, Northwest University, official English website: <https://imes.nwu.edu.cn/index.htm>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

23 Institute for Global Studies, Shanghai University, official website: <https://igs.shu.edu.cn/teqyjzx/zxjj.htm>. Accessed on December 10, 2024. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

24 Turkish Studies Center, Shaanxi Normal University, official website: <https://Türkiye.snnu.edu.cn/>. Accessed on December 10, 2024. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

### c) Beijing Language and Culture University Turkish Studies Center<sup>25</sup>

Established in 2017, this center is part of the Institute of Regional and National Studies and was among the first batch of Ministry of Education-certified centers. It publishes a monthly bulletin, *Turkish Panorama*, covering Turkish news, research, and cultural developments. The center also collaborates with other institutions to form the “Turkish Studies Community,” fostering academic cooperation among Chinese Turkish studies scholars.

### d) Peking University Turkish Studies Center<sup>26</sup>

Established in 2018 within the Institute of Regional and National Studies, this center focuses on modern Turkish history and Sino-Turkish relations, with Professor Zan Tao as its director. It leverages Peking University’s academic heritage to advance studies on topics such as Turkish intellectual history, modernization, and the interplay between religion and politics. The center periodically enrolls doctoral students and organizes workshops on specialized themes, such as Turkish historical studies.

### e) Zhejiang International Studies University Turkish Studies Center

Founded in October 2020 as part of the Mediterranean Studies Institute, this center focuses on Turkish language, culture, and regional issues. Under the direction of Professor Shen Zhixing, its primary research areas include Turkish politics, economics, and culture, aiming to enhance Sino-Turkish academic exchange.

## 3. Publications on Türkiye in China

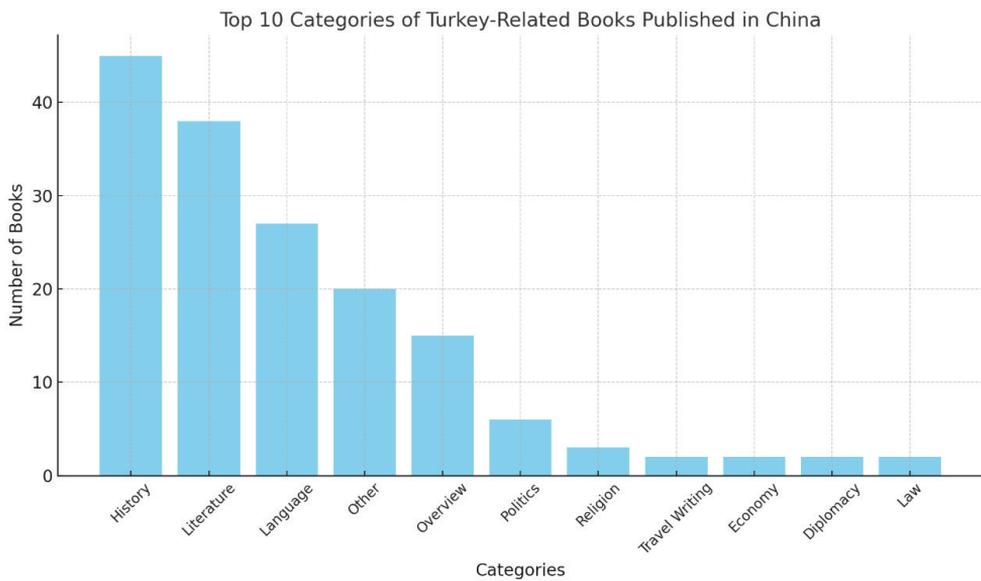
A prior comprehensive review by *Shen and Işık* found that only 25 Turkish literary works had been translated into Chinese since 1971, with more than half authored by Orhan Pamuk, whose prominence in Chinese readership was particularly noted after his Nobel Prize in Literature. Their study also emphasized the limited scope of translated works, revealing an over-reliance on individual authors and a lack of representation for diverse Turkish literary voices. Furthermore, they highlighted a serious shortage of modern Turkish language teaching materials tailored for Chinese students, noting that many available textbooks were outdated or too narrow in scope. Our findings suggest significant progress in both areas. Recent years have witnessed the translation of new Turkish literary works beyond Pamuk’s canon, such as Elif Shafak’s *The Island of Missing Trees*, indicating a growing interest in contemporary Turkish literature. In the field of language instruction, new textbooks and reference works have been published, including *Turkish Grammar* by Liu Zhao, *Basic Turkish Phonetics*, and *Turkish Writing Tutorial II*, all of which have helped address earlier gaps identified by Shen and Işık.

25 Turkish Studies Center, Beijing Language and Culture University, official website: [https://irs.blcu.edu.cn/art/2020/6/28/art\\_16397\\_1155022.html](https://irs.blcu.edu.cn/art/2020/6/28/art_16397_1155022.html). Accessed on December 10, 2024. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

26 Center for Regional and Country Studies, Peking University, official website: <https://ias.pku.edu.cn/xygk/xyjj/index.htm>. (Access date: 21th Dec,2024)

These developments not only reflect the deepening of cultural engagement between the two countries but also demonstrate the maturing infrastructure supporting Turkish studies in China.

According to all the book information collected by the author on CADAL and Dangdang.com, excluding duplicate and reprinted parts, there are a total of 118 books. Publications about Türkiye in China cover a wide array of topics, including history, literature, language, politics, economics, religion, general introductions, travel, and geography, totaling more than 50 titles. Among these, history remains the primary focus, followed by literature and language studies. These publications highlight Chinese scholars' longstanding interest in Türkiye's historical development and cultural heritage, as well as the growing academic and public engagement with Turkish literature and linguistics.



**Chart 1.** Distribution of Turkish-related books published in China

*(Source: Compiled by the author.)*

Turkish research books published in China began to appear in the early 20th century, and it has been more than a hundred years. Relevant research before the founding of the People's Republic of China does not belong to the scope of this study, but from the perspective of academic history, research in this period is an extremely important part, because from this period on, Chinese people began to show great interest in Türkiye.

### 3.1 General trend

First of all, historical research constitutes the largest proportion of Chinese studies on Türkiye, with works predominantly centered on the Ottoman Empire and modern Türkiye's

historical transitions. These studies often explore themes such as Türkiye's modernization, the Kemalist reforms, and the country's geopolitical significance during pivotal moments in history. Noteworthy contributions include *The History of the Turkish Revolution* by Cheng Zhongxing<sup>27</sup> and *New Türkiye* by Liu Keshou, which delve into Türkiye's nation-building process following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The modernization efforts of the Ottoman Empire and late Qing China share notable similarities. Both faced internal resistance from traditional elites and external pressures from Western colonial powers, which catalyzed reform. Despite these efforts, both empires struggled to balance tradition with modernity, ultimately leading to systemic transformations—Türkiye's secular republic under Atatürk and the Republic of China's establishment after the Qing collapse. These parallels offer insights into non-Western modernization under global imperialism. Chinese intellectuals of the early 20th century, such as Dai Wangshu, admired Atatürk's reforms, viewing Türkiye's modernization as both a model and a mirror for China's trajectory by saying:

*"Türkiye has aroused our interest in research because it has many similarities with our country.....Due to the awakening of national consciousness, military and diplomatic victories, the elimination of all dark forces in the country, the expansion and development of the national spirit, and the decisive reforms and great construction in politics, economy and culture, Türkiye has not only cleansed them all, but also shown a bright and far-reaching future for itself. Although our achievements are not as rapid and smooth as Türkiye's, our efforts have also progressed in the same direction as Türkiye. In this respect, Türkiye is not only a country with the same destiny as us, but also our example and our mentor. Therefore, the study of Türkiye and the review of the politics of this emerging Türkiye are not only objective and academic, but also have a guiding role in stating our own shortcomings and indicating the attitude we should take and the path we should take."*<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, Turkish literature occupies a significant place in the Chinese academic and cultural landscape, with an increasing number of translations making Turkish authors accessible to Chinese readers. This trend began in the mid-20th century with works by Nazım Hikmet, such as *The Turkish Story* and *Struggle for Bread*, which resonated with Chinese readers due to shared revolutionary themes during the Cold War period.

More recently, the works of Orhan Pamuk, including *My Name is Red*, *The Museum of Innocence*, *Snow*, and *The Silent House*, have garnered widespread attention, reflecting Pamuk's global literary influence as a Nobel laureate. Additionally, translations of novels by Elif Shafak, such as *The Island of Missing Trees*, have further expanded the diversity of Turkish literature available in China. These works not only introduce Chinese readers to the complexities of Turkish society but also highlight shared cultural themes, such as the tension between tradition and modernity.

27 程中行,《土耳其革命史》,民智书局,1928年。(Cheng, Zhongxing, *History of the Turkish Revolution*. Minzhi Bookstore, 1928.)

28 戴望舒编,《现代土耳其政治》,商务印书馆出版,1937年:编者按。(Dai, Wangshu, ed. *Modern Turkish Politics*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1937: Editor's Note.)

Last but not least, studies on the Turkish language in China have seen significant growth, particularly in the form of textbooks and instructional materials designed to support university-level Turkish programs. These publications include foundational resources such as *A Practical Guide to Turkish Translation*, *Turkish Grammar*, and *Basic Turkish Phonetics*. They cater to the increasing demand for Turkish language education, driven by both academic pursuits and the practical needs of Sino-Turkish relations under the Belt and Road Initiative.

### 3.2 A historical analysis

The history of publications on Türkiye in China can be divided into four distinct phases based on the evolution of Sino-Turkish relations and shifts in academic focus:

#### 3) Pre-1949: The Initial Exploration Phase

Publications during this period (16 titles) focused primarily on Türkiye's modernization and revolutionary movements. This interest stemmed from perceived parallels between the Ottoman Empire and China during the early 20th century. Significant works from this era include translations of English-language historical studies<sup>29</sup> and original analyses by Chinese intellectuals. These works reflect the burgeoning curiosity about Türkiye's nation-building efforts, seen as both a model and a source of inspiration for China's own reformist movements. The field of literature saw initial development, such as the Fairy Tales translated from Japanese<sup>30</sup>, which showed an early attempt to translate Turkish literature. The research during this period was limited by resources and international exchanges, with a small number of publications and relatively single research topics.

#### 4) 1949–1971: The Slow Development Phase

During this phase, the number of publications dropped to 12 titles, with literary translations dominating the landscape. Many of these works were by Nazım Hikmet, whose revolutionary themes aligned with Cold War-era ideological currents.<sup>31</sup> This period also marked the beginning of linguistic studies on Turkish, with the publication of *A Grammar of the Turkish Language* in 1959,<sup>32</sup> translated from Russian. However, the absence of formal diplomatic ties between China and Türkiye limited scholarly exchanges and resource availability.

29 (英)密林根著,孟绣玮、常道直译,《土耳其一瞥》,商务印书馆,1926年。(Millingen, F. *A Glimpse of Turkey*. Translated by Meng Xiuwei and Chang Daozhi, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1926.)

30 (日)永桥卓介著,许达年译,《土耳其童话集》,中华书局,1933年。(Nagahashi, Takusuke. *Collection of Turkish Fairy Tales*. Translated by Xu Danian, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1933.)

31 纳泽姆·希克梅特著,袁水拍译,《土耳其的故事》,平明出版社1953年版(Hikmet, Nazım. *Turkish Stories*. Translated by Yuan Shuipai, Pingming Publishing House, 1953); 纳泽姆·希克梅特著,袁水拍译,《五十朵番红花》选录,平明出版社1955年(Hikmet, Nazım. *Fifty Saffron Flowers (Selections)*. Translated by Yuan Shuipai, Pingming Publishing House, 1955); 凯末尔·奥尔汗著,郭恕可译,《为面包而斗争》,人民文学出版社·北京,1958年(Kemal, Orhan. *Struggle for Bread*. Translated by Guo Shuke, People's Literature Publishing House, 1958.)

32 (苏)埃捷尼舍夫著,中科院翻译,《土耳其语语法》,科学出版社,1959年。(Etjenishev, A. A. *Turkish Grammar*. Translated by Chinese Academy of Sciences, Science Press, 1959.)

## 5) 1971–2013: The Expansion Phase

After the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Türkiye in 1971, bilateral exchanges and academic interest in Türkiye expanded significantly, resulting in the publication of 29 titles. Historical studies witnessed substantial growth, particularly focusing on the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkish reforms. Notable translations during this period include *A Brief Modern History of Türkiye*<sup>33</sup> and *The Emergence of Modern Türkiye*<sup>34</sup>. Additionally, pioneering works by the first generation of Chinese Middle Eastern historians, such as *A General History of the Middle East*<sup>35</sup>, *The Turks*<sup>36</sup>, *The Kemalist Reforms in Türkiye*<sup>37</sup>, and *The Evolution of Britain's Policy on the Turkish Straits*<sup>38</sup>, laid a strong foundation for further scholarly engagement.

Literary studies also continued to develop, with translated works such as *Ince Memed*<sup>39</sup> and *Baba Evi*<sup>40</sup> gaining prominence. Linguistic research during this period focused primarily on educational materials, with notable publications from the Turkish Language Department at Beijing Foreign Studies University, including *Turkish Conversation*<sup>41</sup> and *Practical Turkish Translation*<sup>42</sup>.

Moreover, broader research in the humanities and social sciences began to emerge, covering topics such as Turkish politics (*A Study on the Democratization Process of the Republic of Türkiye*<sup>43</sup>), religion (*Tradition and Reality*<sup>44</sup>), and diplomacy (*Türkiye's Relations with the United States*<sup>45</sup>). Additionally, publications in geography and the sciences, such as *Turkish*

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- 33 (苏)米列尔著;朱贵生、苏苒、王荣宅译,《土耳其现代简明史》,生活读书新知三联书店,1973年。(Milyer. *A Brief Modern History of Turkey*. Translated by Zhu Guisheng, Su Ran, and Wang Rongzhai, Sanlian Bookstore, 1973.)
- 34 伯纳德·刘易斯著、范中廉译,《现代土耳其的兴起》,商务印书馆,1982年。(Lewis, Bernard. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Translated by Fan Zhonglian, Commercial Press, 1982.)
- 35 彭树智主编,黄维民著,《中东国家通史》,商务印书馆,2002年。(Peng, Shuzhi, editor. *A Comprehensive History of Middle Eastern Countries*. Written by Huang Weimin, Commercial Press, 2002.)
- 36 黄维民著,《土耳其人》,三秦出版社,2004年。(Huang, Weimin. *The Turks*. Sanqin Publishing House, 2004.)
- 37 肖宪,《土耳其的凯末尔改革》,南京大学出版社,2001年。(Xiao, Xian. *The Kemalist Reforms in Türkiye*. Nanjing University Press, 2001.)
- 38 赵军秀,《英国对土耳其海峡政策的演变》,中国社会科学出版社,2007年。(Zhao, Junxiu. *The Evolution of Britain's Policy on the Turkish Straits*. China Social Sciences Press, 2007.)
- 39 亚沙尔·凯末尔著,李贤德译,《瘦子迈迈德I》,外国文学出版社,1981年。(Kemal, Yaşar. *Ince Memed I*. Translated by Li Xiande, Foreign Literature Publishing House, 1981.)
- 40 奥尔汗·凯末尔著,夏永敏译,《爸爸的家》,中国国际广播出版社,2011年。(Kemal, Orhan. *Father's House /Baba Evi*. Translated by Xia Yongmin, China International Broadcasting Publishing House, 2011.)
- 41 刘钊,《土耳其语口语》,外语教学与研究出版社,2005年。(Liu, Zhao. *Turkish Conversation*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2005.)
- 42 刘钊,李智育,《土耳其语翻译实践》,外语教学与研究出版社,2008年。(Liu, Zhao, and Li Zhiyu. *Practical Turkish Translation*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2008.)
- 43 哈全安,《土耳其共和国的政治民主化进程研究》,上海三联书店,2010年。(Ha, Quanan. *A Study on the Political Democratization Process of the Republic of Türkiye*. Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2010.)
- 44 孙振玉,《传统与现实》,民族出版社,2001年。(Sun, Zhenyu. *Tradition and Reality*. Minzu Publishing House, 2001.)
- 45 肖宪、伍庆玲、吴磊等著,《土耳其与美国关系研究》,时事出版社,2006年。(Xiao, Xian, Qingling

*Geography*<sup>46</sup> and *Biophysical and Physiological Systems Analysis*<sup>47</sup>, further expanded the scope of Turkish studies. Although most scientific and technical works were translations or introductory texts, they underscored the gradual recovery of Sino-Turkish relations and the enrichment of research resources through increased international exchanges.

## 6) 2013–Present: The Rapid Growth Phase

Following the introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, Turkish studies in China entered a phase of rapid growth, spanning from 2014 to the present. During this decade, the number of publications increased significantly, with 60 books published, covering a wide range of topics, including language, literature, history, politics, economics, and cultural exchange. Among these, historical studies remained the dominant focus, with research centering on the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkish history. This period witnessed notable advancements in both the scope and depth of historical research.

For instance, international scholars' works such as *The Formation of Modern Türkiye*<sup>48</sup> by Feroz Ahmad and *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1299–1923*<sup>49</sup> by Caroline Finkel offered fresh perspectives on Türkiye's historical development. Meanwhile, comprehensive Chinese studies like Ha Qunan's *A General History of Türkiye*<sup>50</sup> and Li Bingzhong's *Studies on Türkiye*<sup>51</sup> systematically examined Türkiye's historical evolution and its regional and global significance. Specialized research also flourished during this period, with notable contributions such as *Osman's Dream* providing critical insights into Ottoman history and *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul*<sup>52</sup> exploring modern Turkish social transformations through the lens of cultural history.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of this phase is the significant progress made in Turkish language studies. A substantial number of textbooks and reference materials focused on language teaching and translation were published, including *Practical Turkish*

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Wu, and Lei Wu. *A Study on Türkiye-U.S. Relations*. Current Affairs Press, 2006.)

46 (英)杜德内著,《土耳其地理》,北大地质地理系经济地理专业译,商务印书馆,1975年。(Dodney, D..The Geography of Turkiye, translated by the Department of Geology and Geography at Peking University, Commercial Press, 1975.)

47 (苏)耶夫烈莫夫著,王宇知译,《生物物理和生理系统》,分析科学出版社,1979年。(Yefremov, I. *Analysis of Biophysical and Physiological Systems*. Translated by Wang Yuzhi, Science Press, 1979.)

48 艾哈迈德·费罗兹著,郑东超译,《现代土耳其的形成》,上海翻译出版社,2020。(Ahmad, Feroz. *The Formation of Modern Turkey*. Translated by Zheng Dongchao, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2020.)

49 (英)卡罗琳·芬克尔著,邓伯宸、徐大成、于丽译,《奥斯曼帝国1299-1923》,民主与建设出版社,2024。(Finkel, Caroline. *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1299–1923*. Translated by Deng Bochen, Xu Dacheng, Yu Li, Democracy and Construction Publishing House, 2024.)

50 哈全安,《土耳其通史》,上海社会科学院出版社,2021。(Ha, Qunan. *A General History of Türkiye*. Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2021.)

51 李秉忠,《土耳其研究》,社会科学文献出版社,2020。(Li, Bingzhong. *Studies on Türkiye*. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2020.)

52 (美)查尔斯·金著,宋飞译,《佩拉宫的午夜》:现代伊斯坦布尔的诞生,中国社会科学出版社,2016。(King, Charles. *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul*. Translated by Song Fei, Chinese Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016.)

*Translation*<sup>53</sup>, *Basic Turkish Phonetics*, and *Turkish Writing Tutorial II*. These resources have become invaluable for Turkish language education in Chinese universities. Additionally, the publication of grammar books, such as Liu Zhao's *Turkish Grammar*<sup>54</sup>, filled critical gaps in the systematic study of Turkish linguistic structures within China. These developments have not only elevated the academic study of Turkish but also established the language as an essential medium for cross-cultural communication and research between China and Türkiye, reflecting China's deepening engagement with Turkish linguistic studies.

Literary translation emerged as a significant feature during this period, with the works of Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk receiving widespread attention and acclaim in China. Translations of his novels, including *Benim Adım Kırmızı*<sup>55</sup>, *Masumiyet Müzesi*<sup>56</sup>, *Kar*<sup>57</sup>, and *Kara Kitap*<sup>58</sup>, have sparked considerable interest. These works not only reflect the complexities of modern Turkish society but also help Chinese readers gain a deeper understanding of Türkiye's history and culture. Meanwhile, translations of other Turkish literary works have also increased, such as Elif Shafak's novel *Kayıp Ağaçlar Adası*<sup>59</sup>. These literary works, through diverse perspectives, illustrate the richness of Turkish culture and the transformations within its society.

In addition to literature, studies on Türkiye's social issues and political landscape have become prominent topics during this period. For example, research on Türkiye's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and works such as *The Evolution of Turkish National Statehood and the Kurdish Issue*<sup>60</sup> analyze Türkiye's domestic political challenges and regional concerns. Furthermore, research on Türkiye's relations with the West, the United States, and China has expanded, with notable publications such as *Partners of the Empire*<sup>61</sup>, *The Image of Türkiye in Britain*<sup>62</sup>, and *From Baghdad to Istanbul: Middle Eastern Transformations in Historical*

53 刘钊, 李智育, 《土耳其语翻译实践》, 外语教学与研究出版社, 2008. (Liu, Zhao, and Li Zhiyu. *Practical Turkish Translation*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2008.)

54 刘钊, 《土耳其语语法》, 商务印书馆, 2019. (Liu, Zhao. *Turkish Grammar*. The Commercial Press, 2019.)

55 奥尔汗·帕慕克著, 沈志兴译, 《我的名字叫红》, 上海人民出版社, 2016. (Orhan Pamuk, *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, translated by Shen Zhixing, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2016.)

56 奥尔汗·帕慕克著, 陈竹冰译, 《纯真博物馆》, 上海人民出版社, 2021. (Orhan Pamuk, *Masumiyet Müzesi*, translated by Chen Zhubing, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2021.)

57 奥尔汗·帕慕克著, 沈志兴、张雷、彭俊、丁慧君译, 《雪》, 上海人民出版社, 2022. (Orhan Pamuk, *Kar*, translated by Shen Zhixing, Zhang Lei, Peng Jun, Ding Huijun, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2022.)

58 奥尔汗·帕慕克著, 李佳姗译, 《黑书》, 上海人民出版社, 2024. (Orhan Pamuk, *Kara Kitap*, translated by Li Jiashan, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2024.)

59 艾丽芙·沙法克著, 宋赛南译, 《失踪树木的岛屿》, 民主与建设出版社, 2024. (Shafak, Elif. *Kayıp Ağaçlar Adası* (*The Island of Missing Trees*). Translated by Song Sainan, Democracy and Construction Publishing House, 2024.)

60 李秉忠, 《土耳其民族国家建设和库尔德问题的演进》, 中国社会科学文献出版社, 2017. (Li Bingzhong, *The Evolution of Turkish National Statehood and the Kurdish Issue*, Chinese Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017.)

61 阿里·亚伊哲奥卢著, 宋宁刚译, 《帝国的伙伴》, 广西师范大学出版社, 2022. (Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, Translated by Song Ninggang, Guangxi Normal University Press, 2022.)

62 贺敏, 《英国的土耳其形象研究》, 科学出版社, 2018. (He Min, *The Image of Türkiye in Britain*, Science Press, 2018.)

*Perspective*<sup>63</sup>. These studies not only delve into Türkiye's internal dynamics but also analyze its geopolitical role from both Chinese and international perspectives.

Moreover, research in non-humanities disciplines has gradually expanded. For instance, publications like *The Business Environment in Türkiye*<sup>64</sup> and *Turkish Agriculture*<sup>65</sup> provide practical insights for Chinese businesses and scholars seeking to understand Türkiye's economic landscape, thereby enhancing Sino-Turkish economic cooperation. Additionally, Turkish traditional culture and craftsmanship have garnered attention, as seen in works like *Turkish Traditional Lacework*<sup>66</sup> and *Turkish Music*<sup>67</sup>. These research and translation efforts not only exemplify cultural exchange but also offer the Chinese public a deeper appreciation of Türkiye's rich cultural heritage.

Time period	-1948	1949-1971	1972-2013	2013-2024
Publication number	16	12	29	61

(Source: Compiled by the author)

#### 4. Türkiye Studies in Chinese Journals

Since 1949, Türkiye studies in Chinese journals, particularly within the broader field of Middle Eastern and North African studies, have transitioned from a marginal topic to a prominent research focus. Recent years have seen a marked diversification of themes, wider disciplinary distribution, and sustained growth in publication numbers. Under the influence of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the deepening of Sino-Turkish relations, Türkiye has become an important subject in Chinese academia. Research in this area spans multiple perspectives, including geopolitics, economic cooperation, culture, and history, reflecting comprehensive attention to Türkiye's multi-faceted strategic significance.

While Shen and Işık (2020) identified only 48 academic articles published in Chinese between 1971 and 2020 that focused specifically on the Turkish language and culture, their study's limited thematic scope did not capture the broader landscape of Türkiye-related scholarship. In contrast, the present research adopts a more expansive view, encompassing publications in political science, international relations, economics, and cultural studies. Our survey reveals

63 笱涛, 《从巴格达到伊斯坦布尔: 历史视野下的中东大变局》, 中信出版社集团, 2021. (Zan Tao, *From Baghdad to Istanbul: Middle Eastern Transformations in Historical Perspective*, CITIC Publishing Group, 2021.)

64 李鑫均, 杜东辉, 郭长刚, 《土耳其商务环境》, 对外经贸大学出版社, 2021. (Li Xinjun, Du Donghui, and Guo Changgang, *The Business Environment in Türkiye*, University of International Business and Economics Press, 2021.)

65 李春顶, 《土耳其农业》, 中国农业出版社, 2021. (Li Chunding, *Turkish Agriculture*, China Agriculture Press, 2021.)

66 (日)七海光著, 蒋悠悠译, 《土耳其传统蕾丝编织》, 中国纺织出版社, 2021. (Nanami Hikaru, *Turkish Traditional Lacework*, Translated by Jiang Youyou, China Textile Publishing House, 2021.)

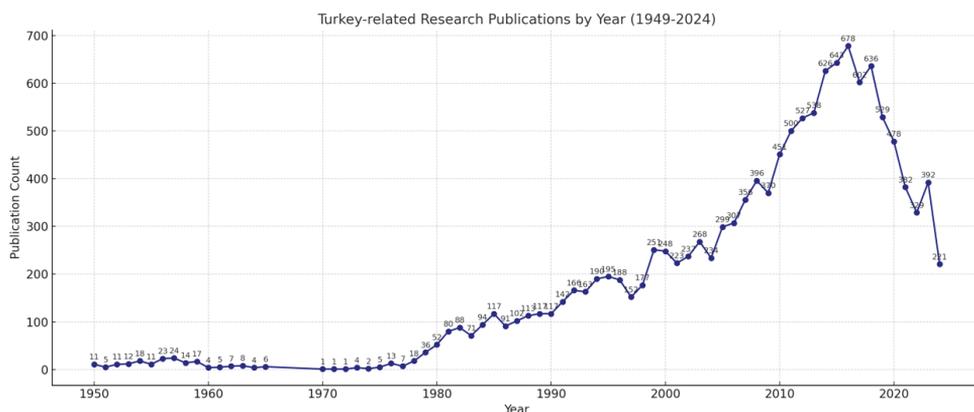
67 埃利奥特·贝茨、管建华、刘咏莲, 《土耳其音乐》, 江苏教育出版社, 2017. (Elliot Bates, Guan Jianhua, and Liu Yonglian, *Turkish Music*, Jiangsu Education Publishing House, 2017.)

that the number of Türkiye-related academic journal articles has surged significantly in recent years, averaging several hundred per year, with a cumulative total of 3,958 articles by the end of 2024. This dramatic increase not only reflects the growing academic attention to Türkiye but also indicates a fundamental shift: from a niche linguistic interest to a fully integrated area of research within Chinese social sciences and humanities. The expansion in volume and disciplinary diversity marks a qualitative leap in Chinese scholarship on Türkiye, one that mirrors the broader deepening of bilateral ties and China's evolving approach to area studies.

The number of journal articles on Türkiye in China between 1949 and the 1970s was extremely limited, averaging fewer than 100 annually. This scarcity can be attributed to the diplomatic priorities and academic environment of the early years of the People's Republic of China. During this period, China's foreign policy was focused on domestic reconstruction and alignment with socialist bloc countries, leaving little room for engagement with the Middle East and Türkiye. Furthermore, limited academic resources and an emphasis on ideology, domestic economic development, and political stability restricted in-depth studies on peripheral nations like Türkiye.

After the 1970s, China's increasing global engagement, including the formal establishment of diplomatic relations with Türkiye, brought the latter into the academic spotlight. As a pivotal state in the Middle East and Eurasia, Türkiye's geopolitical importance grew, especially following the Cold War, when its role as a NATO member and a bridge between Europe and Asia attracted greater attention. The expansion of Chinese academic resources and enhanced opportunities for international exchange further facilitated research during this period, leading to a rapid increase in publications.

In the 21st century, especially after 2010, the Belt and Road Initiative accelerated the growth of Türkiye studies in China. As a critical node at the western terminus of the BRI, Türkiye's strategic location and potential for cooperation gained heightened attention from Chinese scholars. By 2016, the number of academic articles on Türkiye reached a peak of 678, reflecting its emergence as a scholarly hotspot. Although the annual publication volume has since declined slightly, with 392 articles published in 2023, Türkiye studies have transitioned into a stable and enduring field of interest within Chinese academia.

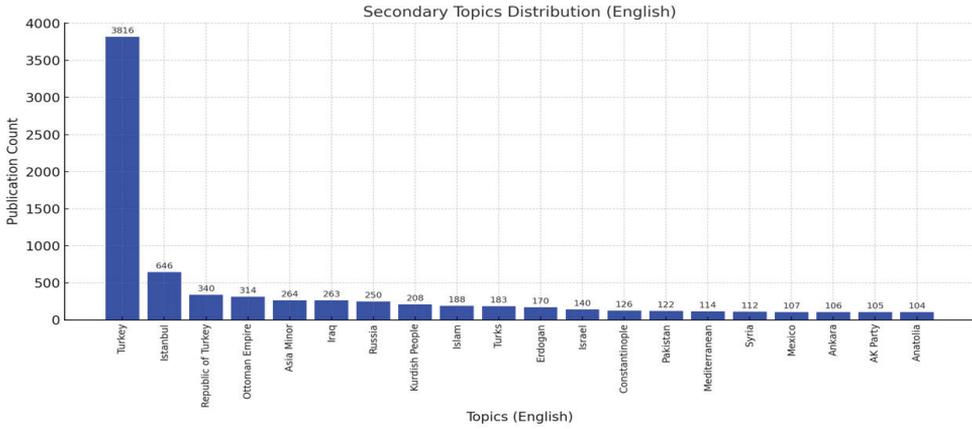


**Chart 2.** the publication of Türkiye-related articles in Chinese Journals

*(Source: Compiled by the author)*

This chronological trend not only mirrors the ebb and flow of Sino-Turkish relations but also reflects the expanding scope of international studies within China. Türkiye’s complex geopolitical role, rich cultural traditions, and strategic significance in regional and global affairs have made it a critical entry point for Chinese scholars to understand and analyze regional dynamics in the context of globalization.

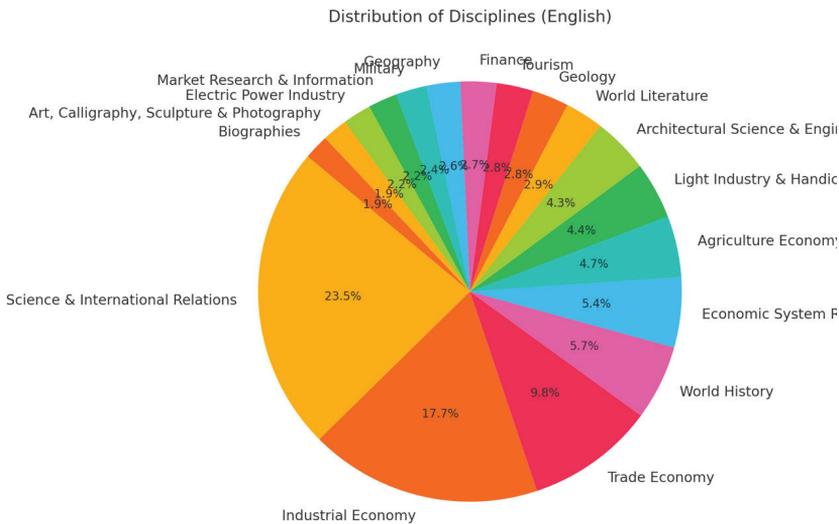
From 1949 to 2024, research on Türkiye in Chinese journals has displayed significant thematic diversity. The keyword “Türkiye” (土耳其) dominates with 3,958 articles, reflecting the country’s unique geopolitical significance. Other focal points include “Istanbul” (343 articles), highlighting its role as the historical center of the Ottoman Empire and the contemporary cultural and economic hub of Türkiye, and “Belt and Road Initiative” (95 articles), underlining the strategic importance of Sino-Turkish cooperation. Themes such as “Russia” (159 articles) and “Syria” (105 articles) reflect Türkiye’s complex regional relationships, while studies on literature and religion (e.g., Orhan Pamuk and Islam) demonstrate an expansion into cultural and social dimensions.



**Chart 3.** Distribution of Journal Articles by Keywords

(Source: Data from CNKI, made by the author)

From a disciplinary perspective, political science and international relations dominate with 2,414 articles, underscoring Türkiye’s pivotal role in regional and global politics. Economic fields, including industrial economics (1,819 articles) and trade economics (1,009 articles), highlight the interest in Sino-Turkish economic cooperation and Türkiye’s economic model. Historical (590 articles) and cultural studies (301 articles) further emphasize Türkiye’s unique heritage and cultural influence.



**Chart 4.** Distribution Of Disciplines

(Source: Compiled by the author)

The surge in Türkiye studies within Chinese academia reflects both the country's strategic importance and the evolving priorities of Chinese scholars. From geopolitics and economic cooperation to cultural exchange and historical exploration, the research landscape showcases remarkable diversity and depth. This trend aligns with China's increasing global engagement and the growing importance of Türkiye as a gateway between Asia and Europe. As Sino-Turkish relations continue to develop, Türkiye studies are poised to play an even more prominent role in China's academic and strategic discourse.

The dominance of these institutions in Türkiye studies is closely linked to their academic traditions, research resources, and geographical advantages. Leading comprehensive universities, such as Peking University, Fudan University, Tsinghua University, and Renmin University of China, serve as the core of China's academic research. Their strengths in international relations, economics, and regional studies have positioned them as frontrunners in Türkiye studies. Institutions like Shanghai International Studies University, with its focus on language research, play a significant role in exploring Turkish culture, language, and literature.

Regionally positioned universities, such as Northwest University, Shihezi University, and Xinjiang University, leverage their geographical proximity to Türkiye and related cultural spheres. These institutions emphasize historical and cultural exchanges with Central Asia and the Middle East, aligning their research topics with Türkiye's cultural heritage and regional influence. Meanwhile, policy-oriented think tanks, such as the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations and the Institute of West Asian and African Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, contribute extensively to studies on Türkiye's international politics, regional conflicts, and economic cooperation. Their outputs not only serve academic purposes but also provide critical insights for government decision-making.

Rank	Institution	Name in Chinese	Number of Articles
1	Peking University	北京大学	112
2	Shanghai International Studies University	上海外国语大学	108
3	Northwest University	西北大学	104
4	China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations	中国现代国际关系研究院	104
5	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of West Asian and African Studies	中国社会科学院西亚非洲研究所	101
6	Shaanxi Normal University	陕西师范大学	68
7	Nankai University	南开大学	64
8	Shanghai University	上海大学	64

9	Fudan University	复旦大学	62
10	Renmin University of China	中国人民大学	59
11	Lanzhou University	兰州大学	57
12	Shihezi University	石河子大学	55
13	Minzu University of China	中央民族大学	51
14	Xinjiang University	新疆大学	50
15	Nanjing University	南京大学	49
16	Capital Normal University	首都师范大学	47
17	Liaoning University	辽宁大学	39
18	Xiamen University	厦门大学	36
19	East China Normal University	华东师范大学	36
20	Tsinghua University	清华大学	35

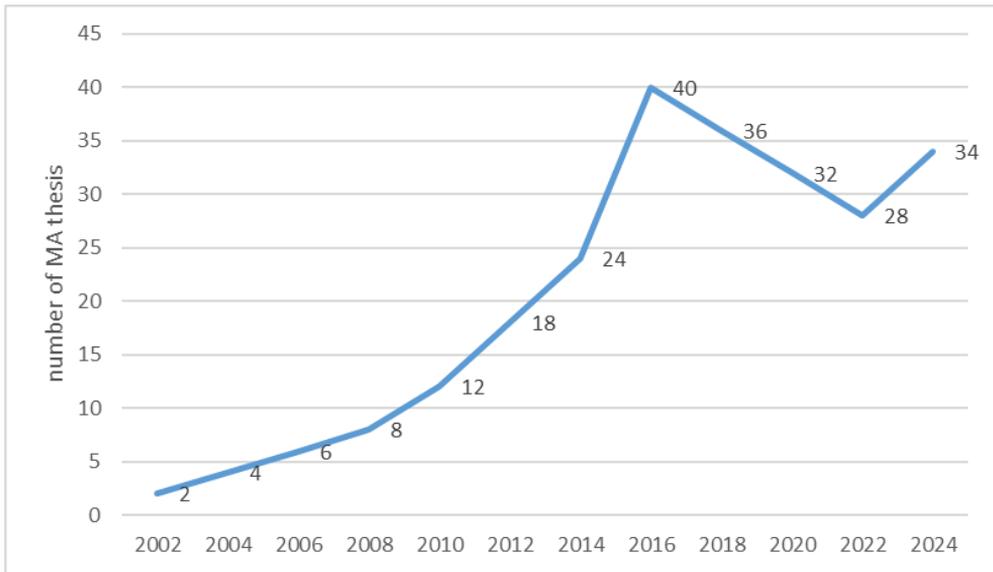
(Source: Compiled by the author)

## 5. Master and PhD studies on Türkiye

### 5.1 Master studies

While Shen and Işık (2020) identified only 12 master's theses on Turkish language topics completed in China between 2006 and 2020—and no doctoral dissertations—the scope of their study was confined to linguistic research within Turcology departments. By contrast, our investigation covers a broader spectrum of disciplines and reflects a dramatic increase in scholarly engagement with Türkiye-related topics. Between 2002 and 2024, we identified 368 master's theses and over 30 doctoral dissertations focusing on Türkiye, across fields such as political science, literature, diplomacy, economics, and cultural studies. This remarkable growth not only reflects heightened academic interest but also points to the emergence of Türkiye studies as a dynamic, interdisciplinary domain within Chinese academia—far beyond what was captured in earlier research.

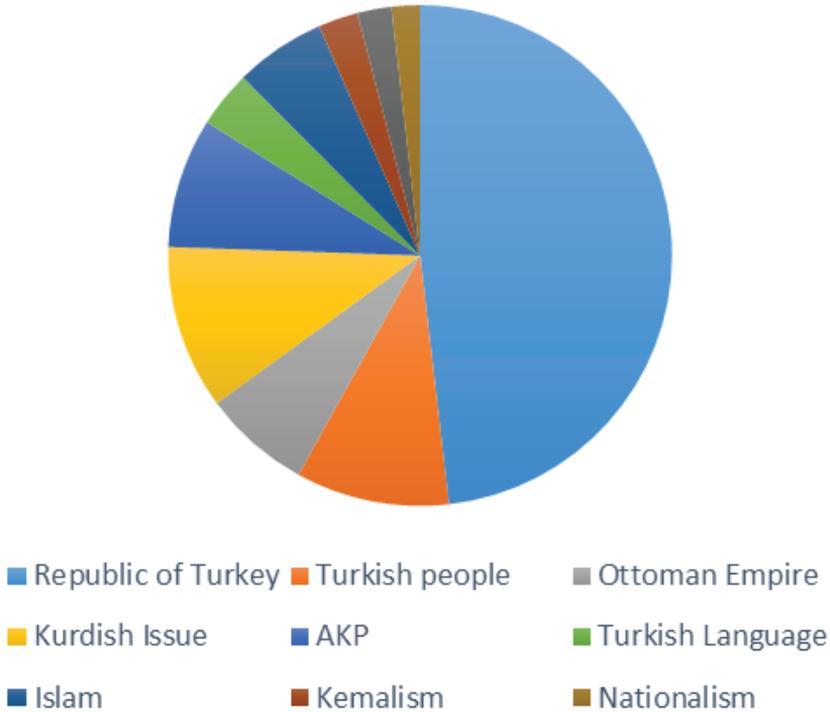
Between 2002 and 2024, a total of 368 master's theses focusing on Türkiye were completed in China. The output exhibits a consistent growth trajectory, with notable increases after 2010, correlating with China's Belt and Road Initiative and the expansion of Sino-Turkish relations. Peaks in thesis output were observed in 2016 and subsequent years, indicating heightened academic engagement with Türkiye during this period. Despite minor fluctuations, the data reveals a steady incorporation of Türkiye Studies into broader academic discourse.



**Chart 5.** Distribution Of Master Thesis on Turkish Studies In China (2000-2022)

(Source: CNKI data, made by the author)

The major themes explored in these theses reflect a diverse array of research interests. Topics such as “the republic of Türkiye” (173 theses) “Türkiye” (125) and “ottoman empire” (38 theses) dominate, underscoring the centrality of Türkiye’s geopolitical and cultural significance. Other prominent themes include “Justice and Development Party” (13 theses) and “Kurdish issue” (13 theses), reflecting China’s academic interest in Türkiye’s political landscape. Emerging areas, such as “Belt and Road Initiative” and “Syrian refugees”, demonstrate an expansion into contemporary geopolitical and humanitarian issues. Leading institutions contributing to Türkiye Studies include Peking University, Shanghai International Studies University, and Northwest University. Disciplines such as political science, international relations, linguistics, and history dominate, demonstrating the multidisciplinary approach scholars adopt to understand Türkiye’s strategic role and cultural identity.



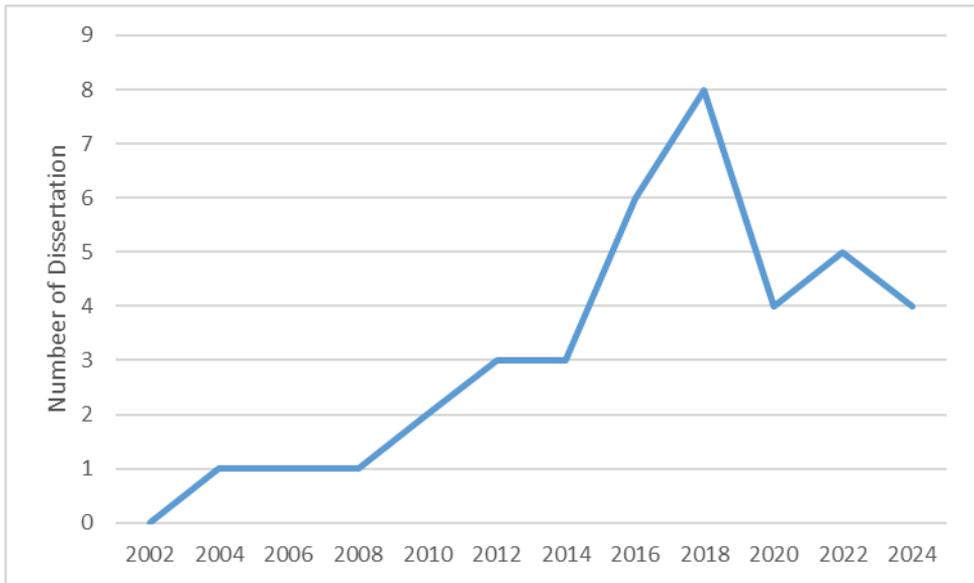
**Chart 6.** Distribution of keywords of Master Studies

(Source: CNKI data, made by the author)

## 5.2 Ph.D. studies

The number of doctoral dissertations related to Türkiye Studies has shown consistent growth over time. In the early 2000s, the number of dissertations was minimal, reflecting the limited scope of Sino-Turkish relations and China's focus on domestic priorities. The turning point came in the 2010s, particularly after the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, which positioned Türkiye as a critical partner at the western terminus of the initiative.

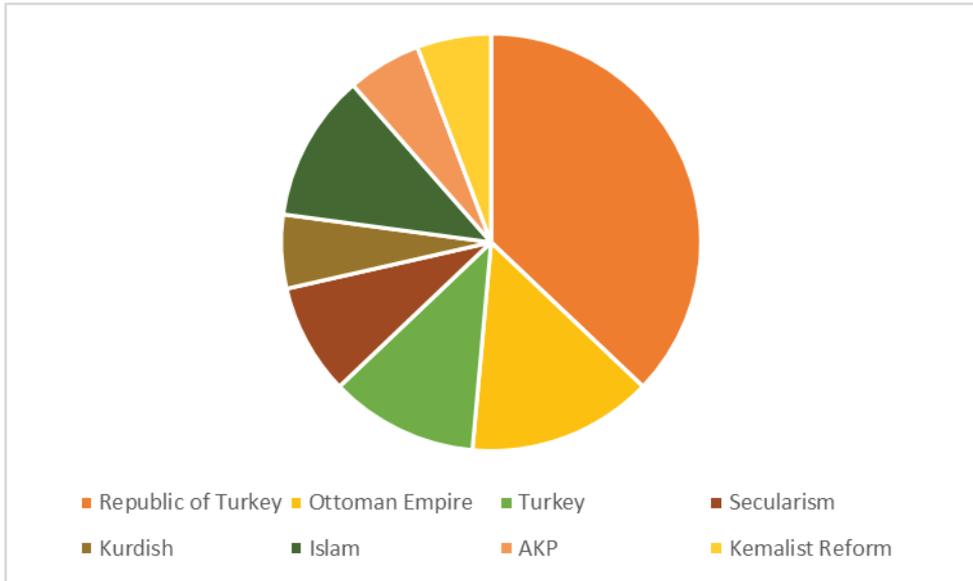
The peak output occurred in 2016, driven by intensified Sino-Turkish collaboration and increasing academic interest in Türkiye's role in regional and global geopolitics. While the number of dissertations has stabilized in recent years, with an annual output of 4-6 dissertations, this trend indicates that Türkiye Studies in China have transitioned from a developmental phase to a mature academic field.



**Chart 7.** Distribution of PhD dissertations on Turkish Studies in China (2000-2022)

(Source: CNKI data, made by the author)

The keyword analysis of doctoral dissertations on Türkiye Studies in China reveals a strong focus on modern political and historical themes. The Republic of Türkiye (13 studies) and the Ottoman Empire (5 studies) dominate, highlighting the interest in Türkiye's nation-state formation and historical legacy. Topics like Islam (4 studies) and secularism (3 studies) reflect the interplay between religion and governance, while specific issues such as the Kurdish question (2 studies), Justice and Development Party (AKP) (2 studies), and Kemalist reforms (2 studies) indicate attention to Türkiye's domestic challenges and reform efforts. This distribution underscores the multidimensional nature of Türkiye Studies, balancing historical, political, and cultural analyses.



**Chart 8.** Distribution of keywords of PhD Studies

Source: CNKI data, made by the author

## Conclusion

The evolution of Turkish studies in China reflects broader trends in the deepening of Sino-Turkish relations, the globalization of Chinese academia, and China's strategic push in area studies. Over the past few decades, this field has progressed from a marginal, language- and literature-focused pursuit to a dynamic and multifaceted domain of scholarship. It has been enriched by contributions across disciplines such as history, literature, linguistics, politics, and economics, transforming a once-niche interest into a mature research system that engages with both contemporary and historical issues.

Reviewing the development stages of Turkish studies in China reveals a clear trajectory of expansion and diversification. Early efforts were constrained by geopolitical conditions and limited resources, focusing mainly on translated literary works and basic linguistic studies as points of interest. The establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1971 marked a turning point, opening new avenues for academic exchange and collaboration. Subsequent decades saw gradual growth in expertise and institutional support, but it was after the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 that the field truly accelerated. Türkiye's role as a key partner under this initiative underscored its importance in China's regional studies strategy, catalyzing the growth of the field beyond philological studies into areas like politics, economics, and cultural research. What began as a peripheral curiosity in language and literature thus evolved

into a comprehensive research system encompassing diverse facets of Turkish society and Sino-Turkish interactions.

As the field began to expand, early scholarly reviews took stock of its progress. Notably, the study of Shen & Işık in 2020 provided one of the first comprehensive overviews of Turkish studies in China, focusing on the establishment of Turkish language departments, translations of Turkish literature, and the production of language teaching materials and academic publications. Their findings highlighted that, by 2019, these efforts were advancing in tandem with improving Sino-Turkish ties, yet the field had not yet attained full academic maturity in terms of scholarly output. While this early research offered a valuable baseline for understanding the nascent stage of Chinese Turkology, it did not capture the multi-disciplinary expansion and deepening of research that unfolded in subsequent years. The present study builds on that foundation by extending the temporal scope and thematic range of analysis, providing an updated and more extensive examination that illustrates how Turkish studies in China have reached a new level of breadth and depth.

The diversification of research topics and the establishment of specialized Turkish studies centers in recent years have laid a strong foundation for future academic endeavors. While political and economic analyses continue to dominate much of the scholarship, emerging areas such as cultural exchange, comparative modernity, literary studies, and other interdisciplinary research are gaining prominence as promising directions for further exploration. These developments not only enhance mutual understanding between China and Türkiye but also contribute to global scholarship by incorporating unique perspectives from the Global South. Chinese scholars are increasingly engaging in cross-cultural dialogues and comparative studies that examine modern development trajectories in both countries, adding rich nuance to the study of modernity and cultural change beyond a Western-centric framework.

Looking ahead, Turkish studies in China is poised to continue its expansion in response to evolving dynamics of Sino-Turkish relations, China's ongoing investment in area studies, and the increasing interconnectedness of global academia. Continued investment in academic resources, interdisciplinary collaboration, and international partnerships will be critical in sustaining this momentum and ensuring the field's further maturation. As China's role on the global stage grows, so too will its contributions to the study of nations like Türkiye, fostering a richer and more inclusive understanding of our shared world. The future of this field promises a growing plurality of research agendas – from cultural exchange and comparative modernity to studies of global South solidarity – reflecting both the deepening ties between China and Türkiye and the broader trends of academic globalization and regional studies development.

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