

## China Reaches Turkey? Radio Peking's Turkish Language Broadcasts During the Cold War\*

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### Abstract

*A young socialist regime with few diplomatic ties in the 1950s and 1960s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) made significant attempts to reach foreign audiences through the use of mass media. Shortwave broadcasting was a particularly significant means of disseminating the PRC's worldview abroad. Radio Peking's Turkish language section, which was established in 1957 along with Arabic and Persian broadcasts, signaled China's desire to reach countries in the Middle East. Predating official Sino-Turkish ties and providing a direct cultural link between China and Turkey at a time when few such channels existed, Radio Peking's Turkish language broadcasts should be regarded as a significant aspect of Sino-Turkish relations during the Cold War years. Based on recently available Chinese language sources, as well as interviews with retired staff, this article examines Radio Peking's Turkish language section with regard to its organization, program content and audience from 1957 to 1976. It is significant that the PRC regime continued its Turkish language broadcasts amidst various challenges, such as administrative instability, lack of trained personnel, poor technical equipment and unsatisfactory audience numbers.*

**Keywords:** Radio Peking, propaganda, China, Cold War, Turkey

### 1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) remained alienated from the West from its foundation in 1949 until the Sino-US rapprochement of the early 1970s. Its lack of diplomatic representation in most of the capitalist bloc worried the young PRC regime, which found it increasingly difficult to tackle the anti-China propaganda led by the US during the Cold War. The PRC regime's international isolation reached its peak in the early 1960s, when the Sino-Soviet ideological split put an end to their decade-long brotherly relations. Given China's lack of friendly official ties, the PRC regime emphasized "state-to-people" links, which included various types of propaganda and persuasion activities aimed at reaching overseas audiences.<sup>1</sup> Euphemistically called "people's diplomacy" in China during the Maoist decades (1949-1976), these activities sought to create a favorable image of the PRC regime and exert its ideological influence abroad. In this sense, China had various means at its disposal, including

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<sup>1</sup> The relationship between China's isolation and the regime's emphasis on "people's diplomacy" is noted in various studies. For example, see Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 89.

international student exchanges, delegation visits, overseas exhibitions, etc.<sup>2</sup> The country's most significant external propaganda activities, however, relied on the use of mass media, i.e., publications and radio broadcasts in foreign languages. Operating within the larger foreign propaganda establishment in China, the Foreign Languages Press and Radio Peking were the two central organs assigned this task. Whereas the former organization published and disseminated China's foreign language publications (books, magazines, albums, posters and souvenir items), the latter was responsible for preparing and broadcasting China's shortwave radio content. Working under the strict guidelines of the highest party and government authorities, the Foreign Languages Press and Radio Peking produced the bulk of China's foreign propaganda content during the Maoist decades.<sup>3</sup>

This article focuses on the workings of Radio Peking's Turkish language section, which was established in 1957 to propagate China's achievements to Turkish-speaking people in Turkey and the surrounding region.<sup>4</sup> The launch of these broadcasts predated the establishment of official Sino-Turkish ties, which began only in 1971. In this sense, China's attempt to reach Turkish audiences is a significant but neglected aspect of Sino-Turkish relations in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>5</sup> At the height of the Cold War, China and Turkey stood at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. Turkey had become a NATO member in 1952, when Turkish soldiers under UN command were fighting in the Korean War against Chinese and North Korean troops. Throughout the 1950s, the anti-communist sentiment in Turkey was at its peak, with "Red China" being largely perceived as a communist tyrant. Reciprocally, the PRC regime considered Turkey to be an "American puppet", under the continuous influence of Western propaganda.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Turkey did not have a central place in China's foreign policy discourse, Turkey's policies concerning her neighborhood and her participation in pro-American regional alliances did raise eyebrows in China.<sup>7</sup>

In retrospect, the Sino-Turkish relationship (or the lack thereof) in the 1950s and 1960s was determined by the larger Cold War atmosphere and the antagonistic mutual perceptions associated with it. This was the case even after the establishment of an official relationship in 1971, a decision which had more to do with the Sino-US rapprochement than a drastic shift in Sino-Turkish perceptions. This article argues that, despite its negligible audience size, Turkish language broadcasts provided an important cultural link between China and Turkey at a time when few such channels existed. Based on recently published sources in Chinese and English, as well as interviews with retired Radio Peking staff, this article examines the Turkish broadcasting section in terms of its staff and organization, editorial tasks and program content and audience and feedback from 1957 to 1976.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth examination of these activities, see United States Information Agency, *The External Information and Cultural Relations Programs of the People's Republic of China* (Research Service: 1973).

<sup>3</sup> Chinese foreign propaganda undertaken by Radio Peking and the Foreign Languages Press have been analyzed by various scholars in China. See, for instance, Tong Zhixia, *Zhongguo guoji xinwen chuanbo shi* [A History of International News Communication of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo chuanbo daxue chubanshe, 2006); Gan Xianfeng, *Zhongguo duiwai xinwen chuanbo shi* [History of China's foreign news broadcasts], (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2004); Huang Zecun, *Xin shiqi duiwai xuanchuan lungao* [Draft discussion of the foreign propaganda in the new era] (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2002); Zhang Kun, *Guojia xingxiang chuanbo* [Disseminating the Image of the Country], (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, 2005); Zhang Kun, *Chuanbo guannian de lishi kaocha*, [Historical analysis of propaganda concepts] (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Turkish-language broadcasts were also received in Bulgaria, Romania, Azerbaijan and Cyprus.

<sup>5</sup> Other channels included China-related publications, which circulated in Turkey during the 1960s. These were made available by the Turkish leftists who became interested in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and Mao Zedong Thought – a Chinese version of Marxist-Leninist theory, which rivaled Soviet-style socialism.

<sup>6</sup> See Barış Adıbelli, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Çin-Türkiye İlişkileri*, (İstanbul: IQ Kültür-Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007), 184-185.

<sup>7</sup> Beijing siding with Syria in the Turkish-Syrian border issue of 1957 and Chinese criticism of Turkey's participation in Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and other US-backed security organizations are major examples. See Yitzhak Shichor, *Ethno-diplomacy: the Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations*, (Washington: East West Center, 2009), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> The period 1949 to 1976 signifies Mao Zedong rule in PRC history. Although the Cold War ended in 1989, the "opening

As will be elaborated on below, the Turkish language section worked under extremely difficult conditions during this period. While some of its problems originated from the larger propaganda machine in China (i.e., a huge bureaucracy) others were due to unfamiliarity with the Turkish language (i.e., lack of dictionaries, trained personnel, educational facilities, etc.). Given the serious challenges associated with broadcasting in Turkish, which had few speakers in China at the time, Radio Peking's continued efforts to reach Turkish-speaking audiences during the Cold War years is even more noteworthy. Before focusing on the Turkish language section, however, a few words are necessary about the workings of the Chinese foreign propaganda establishment during the Mao Zedong era (1949-1976).

## 2. Chinese Foreign Propaganda and Radio Peking

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was engaged in propaganda activities from its foundation in 1921. While the party drew its initial propaganda guidelines from Leninist Russia, there is scholarly consensus that the CCP adapted these guidelines to suit local needs.<sup>9</sup> While the general objectives of Chinese communist propaganda changed over time due to new challenges faced by the party in each historical segment, the CCP's reliance on propaganda for mass mobilization remained one of its key precepts.<sup>10</sup> In terms of winning the hearts and minds of foreign audiences, the party's initial efforts at propaganda can be traced back to the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Civil War fought against the Nationalist Party (1945-1949).<sup>11</sup> Systematic efforts in Chinese communist foreign language broadcasting only began after the foundation of the PRC in 1949, with the establishment of the Central Broadcasting Administration in 1950.<sup>12</sup> More commonly known by its call sign "Radio Peking", the short-wave broadcasts undertaken by this government agency became a major tool for Chinese propaganda and persuasion activities during the Cold War.

As one of the central organs in the Chinese foreign propaganda apparatus, Radio Peking operated under the dual authority of the CCP's Central Committee Propaganda Department and the State Council.<sup>13</sup> External propaganda sections were closely monitored by Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, who overviewed organization's day-to-day operations as well as the general editorial lines to ensure they met with the PRC regime's domestic and

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up reforms" led by Deng Xiaoping in the post-1978 era represented economic, political and social change in China. Because the workings of Radio Peking and the Turkish broadcasting section changed drastically in the post-reform era, this study's focus is limited to the Maoist decades.

<sup>9</sup> For a comparative analysis of Chinese and Soviet propaganda, see Julian Chang, "The mechanics of state propaganda: The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union in the 1950s" in Timothy Cheek et al. *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China*, Armonk, (NY: London, M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 76-124. Also see Marianne Bastid-Bruguere, "Patterns of Propaganda organization in the national-revolutionary movement in China in the 1920s" in Leutner, Mechthild, et al., eds. *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between Triumph and Disaster* (London: New York: Routledge Curzon), 2002.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed examination of CCP propaganda objectives in each historical segment, see Lin Zhida, *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan shi*, [Chinese Communist Party Propaganda History] (Sichuan: Renmin Chubanshi, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> The CCP launched broadcasts in Japanese (1941) and English (1947) to win overseas supporters in its fight against Japanese troops, and later, its political rival, the Nationalist Party (Guomindang). See Hu Yaoting "Zhongguo renmin duiwai guangbo tan yuan ji" [Record of discussion on the origins of Chinese People's foreign broadcasts] in Huang Daqiang ed. *Zhongguo guoji guangbo huiyilu* [Recollections of Chinese International Broadcasting], (Beijing Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo Chubanshe, 1996), 25-35. For propaganda activities in the 1930s, see Gan Xianfeng, *Zhongguo duiwai xinwen chuanbo shi* [History of China's foreign news broadcasts], (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2004), 2 and Tong Zhixia, *Zhongguo guoji xinwen chuanbo shi* [A History of International News Communication of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo chuanbo daxue chubanshe, 2006), 67.

<sup>12</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Zhongguo guoji guangbo diantai bumen zhi*, [Departmental Record of China International Broadcasting Station] (Beijing: Guoji guangbo chubanshe, Volume 1, 2001), 5.

<sup>13</sup> While these two agencies were central to the Chinese foreign propaganda leadership, the larger network included many other party and state bodies. The International Propaganda Leadership Small Group (*Guoji Xuanchuan Lingdao Xiaozu*), established in 1961, was composed of the State Council Foreign Affairs Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CC Liaison Department, the CC Propaganda Department, the International Culture Committee, *People's Daily*, the Xinhua Agency, the Foreign Languages Press and Radio Peking. See Gan Xianfeng, *Zhongguo duiwai xinwen chuanbo shi*, 142-143.

international priorities.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the Cold War years, Radio Peking saw gradual growth in terms of its total broadcasting hours, number of broadcasting languages and its target audiences. This expansion was also reflected in its administrative growth. Radio Peking began with only 34 people in 1949; the number of staff grew to 58 in 1950; 84 in 1952; 214 in 1956 and 685 in 1966.<sup>15</sup>

Radio Peking's initial broadcasts were aimed at the country's immediate neighborhood in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>16</sup> This focus was related to the regime's desire to convince its Asian neighbors of its peaceful intentions, which became suspect after China's participation in the Korean War (1950-1953).<sup>17</sup> Radio Peking saw its first major expansion in target audiences subsequent to the Bandung Conference (1955), which signified the PRC regime's growing desire to act as a leader of developing countries.<sup>18</sup> This growth necessitated launching new broadcasting languages aimed at audiences in Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, including Turkey.<sup>19</sup> By the early 1960s, following the Sino-Soviet split, Radio Peking broadcasts also reached Eastern Europe and Africa, areas which had been long considered to be under the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>20</sup> Having added several foreign languages to its broadcasts by the mid-1960s, Radio Peking became a world leader in shortwave broadcasting, along with Radio Moscow (the Soviet Union) and Voice of America (the US).<sup>21</sup> The global reach of Radio Peking broadcasts coincided with the launch of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, which made "export of Mao Zedong Thought" a top priority in foreign propaganda.<sup>22</sup>

The next section examines Radio Peking's Turkish language section and focuses on the specific decision to launch these broadcasts.

### 3. Turkish Broadcasting Section

As noted, Turkish language broadcasts were launched in 1957 alongside Persian and Arabic. While some observers attribute this move to the "Third World" spirit emanating from the

<sup>14</sup> The influence of Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai on foreign propaganda is acknowledged in many Chinese- and English-language sources. For Mao Zedong's involvement, see Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 37. On Zhou Enlai, see Huang Zecun, *Xin shiqi duiwai xuanchuan lungao* [Draft discussion of the foreign propaganda in the new era] (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2002), 97-100; Morris R. Wills, J., Robert Moskin, *Turncoat: An American's 12 Years in Communist China: the story of Morris R. Wills as told to J. Robert Moskin*, (Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc, 1966), 134-135; Pu Shiyu, "Chaoyu guangbo chuangjian shiqi de diandi huiyi" (Bits of memories from the time of the establishment of Korean language broadcasts) in *Zhongguo guoji guangbo huiyilu*, ed. Huang Daqiang, 339.

<sup>15</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Zhongguo guoji guangbo diantai zhi, (shang)* [Record of the China International Broadcasting Station, Vol. 1.] (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 2001), 23-26.

<sup>16</sup> Radio Peking launched Korean, Burmese, Thai, Indonesian and Vietnamese broadcasts in the early 1950s, which led to the establishment of the Eastern Languages Department. See the organizational chart for 1950 in Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Diantai zhi*, Vol. 2, 854.

<sup>17</sup> In 1954, Asian broadcasts propagated "five principles of peaceful co-existence" and anti-US sentiment. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 17-18.

<sup>18</sup> See *The external information and cultural relations programs*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Radio Peking launched Spanish broadcasts aimed at Latin America in 1956 and Persian, Turkish and Arabic broadcasts aimed at the Middle East in 1957. China's target audiences in Asia were also broadened with the launch of Malay, Hindi, Lao and Cambodian broadcasts in the second half of the 1950s.

<sup>20</sup> See *The external information and cultural relations programs*, 100. Radio Peking's language broadcasts aimed at the Soviet sphere of influence included German (1960), Russian (1962), Mongolian (1964), Czech (1968), Polish (1968) and Romanian (1968). In its African broadcasts, Radio Peking used indigenous languages such as Hausa (1963) and Swahili (1961), in addition to English and French. Other languages added to Radio Peking broadcasts during the Maoist decades included Tamil (1963), Esperanto (1964), Filipino (1965), Urdu (1966), Bengali (1969), Pashto (1973), Bulgarian (1974), Nepalese (1975) and Hungarian (1976). See *Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo shiliao jianbian (1947-1987)* [Short edition of China Radio International Historical Materials (1947-1987)], ed. Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo Diantai Tai shi bian bianzu (editorial board for the history of China Radio International) (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1987), 395-396.

<sup>21</sup> According to a BBC report released in the early 1960s, Radio Peking occupied the third place in international broadcasting in terms of total broadcasting hours. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Diantai zhi Vol. 1*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> See Huang Zecun, *Xin shiqi duiwai xuanchuan lungao*, 71; Gan Xianfeng, *Zhongguo duiwai xinwen chuanbo shi*, 198.

Geneva (1954) and Bandung (1955) conferences, others attribute it to the Suez Crisis of 1956.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the above theories have some explanatory value, the evidence concerning the specific decision to launch Turkish language broadcasts suggests that it was not a calculated move on the part of the PRC regime. Although it is clear that China's interest in developing countries was growing at the time, as of early 1957, Radio Peking was not planning on launching Turkish broadcasts.<sup>24</sup> This particular decision seems to have originated from a twist of events following the arrival of Iranian experts from Radio Moscow to help with the launch of Radio Peking's Persian language broadcasts.<sup>25</sup>

This small team of Soviet-affiliated Iranian experts, three of whom were also fluent in Turkish, suggested that Radio Peking could also launch Turkish language broadcasts.<sup>26</sup> As Radio Peking heavily relied on the linguistic assistance of the Soviet experts posted to China throughout the 1950s, this was a viable proposal, and welcomed by the Chinese side.

The paper next explores the organization, cadres and working routine in the Turkish broadcasting section between 1957 and 1976.

### 3.1. Organization and cadres

Thanks to the organic link between the Persian and Turkish language sections, they began operation under the common label "Iran-Turkey" (*yi-tu*, in Chinese) broadcasts.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1963 that the Turkish section acquired its own section with a separate organizational structure.<sup>28</sup> The section structure reflected the general administrative framework at Radio Peking, which clearly divided the tasks of senior and junior staff. The senior staff was primarily responsible for maintaining the ideological line of the program content, whereas the junior staff was responsible for technical duties, such as translation, proofreading, recording and broadcasting. Senior employees were chosen for their ideological standing and trustworthiness rather than for their linguistic expertise.<sup>29</sup> The junior staff, on the other hand, had to be fluent in at least one foreign language, although it was also common for inexperienced staff to enroll in language courses or receive on-the-job training. In the junior cadres, Radio Peking distinguished among foreign experts, who came either directly from the Soviet Union or from affiliated communist parties around the world; "Overseas Chinese" who were born or raised in a foreign country and returned to the mainland to help with reconstruction efforts,<sup>30</sup> and regular Chinese staff, who received their foreign language education in China. Among these, the returned overseas Chinese and foreign experts had privileged status in terms of salaries and other benefits.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> According to United States Information Agency (USIA) experts, the Suez Crisis was instrumental in drawing China's attention to the Middle East. See *The external information and cultural relations programs*, 100.

<sup>24</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 311; also see Li Ruheng, "Kaiban bosi yu he tuerqi yu guangbo de youlai he jingyan" [Origins and experiences of launching the Persian and Turkish broadcasts] in *Zhongguo guoji guangbo huiyilu*, ed. Huang Daqiang, 211.

<sup>25</sup> Tuerqi yu zu (Turkish language section) "Tuerqi yu guangbo" (Turkish language broadcasts) in *Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo shiliao jianbian (1947-1987)*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> See Li Ruheng, "Kaiban bosi yu he tuerqi", 211.

<sup>27</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 315.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> According to a retired Radio Peking employee, because some of the editors could not speak the relevant foreign languages but guided the junior staff in terms of the correct ideological line, translating items from and into Chinese resulted in a considerable waste of time. A retired cadre from the Burmese language section. Interview by author. Beijing, December 11, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> See Xu Yongsheng, "Zui nanwang de san zhi duiwu" (Three most unforgettable ranks) in *Nanwang suiyou* [Unforgettable Years] ed. Gao Jiming (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 2001), 88.

<sup>31</sup> See Sidney Shapiro, *An American in China: Thirty Years in the People's Republic*, (New York: New American Library, 1980), 214.

Recruiting Chinese staff was a major challenge for the Turkish broadcasting section in the 1950s. At the time, Turkish speakers were rare in China, in striking contrast with speakers of major Western or East/Southeast Asian languages. As Turkey was not a conventional destination for Chinese immigrants, the Turkish language section was not able to employ any Overseas Chinese. Further, China did not offer any educational prospects in the 1950s for mastering this difficult language in a relatively short time. Due to the lack of Turkish speakers, Radio Peking's Turkish language section had to rely on the Iranian (Soviet) experts during its formative years (1957 to 1960).<sup>32</sup>

The Turkish language section broadcasted its programs twice a day, each for half an hour.<sup>33</sup> A typical work day at the section necessitated translating, proofreading, recording and broadcasting. The staff also had to participate in daily political study sessions and physical exercises. Similar to other understaffed language sections, the working routine in the Turkish section was arduous, with minimal vacation time.<sup>34</sup> An additional burden for staff was the excessively centralized bureaucracy of Radio Peking. The news items and political reviews, which constituted the bulk of the program content, were drafted in Chinese by the central administration and disseminated to each language section to ensure that all sections used the same ideologically appropriate content. The Turkish broadcasting section, similar to other language sections, had to choose relevant news items from this centrally prepared draft, on which they were allowed to make only small changes.<sup>35</sup> Most of the broadcasting content were derived from the news items and articles originally released by the Xinhua News Agency or official publications like *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)* and *Red Flag (Hong Qi)*. The derivative nature of the items, together with the careful editing and translation process, caused substantial delays. As a result, Radio Peking's Turkish language section often broadcasted news items two or three days after the actual event, which decreased the station's competitiveness vis-à-vis its Western counterparts.<sup>36</sup>

In its formative years, another major setback for the Turkish language section was its excessive dependency on foreign expert assistance. During this period, due to the Chinese cadres' limited Turkish proficiency, the Soviet experts had the upper hand in broadcasting work. As the Chinese were not fluent in Turkish and the Soviets had no proficiency in Chinese, the central drafts had to be translated first from Chinese to Russian, and then from Russian to Turkish.<sup>37</sup> Because the language employed in the Chinese foreign propaganda content was extremely complex, few could perform these tasks without difficulty. Further, the staff had to work without access to most fundamental reference sources, including a Turkish-Chinese dictionary.<sup>38</sup> But the greatest challenge derived from ideological disagreements between Chinese staff and their Soviet counterparts.<sup>39</sup> As Sino-Soviet ideologies became increasingly

<sup>32</sup> See Tuerqi yu zu (Turkish language section) "Tuerqi yu guangbo" (Turkish language broadcasts), 97.

<sup>33</sup> This was expanded to four times a day in the early 1970s. See Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 334.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 320.

<sup>36</sup> This state of affairs caused much frustration among the staff. A former employee of the Turkish broadcasting section recalls how angry she was upon hearing news items on Western radio stations ahead of Radio Peking's broadcasts. A retired announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section. Interview by author. Beijing, October, 26, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> See Tuerqi yu zu (Turkish language section) "Tuerqi yu guangbo", 97.

<sup>38</sup> A former editor in the Turkish broadcasting section describes his experience as follows: "They were handing us the full articles (usually very long) or excerpts from domestic journals like *Red Flag (Hong Qi)*. The idioms and long expressions were very hard to translate. Sometimes we broadcasted them in parts, not as a whole. I was using a Russian-Turkish dictionary [because] there was nothing else available". A former editor and director in the Turkish broadcasting section. Interview by author. Beijing, November 5, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Chinese cadres devised creative methods to bypass their Soviet colleagues. For instance, a former editor in the Turkish

disparate, by the late 1950s the working environment in the Turkish language section was tense.<sup>40</sup> By 1961, Soviet experts working in the Turkish section refused to edit and translate items that disseminated China's "anti-revisionist" stance.<sup>41</sup>

In 1960, the Soviet Union suspended its financial and technical aid to China and withdrew its experts from the country. This was a huge blow to Radio Peking and other Chinese institutions, which had relied on Soviet assistance since the early 1950s.<sup>42</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Soviets' departure, Turkish language broadcasts were off the air for 12 days.<sup>43</sup> As the broadcasts were closely associated with the survival of the PRC regime, this was a major humiliation for Radio Peking administration. As a result of the interruption, the Turkish section received letters from listeners asking whether the PRC regime had collapsed or if Mao Zedong had died.<sup>44</sup> The break in Turkish language broadcasts alarmed even Premier Zhou Enlai, who, according to Chinese sources, took a personal interest in the case and paid a visit to Radio Peking's general director, Mei Yi<sup>45</sup>. Upon the request of Zhou Enlai, the director summoned a young radio employee -a Uyghur (a Turkic group from Central Asia) woman with little modern Turkish proficiency- to take over announcing duties.<sup>46</sup>

After the departure of the Soviets, the Turkish language section began to train its own staff. Radio Peking's senior management decided that the most likely candidates to master modern Turkish were Chinese citizens of Uyghur ethnicity. In 1961 the Turkish section employed three Uyghur cadres who had completed a short training program at the Beijing Broadcasting University (*Beijing Guangbo Xueyuan*).<sup>47</sup> In this period of extreme staff shortages, Radio Peking leaders also devised other ways to cope, such as re-assigning personnel from one government office to another.<sup>48</sup> Such remedies produced results. Academic training offered in Beijing's educational institutions, as well as on-the-job training at Radio Peking gradually increased the Chinese cadre of foreign-language speakers.

Other challenges in the section resulted from disruptions caused by radical political campaigns in China, which added to the burdens of Radio Peking's staff as a whole. The Anti-Rightist campaign (1957), for instance, was considered a major impediment to broadcasting

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section used to omit words from the rough drafts (like revisionism) that he thought might offend the Soviet experts and replace in the final draft, after translation. A former editor and director in the Turkish broadcasting section. Interview by author. Beijing, November 5, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> See Li Ruheng, "Kaiban bosi yu he tuerqi", 214.

<sup>41</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 312

<sup>42</sup> The Turkish section was not alone in its difficulties. The departure of the Soviet experts had the worst impact on the language sections that needed full or partial guidance from foreign experts, such as Portuguese, Italian, Swahili, Hausa, Serbian, Malay, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, French, German, Hindu, Spanish and Lao. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Diantai zhi* Vol. 2, 569.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> A former announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section, Interview by author. Beijing, October, 26, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Premier Zhou Enlai's interest in broadcasting work was hardly limited to the Turkish section. He was in charge of the day-to-day operations in Radio Peking and he guided propaganda on various occasions. For instance, it was upon the instructions of Premier Zhou Enlai that the Korean broadcasts section started monitoring South Korean radio. Before then, this was considered inappropriate as it was the "enemy station." Zhou Enlai believed that the foreign propagandists needed to know their enemy thoroughly in order to counter the threat. See Pu Shiyu, "Chaoyu guangbo chuangjian shiqi de diandi huiyi" (Bits of memories from the time of the establishment of Korean language broadcasts) in *Zhongguo guoji guangbo huiyilu* (Recollections of Chinese International Broadcasting) ed. Huang Daqiang (Beijing Zhongguo Guoji Guangbo Chubanshe, 1996), 339.

<sup>46</sup> Her name was Rukiye Hacı. Although she hesitated to accept the offer due to her poor language skills, she ultimately became the first Chinese announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section. Her language proficiency was so low that initially she could only announce the titles of musical pieces. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 312.

<sup>47</sup> See "Tuerqi yu guangbo", 97.

<sup>48</sup> In the early 1960s, someone with even meager knowledge of Turkish was precious in the eyes of the Radio Peking leadership. During this period, it was common for junior cadres to find themselves assigned to the Turkish language section without their prior knowledge or consent. A former editor in the Turkish broadcasting section who started at Radio Peking in the 1960s is a good example. He was educated at the Moscow Law and International Relations Institute on a government scholarship and aspired to become a diplomat. However, due to the staff shortages after the departure of the Soviet experts, and regardless of his minimal Turkish skills, he was assigned to Radio Peking. A former editor and director in the Turkish broadcasting section, Interview by author. Beijing, November 5, 2007.

work in general.<sup>49</sup> Radio Peking staff was also affected by the famine following the Great Leap Forward (1958-61), when all cadres were issued small food rations and many suffered illnesses due to malnourishment.<sup>50</sup> During the violent phase of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969), the working routine at Radio Peking was disrupted by ongoing meetings and criticism sessions, where cadres were reprimanded for even trivial matters.<sup>51</sup> One announcer was criticized for eating too many sweets, which was considered a bourgeois habit<sup>52</sup>. In this period, leading cadres in the Turkish broadcasting section had to step aside, as they became the subject of investigations. Although programs did not entirely go off the air in the late 1960s, the working routine became even more challenging.

Next, the study examines how China's domestic politics and foreign policy shaped the editorial guidelines and program content of Turkish language broadcasts during the Maoist decades.

### 3.2. Editorial guidelines and program content

Radio Peking worked under the strict guidance of the CC Propaganda Department and the State Council, which formulated the general objectives of foreign propaganda in conformity with the PRC regime's domestic and international priorities at a given time. This general editorial guideline dictated the individual language sections' content. As each section had to work from centrally-prepared drafts in Chinese, staff in the Turkish broadcasting section had little leeway in terms of changing the program content to suit Turkish-speaking audiences. Given the ideological nature of Chinese foreign propaganda work, Radio Peking broadcasts emphasized high politics during the Mao Zedong era. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the broadcasting content was composed of news and review items dealing with China's domestic situation and foreign policy. Turkish language broadcasts also included a number of specialized programs, although these were put on hold during staff shortages and in the disruptions of the mass mobilization campaigns.

In the early 1950s, Radio Peking's editorial guidelines aimed at propagating "New China" and its socio-economic achievements to the world, countering American imperialism and emphasizing China's solidarity with the Soviet Union.<sup>53</sup> When Turkish language broadcasts were launched in 1957, the Anti-Rightist campaign has already started to radicalize Chinese foreign propaganda discourse. The exaggerated emphasis on China's industrial and agricultural growth peaked during the Great Leap Forward, although the campaign ultimately resulted in a nationwide famine.<sup>54</sup> While the Turkish broadcasting section followed the general editorial line of propagating revolutionary changes in China, it also placed special

<sup>49</sup> For discussions on the negative impact of the Anti-Rightist campaign on foreign propaganda work, see Huang Zecun, *Xin shiqi*, 70-71 and Gan Xianfeng, *Zhongguo duiwai*, 193-195. For its impact on the Turkish broadcasting section, see Li Ruheng, "Kaiban bosi yu he tuerqi", 213.

<sup>50</sup> For the negative impact of the Great Leap Forward on foreign propaganda work, see Ding Ganlin, ed., *Zhongguo xinwen shiye shi* [History of China's journalism work], (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 445.

<sup>51</sup> For the negative impact of the Cultural Revolution on foreign propaganda work, see Tong Zhixia, *Zhongguo guoji xinwen chuanbo shi* [A History of International News Communication of China], (Beijing: Zhongguo chuanbo daxue chubanshe, 2006), 77-80.

<sup>52</sup> A former announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section. Interview by author. Beijing, October, 26, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> In February 1950, a work report prepared by the editorial department of international broadcasts at Radio Peking summarized these objectives under four headings: 1. Propagating the victorious liberation struggle of the Chinese people; 2. Propagating China's revolutionary experience; 3. Propagating the strength and development of the peaceful revolutionary front led by the Soviet Union; 4. Revealing the US-led anti-democratic front's threats and plots. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 16-17.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 18.



emphasis on religious freedoms.<sup>55</sup> Its specialized program, “Muslim Life in China”, for instance, primarily focused on winning Turkish people’s sympathies.<sup>56</sup> Launched upon the recommendation of the Iranian-Soviet experts, this program was prepared with the assistance of various Chinese academics and religious scholars.<sup>57</sup> To ensure the program’s success, radio staff often visited Beijing’s Niujie Mosque and reported on the lives of Hui Muslims from China’s Hebei province.<sup>58</sup> However, after the departure of the Soviets in the early 1960s, the remaining staff found it difficult to continue the program and it was abandoned, reducing the Turkish content to news and review items. Another attempt to gear Turkish content to its audience was through musical scores, which included folk songs and dance pieces from the Xinjiang region, as well as Turkish traditional music.<sup>59</sup>

Following the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, the foreign propaganda agencies were assigned new tasks of “propagandizing Mao Zedong Thought, anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism”, in addition to the original task of informing overseas audiences about China’s social and economic achievements.<sup>60</sup> This shift in the editorial line overlapped with the staff shortages in the Turkish broadcasting section, so it was only in 1965 that cadres were able to begin broadcasting specialized programs such as “China in Construction”, “Chinese Countryside”, “China’s Minority Nations”, “Listener Letterbox”, “New China, New Things”, “Sports Program” and “Music Program”.<sup>61</sup> This relatively rich program content was available to Turkish-speaking audiences for just a year, however, until the launch of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in May, 1966.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969), Chinese foreign propaganda discourse was pushed to its extreme, prioritizing the propagation of Mao Zedong thought and anti-revisionism.<sup>62</sup> The Turkish broadcasting section, similar to other sections in Radio Peking, had to abandon its regular programming during these years. The growing emphasis on the revolutionary struggle in China took its toll on all cultural and artistic items, including music programs.<sup>63</sup> In accordance with the new regulations, the Turkish section was allowed to play only revolutionary songs,<sup>64</sup> which probably had little appeal for the average Turkish listener. Likewise, regular specialized programs were replaced by programs propagating Mao Zedong Thought. It became customary to read quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong at the start of each program.<sup>65</sup> In August 1966, Radio Peking launched “Imperialism and Reactionaries are Paper Tigers” to introduce its overseas listeners to Mao’s writings.<sup>66</sup> “Selected Readings from Mao Zedong’s Works”(1968) also served the purpose of exporting China’s revolutionary experience and Maoism to its listeners.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 317.

<sup>56</sup> This program was also broadcasted in Persian. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 3, 61, 322.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 319.

<sup>60</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 17-19.

<sup>61</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 322.

<sup>62</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 17-19.

<sup>63</sup> See, Zhang Zhigen, "Yinyue bansui zhi xingjin de zuji" (Footsteps marching forward in the pursuit of music) in *Zhongguo guoji guangbo*, ed. Huang Daqiang, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Such as “Yellow River” or “The Legend of the Red Lantern”. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Bumen zhi* Vol. 2, 323. and Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Bumen zhi* Vol. 3, 166.

<sup>65</sup> A former announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section, Interview by author. Beijing, October, 26, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 233-234.

<sup>67</sup> See, Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 3, 61, 322.

In the early 1970s, there was a return to relative normalcy at Radio Peking. Following the Sino-US rapprochement and the end of China's diplomatic isolation, Radio Peking's propaganda gradually adopted a more moderate tone.<sup>68</sup> In the meantime, the establishment of diplomatic ties with Turkey facilitated bilateral communication and made timely news items about Turkey more available. Despite the moderation of the early 1970s, however, the ideological nature of Radio Peking's content persisted until Mao Zedong's death and the official end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. Radio Peking's official propaganda line altered only after the launch of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, which reshaped Chinese economy and society in the post-1978 era. Turkish language broadcasts, likewise, began offering more colorful content, including specialized programs and music pieces. Using the new call sign "China Radio International", which signifies a break from the Maoist decades, Radio Peking continued broadcasts to Turkey. While today's broadcasts have less emphasis on ideological issues, China is still keen on propagating the country's economic, cultural and technological modernization.

The paper next discusses the reception of Turkish language broadcasts during the Cold War.

### 3.3. Audience

Radio Peking leadership paid enormous attention to audience liaison during the Maoist decades. From the early 1950s onwards, it assigned a number of people the task of replying to listener letters.<sup>69</sup> Audience letters were valued as a measure for estimating the size of the audience, and Radio Peking's replies were used as an extra tool to win the hearts and minds of listeners abroad. Each letter was carefully responded to by staff in the relevant language section and listeners were often sent a small souvenir item with their reply.<sup>70</sup> Between 1949 and 1976, Radio Peking saw a gradual expansion of its target audience, measured by a growing number of listener letters. With a meager 650 letters in 1951, Radio Peking's annual listener letters had grown to 7,000 by 1955.<sup>71</sup> An even more significant growth was achieved after 1957, subsequent to the rise in total broadcasting hours and languages. While the total number of listener letters in 1957 was 29,398, this number grew almost tenfold by 1965 to 286,163, its peak for the whole Maoist period.<sup>72</sup> Although the number of listener letters dwindled during the Cultural Revolution years to as low as 21,833 in 1970, Radio Peking's global outreach remained substantial during the Cold War.

Based on listener letter statistics, it is safe to conclude that the Turkish language section failed to reach a mass audience during the Cold War years; according to official figures, the yearly listener letter count for the Turkish language broadcasts ranged between 1 and 60.<sup>73</sup> This figure included letters from Turkish-speaking listeners in Bulgaria, Cyprus, West

<sup>68</sup> A directive which circulated in July 1972 advised radio staff to "pay attention to truthfulness"; "respect foreign propaganda principles"; "avoid one-sidedness" and "write easily understandable propaganda pieces." See Li Dan, Chen Minyi eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 1, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Radio Peking established a listener letters department (*tingzhong laixin zu*) in August, 1953. By the late 1950s, as the number of broadcasting languages increased, individual language sections set up their own listener liaison offices. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Diantai zhi*, Vol. 1, 306.

<sup>70</sup> At the end of each Christian year, it was also customary for audience liaison departments to send a New Year's card and a calendar to their correspondents. See Han Yuejing, "1958 nian-1969 nian yingyu guangbo laixin gongzuo diandi" (A bit of English broadcasts listener letters work in 1958-1969) in Huang Daqiang ed. *Zhongguo guoji guangbo huiyilu*, 133.

<sup>71</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 4, 530.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Between 1957 and 1959, the Turkish language section received a total of 11 letters; in 1960 and 1961, none. 1975 and 1976 saw the highest letter counts in the time period of this study, at 50 and 60, respectively. See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol.

Germany and Azerbaijan.<sup>74</sup> Although making comparisons between different language sections in terms of listener feedback is problematic for a number of reasons,<sup>75</sup> it is clear that the Turkish section was among the poorest performing sections at Radio Peking. This state of affairs led Chinese propagandists to examine the case of Turkish language broadcasts and offer a number of insights as to the reasons behind the poor listener feedback.

According to many, the major reason why China could not reach mass audiences in Turkey was the popularity of Turkey's anti-communist ideology.<sup>76</sup> Because Turkey was a US ally, Chinese staff considered the country to be under the continuous influence of Western propaganda.<sup>77</sup> While this assessment fails to credit Turkish sources of anti-communist discourse, such as nationalism and pan-Turkism, Chinese propagandists were right in noting the role of mainstream ideology in Turkey. When Radio Peking launched its Turkish language broadcasts, Turkey had been under the Democratic Party's (DP) rule for almost a decade. The Democrats were known for their advocacy of capitalist development and urbanization, with vows to "create a millionaire in every neighborhood". Having pursued a pro-American line in foreign policy since 1950, the DP government was instrumental in solidifying Turkey's geopolitical position in the Western hemisphere during the Cold War. Despite the rise of the political left after the mid-1960s, anti-communist discourse continued to dominate mainstream public opinion. Except for brief intervals, Turkey was ruled by right-wing political parties with nationalist or religious undertones until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The average radio listener, therefore, was not likely to tune into Radio Peking to hear the other side of the story from "Red China".

Another explanation provided by China's propagandists was the predominance of religious conservatism in Turkey. Chinese foreign propaganda staff was fully aware of the difficulties of penetrating a predominantly Muslim country through communist ideology, which is known for its atheistic values. Although Radio Peking's broadcasts emphasized the "religious freedom" among China's Muslim minorities, Uyghur immigrants who fled from China's Xinjiang province to settle in Turkey during the 1950s and 1960s presented a rather different picture. During the Cultural Revolution, the suffering of "Muslim Turks" in China was largely publicized in the Turkish media and presumably intensified the negative perception of the People's Republic.<sup>78</sup>

Although it is clear that Radio Peking had no mass appeal in Turkey during the Cold War years, it is not easy to conclude that the launch of Turkish language broadcasts was a futile effort on the part of the PRC leadership to win the sympathies of Turkish people. For a couple of reasons, it is probable that the Turkish audience was broader than what is implied by the number of listener letters. First, the few letters received by Radio Peking staff show that these

2, 343.

<sup>74</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, eds. *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 336.

<sup>75</sup> First, some of these languages were regional languages spoken by different people in various countries (e.g. Spanish). Therefore, the number of listener letters was likely to be much bigger than say, Turkish, which is spoken in a limited geographical area. Second, the number of listener letters originating from one country was very much related to that country's political system, geographical location as well as its bilateral relations with China. Therefore, listeners who lived in neighboring countries (especially those with large Overseas Chinese minorities) or countries that maintained neutral or friendly relations with China were more prone to send letters to Radio Peking.

<sup>76</sup> See Li Dan, Chen Minyi, *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 336.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> See "Kızıl Çin'den kaçan 13 Türk yurda sığındı", *Yeni İstanbul*, March 30, 1967; Çin Türkistanında kanlı savaşlar şiddetlendi", *Ulus*, Jan. 30, 1967, s.8; "Kıta Çin'inde Müslümanlar zor durumda", *Ulus*, Jan. 23, 1967, 4; "Çin Doğu Türkistanı Mao'ya karşı direniyor", *Cumhuriyet*, Jan. 29, 1967, p.3; "Moskova'ya göre Çin, idaresindeki Türkleri imhaya çalışıyor", *Cumhuriyet*, Jan. 26, 1967; "Kızıl Çin'den gelen Doğu Türkistanlılar çektiklerini anlattı", *Milliyet*, May 29, 1968.

broadcasts were received even in the remotest parts of Turkey. Additionally, some listeners wrote on behalf of a village or neighborhood.<sup>79</sup> A number of local sources also suggest that these broadcasts had ardent followers in the Turkish countryside.<sup>80</sup>

Second, given the implicit dangers associated with sending mail from Turkey to a communist broadcaster, one might safely assume that most Turkish listeners chose to avoid the possible consequences of writing a letter to Radio Peking.<sup>81</sup> This was most probably the case in the late 1950s, when the DP government's increased censorship measures left no room for ideological dissent. Even in the mid-1960s, when Radio Peking had loyal followers among Turkey's left-wing youth, only a few probably felt the need to correspond with its Chinese staff. Members of the Maoist-leaning *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik (Proletarian Revolutionary Illumination)*, for instance, tuned into these broadcasts on a regular basis to follow developments in China.<sup>82</sup> Such examples indicate that the PRC regime was able to reach and influence a more significant number of Turkish people through its radio broadcasts than the paltry letter count would suggest. Although an accurate estimate of the size of this audience requires further study, the available evidence indicates that these broadcasts provided a direct channel between China and Turkey at a time when few alternatives existed.

#### 4. Conclusion

The story of Radio Peking's Turkish language broadcasting section is an exemplary case of China's larger propaganda and persuasion activities during the Cold War years. This article's primary aim, however, was to highlight an unexplored aspect of Sino-Turkish relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Turkish language broadcasts were launched at a relatively early date by Radio Peking to reach audiences beyond China's immediate neighborhood. Since its launch in 1957, broadcasting in Turkish proved a difficult task for Radio Peking administration. Unlike Western and East/Southeast Asian languages, which had many speakers on the mainland, Turkish was an unfamiliar language whose broadcasting necessitated continuous guidance from Iranian-Soviet experts. After the departure of those experts in the early 1960s, the lack of trained personnel proved a real challenge for the section. In addition to staff shortages, the Turkish language section lacked main reference works on Turkey, including a Chinese-Turkish dictionary. Amidst huge bureaucracy, technical inadequacies and shortage of personnel, it is significant that Turkish broadcasts experienced an almost uninterrupted flow during the Maoist period.

A predominantly Muslim country with a strong anti-communist sentiment, Turkey offered little prospects for Radio Peking in terms of recruiting a mass audience. Although there is only scattered information with regard to audience feedback, it is clear that China had limited success in reaching average Turkish listeners during the Cold War. By the mid-1960s,

<sup>79</sup> According to a retired staff member, listener letters mostly originated from rural areas, villagers and workers: "Among the listeners, there were some who wanted to come to China because of the poverty conditions they faced in Turkey. One listener wrote that not only he himself but his whole village was following our broadcasts. Some wanted [us to send them] a tape or a radio. There were also letters from Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkmenistan. Most letters would praise us. They would ask questions about our policies and about the social conditions in China. Especially during the Cultural Revolution there were many...letters [curious about China]. We would answer the letters and our answers would be double-checked by senior cadres". A former announcer in the Turkish broadcasting section, Interview by author. Beijing, October, 26, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Such as the group of villagers who regularly tuned in to Radio Peking's Turkish language broadcasts in Söke, Aydın. See Durmuş Uyanık, *Aşılı Zeytin: Devrimci Köylünün 12 Mart Anıları*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2003), 31.

<sup>81</sup> This was suggested by a former member of the Turkish leftist movement during a conversation with the author.

<sup>82</sup> For a detailed examination of this group, see Cagdas Ungor, *Impact of Mao Zedong Thought in Turkey: 1966-1977* (M.A. thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University, 2004).

however, these broadcasts seemingly influenced Turkish leftist youth, particularly those with Maoist sympathies. Therefore, Turkish language broadcasts provided a link between China and Turkey during the Cold War, albeit for a small circle of people.

Predating the establishment of official Sino-Turkish ties in 1971, Radio Peking's Turkish language broadcasts were one of the few direct channels between China and Turkey during this period. As of today, the section continues its work under its new call sign "China Radio International".<sup>83</sup> Although the radio's dominant position in Chinese foreign propaganda work has now been eclipsed by TV and the internet, the PRC regime's efforts to win the hearts and minds of Turkish audiences continue to this day. With the launch of China's economic reforms in 1978, Turkish-language broadcasts lost their Marxist-Leninist jargon, but the legacy of the Cold War has not entirely disappeared. Similar to earlier days, CRI's Turkish language broadcasts propagate China's economic and social modernization, and now with an aim to improve Sino-Turkish ties. Another thematic legacy is the emphasis on the religious freedoms "enjoyed" by Uyghur residents in the China's autonomous Xinjiang province. Chinese broadcasters are also advised to avoid sensitive topics such as domestic party rivalries in Turkey or the Cyprus problem.<sup>84</sup>

The change in Sino-Turkish relations in the post-Cold War era is significant. Since the 1990s, China and Turkey have seen exponential growth in their trade volume, with China becoming Turkey's number one trading partner in the Asia-Pacific region. The increased number of official exchanges, the signing of their "strategic partnership" treaty in 2010 and the launch of "2012 -Year of China" in Turkey suggest that the political and cultural dimensions of Sino-Turkish relations will acquire new significance in the twenty-first century. In this sense, the story of Radio Peking's Turkish language section, which struggled to reach Turkey against all odds during the Cold War, is an important footnote in the history of Sino-Turkish relations.

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<sup>83</sup> CRI's online broadcast content can be found at the official website for Turkish broadcasts (<http://turkish.cri.cn/>).

<sup>84</sup> See, Li Dan, Chen Minyi, *Bumen zhi*, Vol. 2, 318

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