

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background**

Turkey has become one of the countries with a strong defense system in the world that has also managed to have good relations with Muslim countries. The birth of the new millennium in 2003 has led Turkey to choose an Islamic party to form their government. This has also resulted in the good values and practices of their democratic system. The Turkish government has had significant impacts on the lives of its people. In its framework and development, Turkey also emerged as a model for many countries in the Arab world (Baharcicek, 2011).

Even though the idea of Islamic democracy is a very controversial concept, especially in the early 2000s, Turkey has proven it wrong by becoming one of the most successful models for an Islamic religion of democracy. In a substantive level, the Islamic movements in Tunisia and Egypt have referred to Turkey as a model for their future democracy. Turkey is respected for being a brave country and having policies to maintain its main role as a mediator in resolving conflicts in the Muslim world (Gursel, 2011).

There is no easy way for Turkey to separate Islam from their governance. Islamic signs have established the critical identity redefining what it means to be a truly Turk. Indeed, by becoming a Turkish nation today means being progressively defined by Islamic practices and identity.

This also means that Turkey has slowly changed its political direction from secularism to Islamic principles (Yavuz & Öztürk, 2018).

Besides its involvement in the resolutions and conflict, Turkey also embraces the bilateral relations that are considered beneficial for their national interests. One of

the countries that Turkey has been actively engaging with is China. The relations between Turkey and China actually began since the entry of China into the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1971, even though there was no significant activity (Selcuk, 2013). In 1980s, their diplomatic relations started to grow and was proven by the fact that the number of visits between them has been increased in the early of 2000s. Turkey started to see their partnership as a good opportunity to engage a bigger scale of economic cooperation (Selcuk, 2013).

Furthermore, their relations were remarkably elevated in 2004. Huang Ju, Chinese Vice Premier of the State Council, said that Erdogan's visit to China had promoted the development of friendly cooperation between the two countries. China appreciated the response of the Turkish government in respecting China's one policy, China's reunification, and China's good intentions in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Tarihi Y. K., 2017). In the following year, the cooperation between Turkey and China in the aspect of politics, economic, and military kept elevating. In November 2004, Huang Ju revisited President Ahmed Necdet Sezer to discuss more the partnership that could happen between them especially in the trade and security matter (China Embassy, 2004).

The second visit occurred when Hua Jianmin, the Chinese State Adviser, visited on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006 to Turkey and met Mehmet Ali Sahin, the Turkish Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister. During the visit, the two representatives have vowed to further strengthen cooperative relations in various fields between the two countries. Hua stated that the relations between Turkey and China had been developed since they established diplomatic relations for more than 30 years ago. Both parties have witnessed the politics of mutual trust and equal economic interests (Xinhua News Agency, 2006).

However, the relations between them seems to deteriorate in 2009, right after the big riot between Uyghurs and the Chinese government, known as Urumqi accident, happened in Xinjiang, China. The pressure made by the Chinese government against Uyghurs ethnic and the number of victims who fell in riots has triggered big demonstrations did by Turkish society. The media in Turkey also put their extra attention to highlight the tragedy that has been happening in Xinjiang (China - Turkey and Xinjiang , 2015).

Turkey has a long history of sympathy for the Uyghurs, who share linguistic and cultural similarities with the other Turkic ethnic groups who are widely spread in West and Central Asian regions. Turkish society is totally against the prosecution did by the Chinese government towards the Uyghurs. The media reported the full incident and gave special articles about the historical relationship between Turkish Uyghur ethnicity and Turkish nationalism (Turkey Stands Up for Uighur Brethren in Wake of China's Brutality, 2009).

Meanwhile, as a response towards the discriminations that happened to Uyghurs, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister, also expressed his support for an anti-Chinese demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Ankara. Erdogan declared to bring this issue to the UN Security Council if China did not stop the persecution. Through a message sent to Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, Erdogan stated his sharp criticism of measures taken by the Chinese government in resolving the problems in Xinjiang. This has made the relations between both countries heated up at that time (Uyghur Crisis, 2014).

However, the heated situation between Turkey and China did not last long. The diplomatic relations between these two countries has returned to normal in September and October 2010. Turkey needed China to develop sustainable economic cooperation rather than focus on political issues. On the other hand, many other criticisms

were coming from the Turkish Islamist NGO, IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation) (Cafiero, 2015).

On July 2015, the relations between Turkey and China became worse again. The anger was flared again in China right after one of the Turkish demonstrations burnt some Chinese flags in front of China Embassy in Istanbul. The situation was getting really worse when Grey Wolves, a wing of Turkey's right-wing nationalist party (MHP), attacked some tourists whom they believed were Chinese but were actually Koreans. To be known, the MHP party is an ultranationalist right-wing Turkish political party that embraces Turkish nationalism in its interaction with the international world (Bal, 2004).

The majority of Uyghur refugees arrived in Turkey and settle temporarily in the following year of 2017. There is real pressure from Turkish society towards the government due to the constant flow of refugees. Meanwhile, some of the Uyghurs who have caught crossing border in Malaysia would be directly handed over to Thailand. However, China claimed that the Uyghurs seeking shelter from Turkey should be considered as illegal immigrants rather than the refugees (China seeks return of Uighur Muslims detained in Malaysia after escaping from Thai jail: Sources, 2018).

The friction between both Turkey and China over Uyghur factor seems to linger further. The Islamic countries keep criticizing the inconsistency of Turkish ambition in resolving conflict, especially when it comes to Muslims, that supposed to be their concern in Islamic democracy values. In the meantime, the political parties condemned the Erdogan's action in carrying out many various international agendas on the party's platform related to Uyghur issue, but there was no meaningful action conducted. Turkey tends to refuse the claims by the international community and media regarding the domestic conditions of Xinjiang, namely the case in the Uyghur itself (Chislett, 2011).

On July 2019, Turkey remains committed to having a good relationship with China. This is proven by the statement stated by PM Erdogan to the media after meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, “Turkey keeps engaging on One China Policy and stressing that the people, who live in Xinjiang, including Uyghurs, are ‘living happily’. It is tough for them to admit that the main reason behind their prosperity is because of the Chinese Government. Turkey would not let any of this issue that happened in Xinjiang spoils the bilateral relationships with China.” (Westcott, 2019).

## **B. Research Question**

From the background of the case study that has been presented, the researcher finds an interesting main problem to be analyzed :

Why is Turkey being inconsistent towards the Uyghur Issue that happens in China?

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

- Foreign Policy Theory

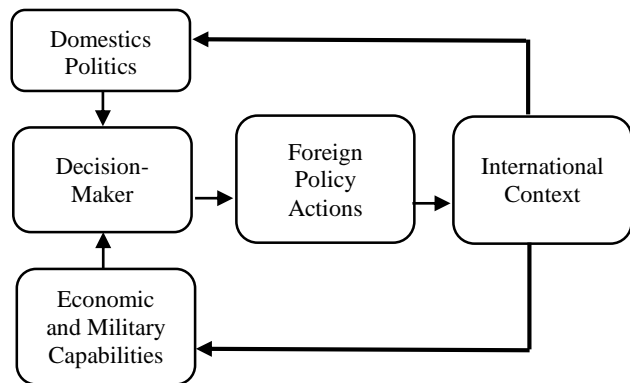
Foreign Policy is a set of goals on how a country should interact with the other countries in the aspects of politics, economy, social, and military. In other words, foreign policy is made by the decision-makers in the effort of achieving their obvious benefits. Furthermore, foreign policy is also a realm in which the decisions and actions are conducted under constraints and uncertainty. The policy maker's goal is to maximize the national interests which hopefully become beneficial for its society. The rational approach emphasizes on how a state is the main actor to achieve national interests. Coplin stated that in order to

understand why a country conducts its foreign policy in accordance with the national interests, we should also examine what or why behind the high authorities' decisions (Coplin, 2003).

According to Coplin, the foreign policy contains a number of activities that can be classified into three types, namely general policy, administrative decisions, and critical decisions. Coplin explained that foreign policy was hugely influenced by the three aspects, namely domestic political conditions, economic and military capabilities, and international context. By observing these three considerations, we can explain why a country's foreign policy is determined. It should be underlined that each consideration only partially influences so that each consideration is not a single factor in controlling the whole formation of foreign policy (Coplin, 2003, p. 32).

To understand more about this theory, William D. Coplin explains it through this following chart.

Figure 1.3.1  
Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process



Source: William D. Couplin, *Pengantar Politik Internasional: Suatu Telaahan Teoritis*, (Bandung: CV. Sinar Baru, 1992), p. 30.

### **a. Domestic Politics**

The situation of a country could simply influence the decision-making process of its foreign policy. In fact, domestic politics is one the cultural factor that is fundamentally influenced by people's behaviour and the ongoing political condition of a country. Notwithstanding, the authorities of a country are the main actor to manage the concept of national interests, accomplish the strategy, become the decision-makers, and even evaluate the executed policy. In most cases, the leader of a state (President, Prime Minister, or King) plays a significant part as decision-makers (Coplin, 2003).

Coplin categorizes the policy influencers into four categories, namely, bureaucratic influencers, partisan influencers, interest influencers, and mass influencers (Coplin, 2003, p. 81). Specifically, Bureaucratic influencers are various individuals and organizations within the executive branch of government who assist the decision-makers in arranging and implementing policies. The bureaucratic groups become very influential and prominent if they are members of the decision-makers.

The second type is Partisan influencers. This type of influencers has goals to realize the demands of the society into political demands, namely the demands on decision-makers regarding government policies. Partisan influencers in here mean those individuals that committed to be the members in a political party. As a matter of fact, partisan influencers are not only focusing on domestic policy matters, but also on Turkish foreign policy.

The third type is the Interest influencers, consisting of a group of people who join together having the same interests, which are not yet large enough to be the basic fundamental for the activities of party groups but are urgently needed to give up resources to get support from other decision-makers. The last one is Mass influencers, in this case, refers to public opinion created by mass media, which is owned by the population that is considered by decision-makers when formulating foreign policy. The impacts of mass influencers depend on the political system adopted by a country.

Partisan influencers are actually the right type to be used in analyzing the Turkish foreign policy. PM Erdogan and his political party hold an essential role in conducting the Turkish foreign policy and the whole decision-making process. To be noted, AKP party also holds a vital role in shaping public opinion. All of the policies and bureaucracy that are arranged by the government under Erdogan will eventually become influential for their national interests and economic welfare.

In this case, Turkish foreign policy in the era of Erdogan is always attached with the role of Ahmet Davutoglu, foreign policy advisor since 2009. Davutoglu stated that Turkey is currently implementing the *historical depth* and *geographical depth*. In *historical depth*, Turkey will mainly take the benefits from the geopolitics potential, since they are located in a strategic place including their border with Europe, Middle East, and East Asia (Aktas, 2010).

#### **b. Economic and Military Capacity**

The decision-makers should be able to consider the economic and military conditions of their country



during the foreign policymaking. Decision-makers are obligated to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the country's economy and military during the foreign policymaking. To summarize, the decision-makers should also be able to balance their commitment and ability regarding the limitations caused by economic and military conditions. When we are talking about economic capacity, we should not only put concern on its production capacity but also the comparison between other countries' capability, as well as the ability of a state to quantitatively accomplish the economic demands of its people (Coplin, 2003, pp. 124, 125).

Economy and military are the two critical elements of "power" in achieving national interests. Under the leadership of Erdogan, Turkey sees China as one of the most critical foreign policy issues. They have been rapidly improving their strategic cooperation in different levels as well as global and regional issues. China is now even considered as Turkey's third partner especially in the term of economic. As the Turkish economic stability continues to experience the turbulence, China has always been there to give them some financial assistance and military cooperation.

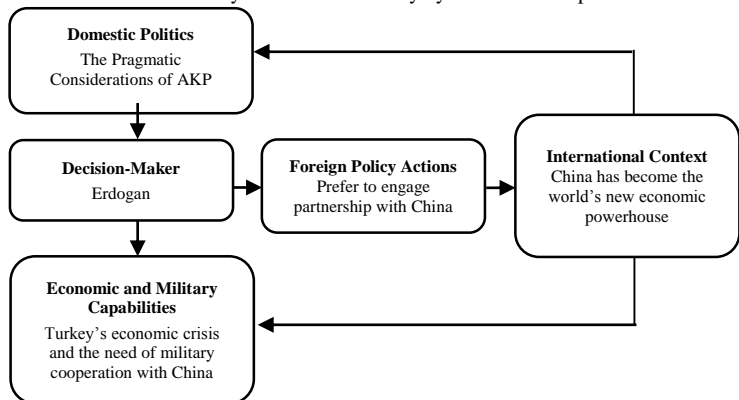
### **c. International Context**

Coplin believes that there are three key elements of the international condition which constantly influence a country's foreign policy, namely geographic, economic, and political condition. The international context or situation in the State that becomes the goal of a foreign policy, as well as the influence from the other countries which are relevant to the issue are a consideration in the making decision-making process (Coplin, 2003, p. 166).

China has become a new powerhouse and leading country in the term of military and politics. During its practice of multi-dimensional foreign policy, Turkey puts more concern on the issues that are involving economic aspects. This can be seen by the improvement of its trade partnerships with the Asian countries, including China (Aktas, 2010). As a result, by considering these three prominent factors, economically, geographically and the political condition are reasonable to be linked with the policy made by Turkish Government in the Erdogan Era.

One of the beneficial things that resulted from this partnership is the scope that Turkey and China could reach. As the New Silk Road project or officially called as One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) initiated by China is really crucial for Turkey. China would also have many opportunities to strengthen its economic, social, and political relations with Turkey and the Middle East countries. In today's globalized world of interdependence, China is the world's new economic powerhouse and politics leading actor. Its partnership with China is actually also a part of their multi-dimensional foreign policy (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

Figure 1.3.2  
The Considerations in the Process of Foreign Policy Making of Turkey based on the Theory by William D. Coplin



As a sovereign country as well as a rational actor, Turkey tends to refuse the claims by the international community regarding the domestic conditions of Xinjiang, namely the case in the Uyghur itself. Of course, Turkey does not want the Uyghur issue becomes an obstacle to have a good partnership with Turkey in the term of social and economic. Turkey is aware that China's presence and its strategic location remain to be really essential in order to achieve their economic stability.

#### **D. Hypothesis**

Based on the theories and models that have been described, this research argues that the Turkish government is being inconsistent towards the Uyghur issue that happened in China due to these several reasons :

1. The pragmatic considerations of AKP toward China rather than Uyghurs.
2. Turkey's economic crisis and the need for military cooperation with China.
3. China is the world's new economic powerhouse who provides more beneficial offers to Turkey.

#### **E. Purpose of Writing**

1. To explain the main reasons behind Turkey and China cooperation.
2. To explain Turkey's involvement in the Uyghur Issue.

## **F. Research Methodology**

In this thesis, the issue analysis was achieved using a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach combines the process of three aspects, namely description, classification and connection. With this explanative combination, an appropriate analysis can be obtained to answer the formulation of the problem that has been proposed.

The method of collecting data used by the author in writing this research was by using the literature review. In this case, the author uses the data derived from writing and reports from the writers obtained through reliable media such as books, journals, papers, magazines, news, and other publications that related with the main discussion of this thesis.

## **G. Scope of Method**

In understanding the process of the research, this thesis put focus on seeing the issue from both perspectives Turkey and China in analyzing their both diplomatic relations and economic partnership. The timely interval of this research starts from the significant dispute that happened between Uyghurs and Hans in 2009 and how it was affecting the dynamic relations between Turkey and China until 2019. Notwithstanding, the writer could possibly use the data before or after the aforementioned period of time if, in many cases, the topics to be analyzed are relevant to the issue of the thesis with the purpose of deepening the analysis.

## **H. Research Systematics**

In order to analyze this research, the writer divides the thesis into five chapters. Each chapter includes;

The first chapter contains an introduction and will systematically deliver the overall thesis discussion. This chapter comprises of seven sub-chapters; the background, the formulation of the problems that arise from the background, the purpose of the research, the framework of the thinking that is used, the hypothesis, the research method, the scope of method, and the research systematic.

The second chapter mainly discusses the friction of the Turkish political system from secular to Sharia. Under the leadership of Erdogan, Turkey has slowly changed its political direction. This will also explain why Turkey started to defend some Muslim countries and also emerged as a model for many countries in the Arab world.

In the third chapter, the writer discusses more the dynamic relations between Turkey and China, including the lengthy historical background that comprises of the entry of Uyghur ethnic into China and the beginning of tensions between them.

The fourth chapter analyzes explicitly the factors of Turkey's inconsistency in dealing with the Uyghur issue. There will be an explanation of why the economic interests and the domestic politics of Turkey have become the main reason that drives its foreign policy towards China rather than the Islamic democracy values.

The fifth chapter is the closure of the thesis, which contains conclusions and some suggestions regarding the discussion.