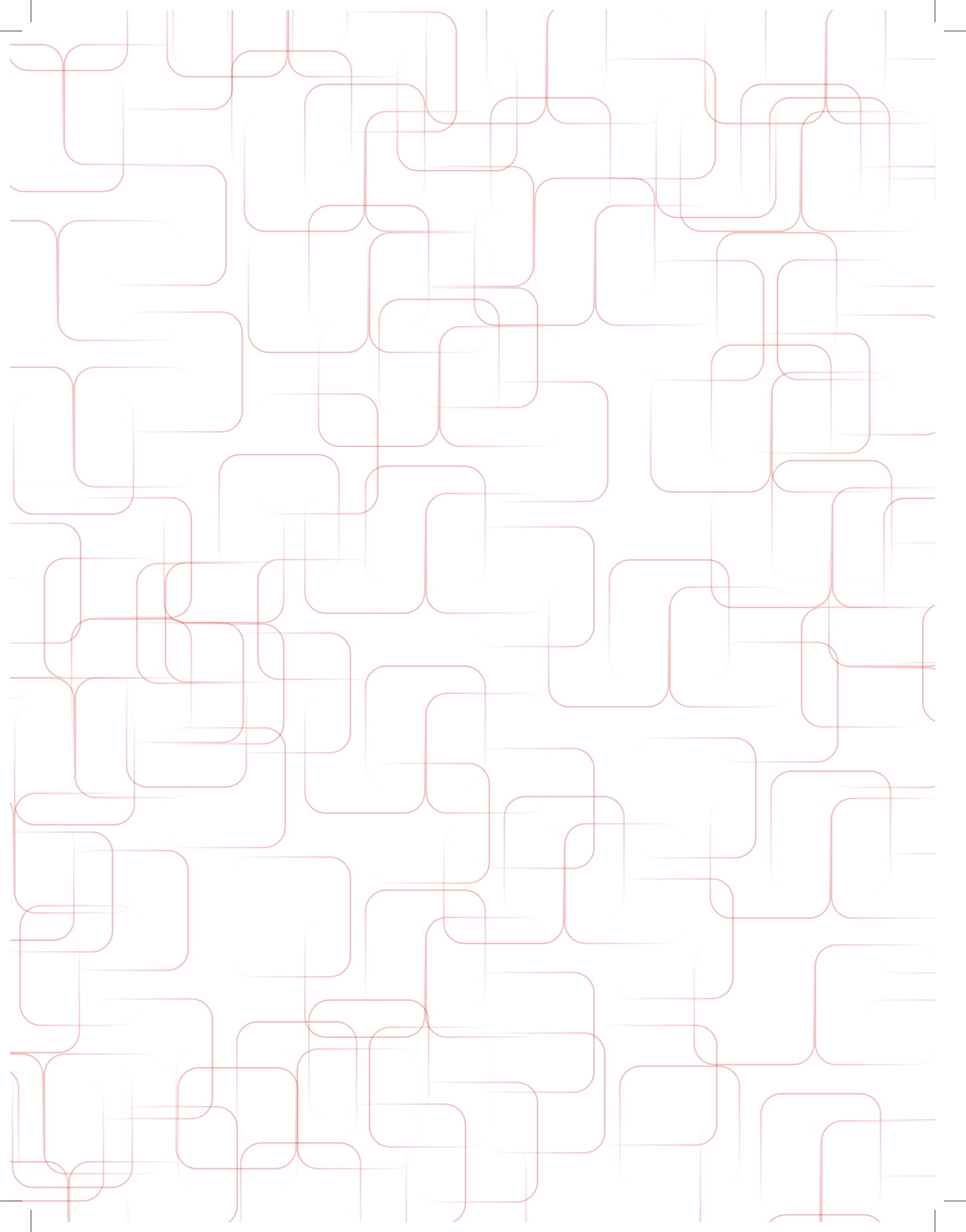


Asian Studies in Türkiye

An Academic and Institutional Overview





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Asian Studies in Türkiye: An Academic and Institutional Overview

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FOREWORD

In the 21st century, the rising global significance of Asia has made academic research on the region more valuable than ever. Given Türkiye's historical, cultural, and economic ties with Asia, the institutionalization and deepening of Asian studies have become a strategic necessity for both the academic community and policymakers.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical development, institutional landscape, human capital, and academic activities in the field of Asian studies in Türkiye. It highlights the contributions of scholars educated in Asian studies and offers valuable insights into the growing number of university-based centers, graduate programs, academic publications, and collaborative initiatives with the region.

The report also puts forward a set of policy recommendations, including the need to strengthen regional studies, promote interdisciplinary research, and foster collaboration between academia and the public and private sectors. In this way, the study not only presents an in-depth overview of the current state of Asian studies in Türkiye but also offers strategic guidance for its future development.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the researchers who contributed to the preparation of this report, the experts involved in data collection and analysis, and Institute Social team for their continuous support. I believe this study will make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of Asian studies in Türkiye and inspire new academic and strategic initiatives.

İpek Coşkun Armağan
General Coordinator, Institute Social



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 21st century has been marked by the rise of Asia as a global economic, political, and cultural powerhouse. Especially during the last decade, Asian nations have emerged as key players in global trade, technology, and geopolitics. This shift has underscored the importance of Asian studies, which provide critical insights into the historical, cultural, and political dynamics driving Asia's ascent. For Türkiye, a nation with deep historical and cultural ties to Asia through the ancient Silk Road, understanding and engaging with Asia is not only strategic but also essential for fostering mutual development and strengthening bilateral relations.

Türkiye has proactively engaged with Asia through initiatives like the "Asia Anew Initiative," launched in 2019 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aims to deepen Türkiye's diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with Asian countries. Türkiye's trade with the Asia-Pacific region has expanded nearly fivefold over the past two decades, driven by deepening economic ties and growing commercial partnerships. Additionally, Türkiye has expanded its diplomatic presence in Asia, participated in regional organizations like ASEAN, and supported humanitarian and development projects through agencies like TİKA.

The field of Asian studies in Türkiye has a strong historical foundation dating back to the late Ottoman Empire, marked by the establishment of diplomatic missions and the development of research. Following the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic, Türkiye pursued a modernist agenda and fostered relations with both Western and anti-colonial states together in the context of "peace at home and peace in the world". This was succeeded by a period of development within Western institutions during the Cold War. In contrast to the limited development of strong institutional relations or academic research in Asian studies during these times, the contemporary process has evolved through three distinct phases. The first phase, from the 1980s to 2008, saw pioneering institutions in Boğaziçi University and Middle East Technical University (METU) lay the groundwork for Asian studies in Turkish academia. The second phase, from 2008 to 2020, witnessed a significant expansion in the number of scholars and the establishment of dedicated centers for Asian studies, driven by Asia's growing global importance. The third phase, beginning after 2020, has been characterized by the Turkish Ministry of Education sponsoring over 100 scholars to study at leading universities in Asia, who have since returned to further develop the field in Türkiye.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the development and current status of Asian studies in Türkiye. It examines the institutions involved in Asian studies, including universities, language and culture centers, and think tanks, and analyzes the human capital in the field, particularly the role of YLSY (Selection and Placement of Students to Be Sent Abroad for Postgraduate Studies) scholarship recipients. The report also evaluates educational programs, academic events, research activities, and industry-university collaborations in Asian studies.

Key findings include:

Institutions: Turkish universities have established over 12 centers and institutes dedicated to Asian studies, with the number growing significantly over time. This expansion reflects Türkiye's increasing academic engagement with Asia. Leading institutions are Boğaziçi University, METU, Ankara University, and Social Sciences University of Ankara.

Human Capital: The YLSY scholarship program has played a pivotal role in developing expertise in Asian studies, with over 100 scholars sent abroad to study in Asian countries. Furthermore, Turkish

students admitted to postgraduate programs or academic positions at prominent Asian universities are presented with a chance to contribute meaningfully to Asian studies in Türkiye, whether by working in Turkish academic institutions or by gaining experience abroad. These scholars have returned to Türkiye to contribute to the academic and professional landscape of Asian studies.

Educational Programs: Several Turkish universities now offer specialized programs in Asian studies at the master's and doctoral levels, reflecting the growing academic interest in the region. Non-university programs, such as the "Asia Anew Certificate Program" organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, further enhance understanding of Asia's strategic importance.

Academic Events: Turkish universities have increasingly hosted academic events, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops, focused on Asian studies. These events serve as vital platforms for knowledge exchange, fostering international collaboration and enhancing Türkiye's understanding of Asia's diverse cultures, economies, and political dynamics.

Research: The number of theses and academic publications on Asian countries has seen substantial growth, rising from 46 theses in 2011 to 251 theses in 2024, reflecting a significant expansion in academic interest. Initially, research focused on a few key countries like Japan, China, and Korea, but over time, it has expanded to include a broader range of Asian nations, such as India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Alongside this growth, the number of academic journals dedicated to Asian studies has also increased, providing more platforms for scholarly research and contributing to a deeper understanding of Asia's diverse regions.

Industry-University Collaboration: Turkish universities have engaged in various collaborations with international partners, particularly in Asia, to promote research and academic exchange. These collaborations have focused on topics ranging from historical relations to contemporary geopolitical issues.

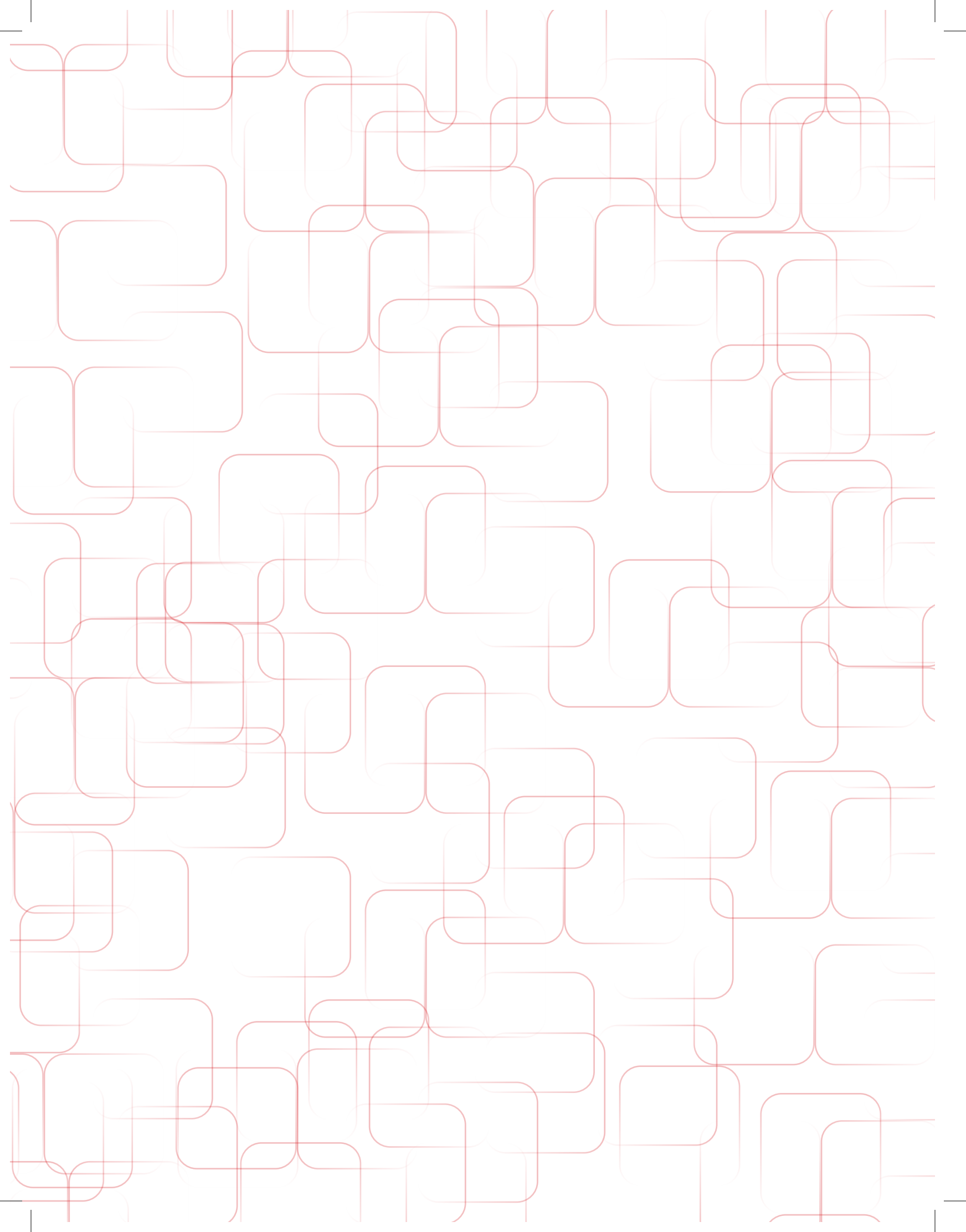
In conclusion, the development of Asian studies in Türkiye reflects the country's commitment to understanding and engaging with Asia's diverse and dynamic landscape. The establishment of dedicated academic centers, the growth of educational programs, and the active participation in academic events and research initiatives demonstrate Türkiye's strategic focus on Asia. Moving forward, continued investment in Asian studies will be crucial for Türkiye to leverage economic opportunities, enhance diplomatic influence, and foster mutual development in this increasingly significant region.

Policy Recommendations:

- Consolidate area studies at leading universities.
- Establish a dedicated university focused on area studies.
- Develop tailored academic programs aligned with national needs.
- Foster partnerships with public and private institutions for internships and research collaborations.
- Promote interdisciplinary research and increase funding for area studies.
- Enhance networking and alumni engagement to support career development in Asian studies.

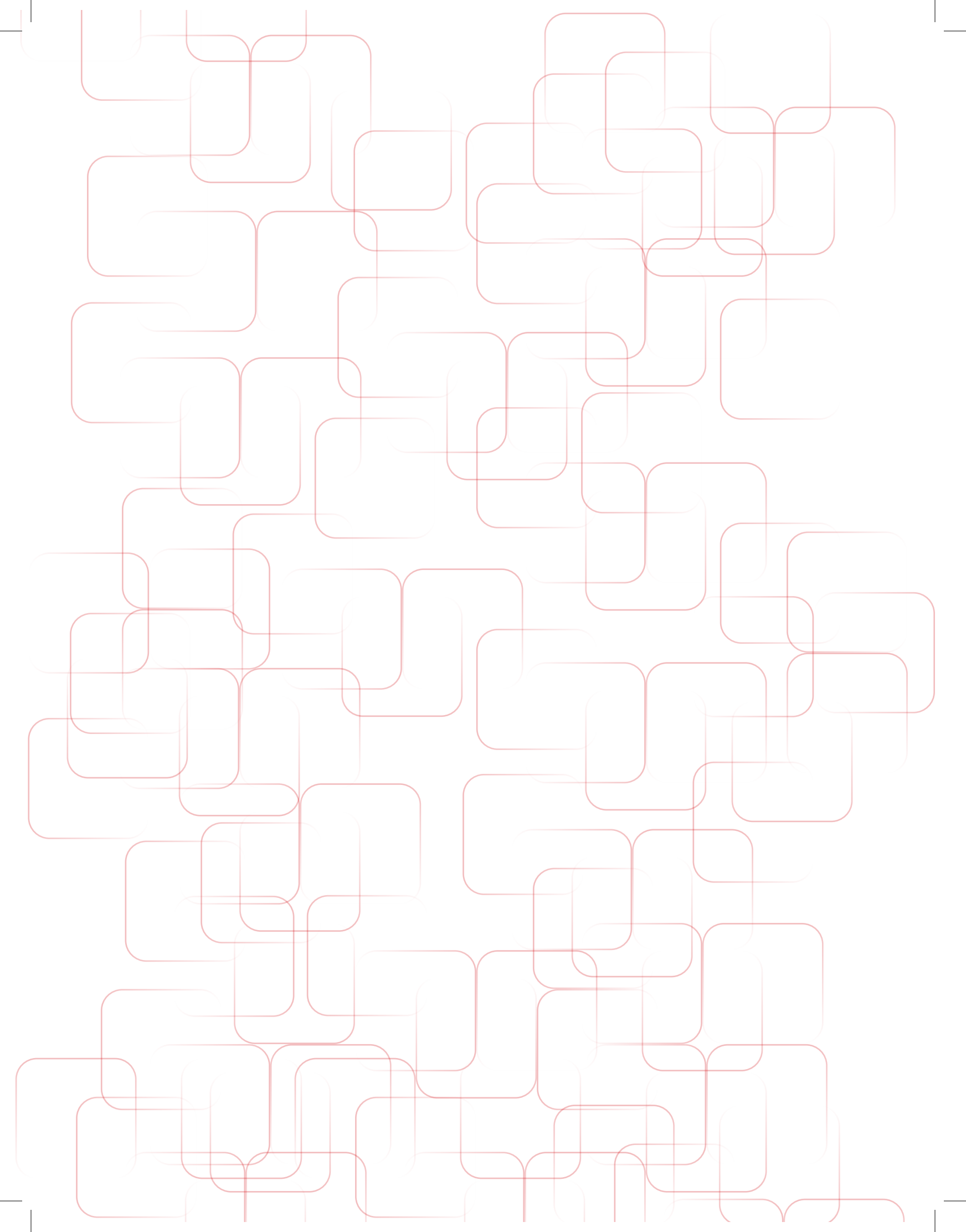
By implementing these recommendations, Türkiye can further strengthen its academic infrastructure and deepen its engagement with Asia, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the region and enhancing Türkiye's role in global discourse.





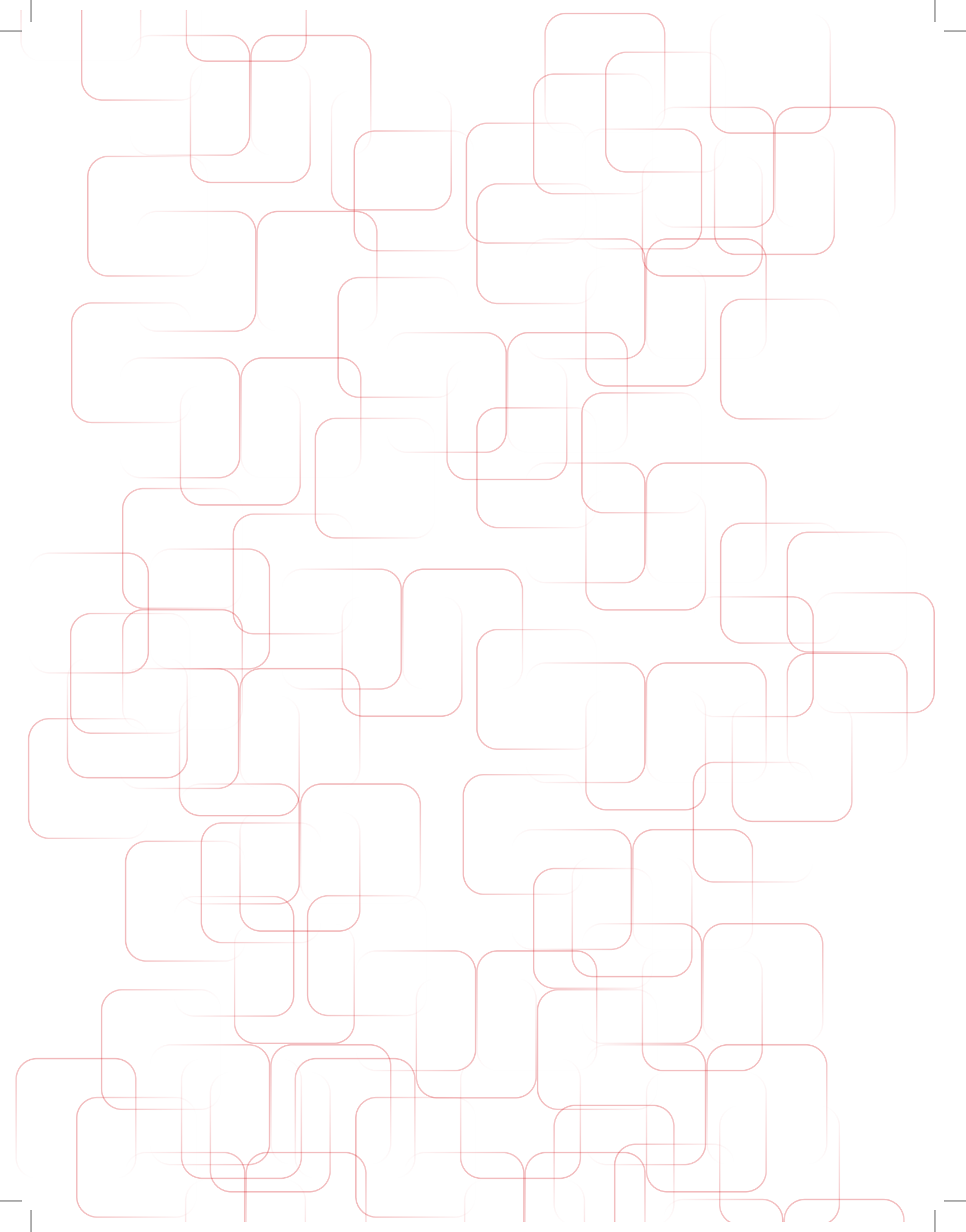
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1. INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The rise of Asia, marked by rapid economic growth, technological advancements, and increased geopolitical influence, is a defining feature of the 21st century. Today, China's transformation into the world's second-largest economy and leading position in technology exemplifies this shift. India, with its burgeoning tech industry and space exploration milestones, like the Chandrayaan-3 moon mission, further underscores the region's dynamic progress. Southeast Asian nations, such as Vietnam and Indonesia, have emerged as significant players in global supply chains and trade (Seong et al., 2023). These developments highlight the critical importance of Asian studies, as understanding the historical, cultural, and political contexts of these countries is essential for comprehending global trends and fostering effective international relations. Asian studies provide invaluable insights into the diverse and complex factors driving Asia's ascent, equipping scholars, policymakers, and businesses with the knowledge needed to engage with the region's multifaceted landscape.

The 21st century is increasingly defined by the rise of the Asia region, whose economic ascendancy is accompanied by significant political, military, and cultural developments. As an Asian nation with deep historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious ties along the ancient Silk Road, Türkiye has proactively engaged with this dynamic region through the "Asia Anew Initiative" launched in August 2019 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This initiative reflects Türkiye's commitment to a comprehensive and holistic engagement with Asia, resulting in strategic partnerships with key nations such as China, Japan, Indonesia, Korea,

Malaysia, and Singapore, and expanding its diplomatic presence across the region.

Türkiye's bilateral trade with the Asia region has surged dramatically, and free trade agreements with South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore further bolster economic ties. Bilateral trade between Türkiye and the Asia-Pacific region surged from \$17 billion in 2004 to \$75 billion in 2021, with direct investments from the region reaching \$7.6 billion by 2017. Participation in area organizations like ASEAN, where it holds Sectoral Dialogue Partner status, and active involvement in international platforms such as the UN and G-20, underscore Türkiye's dedication to fostering strong, mutually beneficial relationships. Through humanitarian efforts, peace process support, and sustainable development initiatives, Türkiye continues to enhance its visibility and impact across Asia, reflecting shared interests and common goals in this pivotal century.

Türkiye's rise as a regional power and global aspirations are evident through its robust economic growth, strategic geopolitical

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positioning, and active foreign policy in multilateral organizations particularly in Turkic Council and “world is bigger than five” motto in the UN. Improving relations with Asian countries is crucial for Türkiye to leverage economic opportunities, enhance diplomatic influence, and foster mutual development in this increasingly significant region. In this context, the importance of Asian studies in Türkiye becomes paramount. This shift is part of the broader internationalization of Asian studies, where Asians themselves are now taking on the role of active participants and subjects of study, rather than merely being objects of analysis as in the past (Reid, 1999). Understanding Asia’s diverse cultures, economies, and political dynamics is crucial for Türkiye as it navigates its role within the broader Asian context. Asian studies programs can equip Turkish scholars, diplomats, and business leaders with the necessary insights to engage more effectively with Asian countries, fostering stronger bilateral relations and enhancing Türkiye’s strategic initiatives across the continent.

Asian studies in Türkiye have evolved through three distinct phases. The first phase, from the 1980s to 2008, was marked by a small group of pioneering scholars, such as Selcuk Esenbel in Boğaziçi University and Mete Tuncoku Middle East Technical University and their students, who were dedicated to advancing the field of Asian studies. The second phase, between 2008 and 2020, saw a significant increase in both the number of scholars and the establishment of centers for Asian studies, driven by the rise of Asia’s global importance. Currently, the third phase, beginning after 2020, is characterized by the Turkish Ministry of National Education sponsoring over 100 scholars to pursue their post-graduate studies and expertise at leading universities in Asia who have since returned to further develop Asian studies in Türkiye. Besides the YLSY scholarship, Turkish students

admitted to postgraduate programs at prominent Asian universities are presented with a chance to contribute meaningfully to Asian studies in Türkiye, whether by working in Turkish academic institutions or by gaining experience abroad.

This report aims to present both the development and current status of Asian studies in Türkiye. Firstly, it offers a comprehensive overview of institutions engaged in Asian studies, including universities, language and culture centers, think tanks, as well as governmental and private organizations. Secondly, the report provides an analysis of human resources and expertise within the field of Asian studies. Thirdly, it evaluates educational programs, academic activities, research, and the collaboration between academia and industry in Asian studies.

Previous studies on Asian studies in Türkiye have primarily focused on universities. In contrast, this study includes a broader range of institutions, recognizing that Asian studies encompass not only academic settings but also various public and private sectors such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs, news agencies, international aid and development organizations, commercial entities, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Due to the presence of Asian experts in these diverse institutions, they are included within the scope of this study.

This report employs a qualitative and descriptive research methodology, relying on both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive overview of the development and current status of Asian studies in Türkiye. Institutional data were primarily gathered from the official websites and publications of relevant organizations, including entries in the Official Gazette, which provided verified information on the

establishment and scope of institutions involved in Asian studies. To assess the academic output and public engagement activities, we systematically collected data from institutional social media accounts and official websites, particularly focusing on the number and nature of academic events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, and published research. Additionally, data on the Ministry of National Education's YLSY scholarship recipients specializing in Asian studies were obtained from the Ministry's official sources. For postgraduate academic output, we utilized the National Thesis Center database maintained by the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK), which enabled us to identify and analyze relevant theses completed in Türkiye. This mixed-method approach, combining document analysis and digital content review, allowed for a detailed mapping of institutional landscapes, academic activities, and human resources within the field. The triangulation of data sources enhances the validity and reliability of the findings presented in this report.

Programs focusing solely on Asian languages and literatures are excluded from this study, as they generally do not offer comprehensive courses on the region's social, historical, economic, and political dimensions. This research instead concentrates on East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia within the broader scope of Asian studies. Central Asia and West Asia are traditionally addressed within the frameworks of Turkology and Middle Eastern studies, and their academic development has followed distinct trajectories.

At the same time, it is important to highlight the growing number of Turkish Studies programs established across Asia in recent years. This trend reflects not only a deepening academic interest in Türkiye but also the country's

rising importance in global affairs. As Türkiye expands its diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagement with Asia, there is increasing demand for scholarly work that explores its historical ties, contemporary influence, and strategic role in regional and global dynamics. These Turkish Studies programs contribute significantly to the broader Asian studies literature by fostering mutual understanding and producing knowledge at the intersection of Türkiye and Asia. In recognition of this important development, Institute Social plans to publish a separate, in-depth report on the emergence and impact of Turkish Studies programs in Asia.

The literature on the development of Asian studies in Türkiye is quite limited. Ergenç (2015) examined the emergence of Asian studies as a new discipline in the field of social sciences in Türkiye, which had previously focused on regions like Europe and the Middle East. This study highlighted the evolution of Asian studies, which, despite covering a broad geography from Central Asia to the Pacific academically, has seen Eurasian studies develop autonomously for historical and political reasons. Consequently, Asian studies programs in Türkiye now encompass North and Southeast Asia as well as South Asia and the Pacific region. Focusing on East Asia, Ergenç (2015) argued that the knowledge produced about East Asia in Türkiye reflects the national identity formation process, often from a Western-centric perspective. Esenbel (2017) outlined the development of Asian studies in Türkiye from their early years to 2022, with a particular emphasis on academic programs at Boğaziçi University and the international academic partnerships they entailed. Sezen (2022) emphasized the importance of Türkiye's knowledge base in developing and implementing long-term, stable, and predictable policies towards the Asian region and its countries.

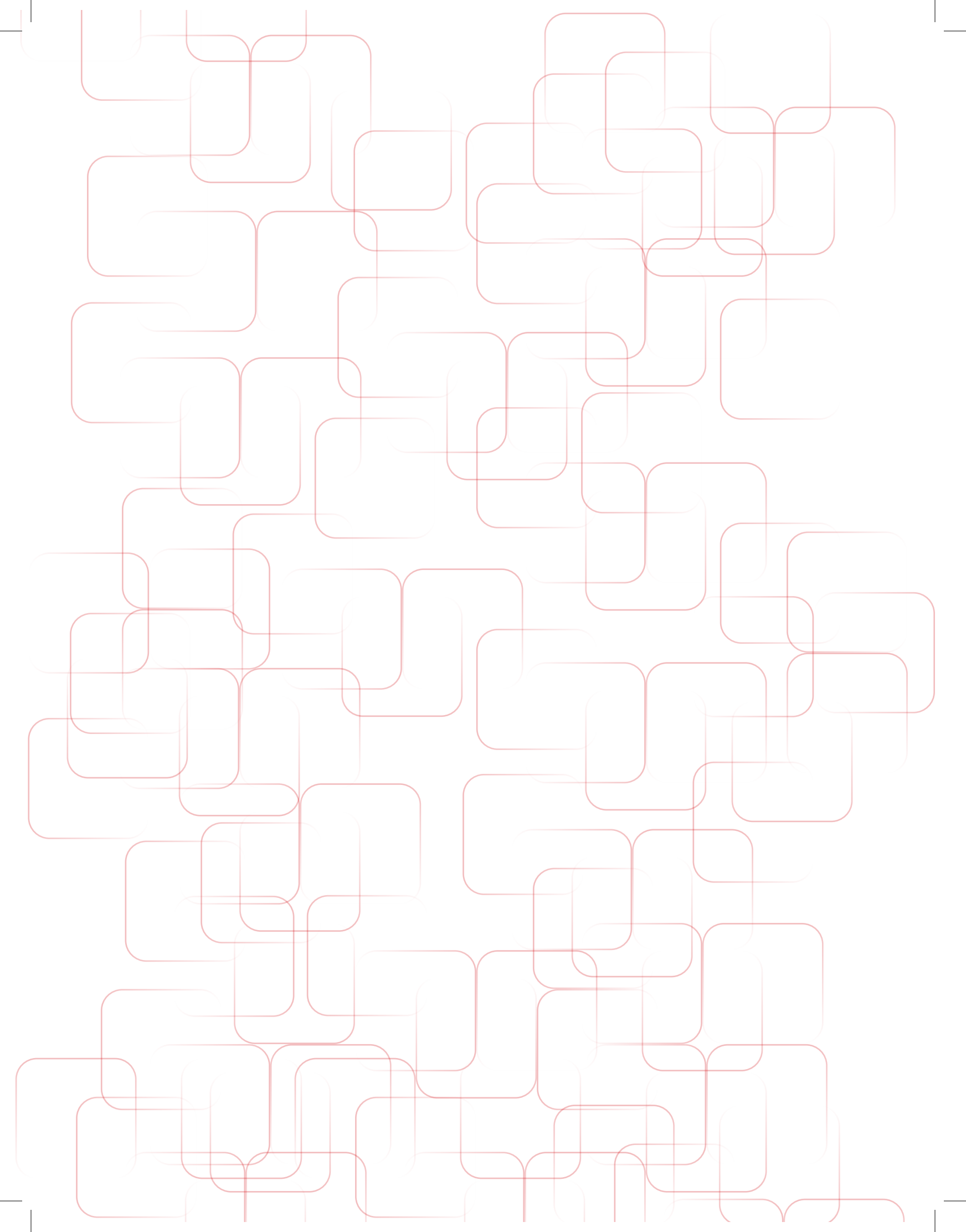


This report contributes significantly to the literature on Asian studies in Türkiye. Firstly, it provides the most up-to-date account of the development of Asian studies up to 2024. Secondly, it offers a comprehensive overview of institutions engaged in Asian studies, including universities and other organizations. Although a detailed analysis of qualified experts listed by various university centers is not fully possible, the report highlights the recent initiative of sending over 100 YLSY scholars to study Asian studies abroad in the last decade. Finally, the report examines educational programs, academic conferences, research activities, and university-industry collaborations in the field of Asian studies, based on data from official institutional sources.

This report is structured into several key sections to provide a comprehensive overview

of Asian studies in Türkiye. The introductory section sets the stage for the analysis, followed by a historical account of Asian studies in Türkiye. The third section examines the various institutions involved in Asian studies, including universities, Asian language and culture centers, think tanks, and both public and private organizations. The report then delves into the human resources aspect, detailing the academic staff at universities and the YLSY scholarship recipients who have specialized in Asian studies. Educational programs and student demographics are discussed in subsequent sections, along with the mobility of students and academic staff. The report also covers academic conferences, research initiatives, and the collaboration between academia and industry. The concluding section summarizes the findings and offers policy recommendations.

2. HISTORY OF ASIAN STUDIES IN TÜRKİYE



HISTORY OF ASIAN STUDIES IN TÜRKİYE

The history of Asian Studies in Türkiye traces back to the late Ottoman Empire, a period marked by a growing interest in Japan's rapid modernization following its victory over Russia in 1905. This interest coincided with the spread of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic ideologies within the empire. Prior to this intensified focus, intellectuals, travelers, and religious scholars played significant roles in conveying knowledge about Asia to the Ottoman world. Interestingly, the field of Asian Studies in Türkiye has again experienced significant development, particularly since the 1990s, fueled by the economic and technological advancements of the "Asian Tiger" economies, with China being a prominent example.

In the context of contemporary Türkiye, Asian Studies began with the efforts of a pioneering group of scholars who were instrumental in introducing Asian languages and cultures into Turkish academia. These scholars—Selçuk Esenbel, a graduate of Columbia University who established the field at Boğaziçi University; İsenbike Togan, a Harvard-trained expert in Chinese history; the late Pulat Otkan, a Sinologist at Ankara University; and Mete Tunçoku, who earned his Ph.D. in Japanese International Relations from Kyoto University—played a foundational role in shaping the development of the field in Türkiye. Their scholarly contributions not only introduced Asian studies to Turkish universities but also set the stage for future programs and academic engagement with Asia.

In the early stages, the focus was primarily on language programs, beginning with Japanese. Ankara University established its Japanese language program in 1986 within the Faculty

of Languages and History-Geography, under the Department of Eastern Languages, which also included studies in Indology, Sinology, and Korean language and literature. Boğaziçi University followed in 1988 with a five-year elective Japanese language program, which also served as language training for students in the History and Translation Studies departments.

As Türkiye's relations with Asian countries strengthened, the demand for expertise in Asian languages grew, and this demand was reflected in the expansion of academic programs. By the 2000s, interest in Asian languages—especially Japanese, Chinese, and Korean—had grown significantly. This was driven not only by increasing economic and diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Asia but also by a rising global interest in the region's cultures, economies, and political landscapes.

The expansion of Asian language programs in Türkiye continued during the 1990s and 2000s, marked by the introduction of more extensive and specialized Asian studies programs. Ankara University maintained its position as a leader, offering both undergraduate and graduate programs in Asian languages. Boğaziçi

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By 2022, a total of 12 Turkish universities were offering programs in Asian languages—Chinese, Japanese, and Korean—as well as graduate-level studies in Asian area studies. These developments were a direct reflection of the growing academic interest in Asia, which coincided with Türkiye's increasing engagement with the region.

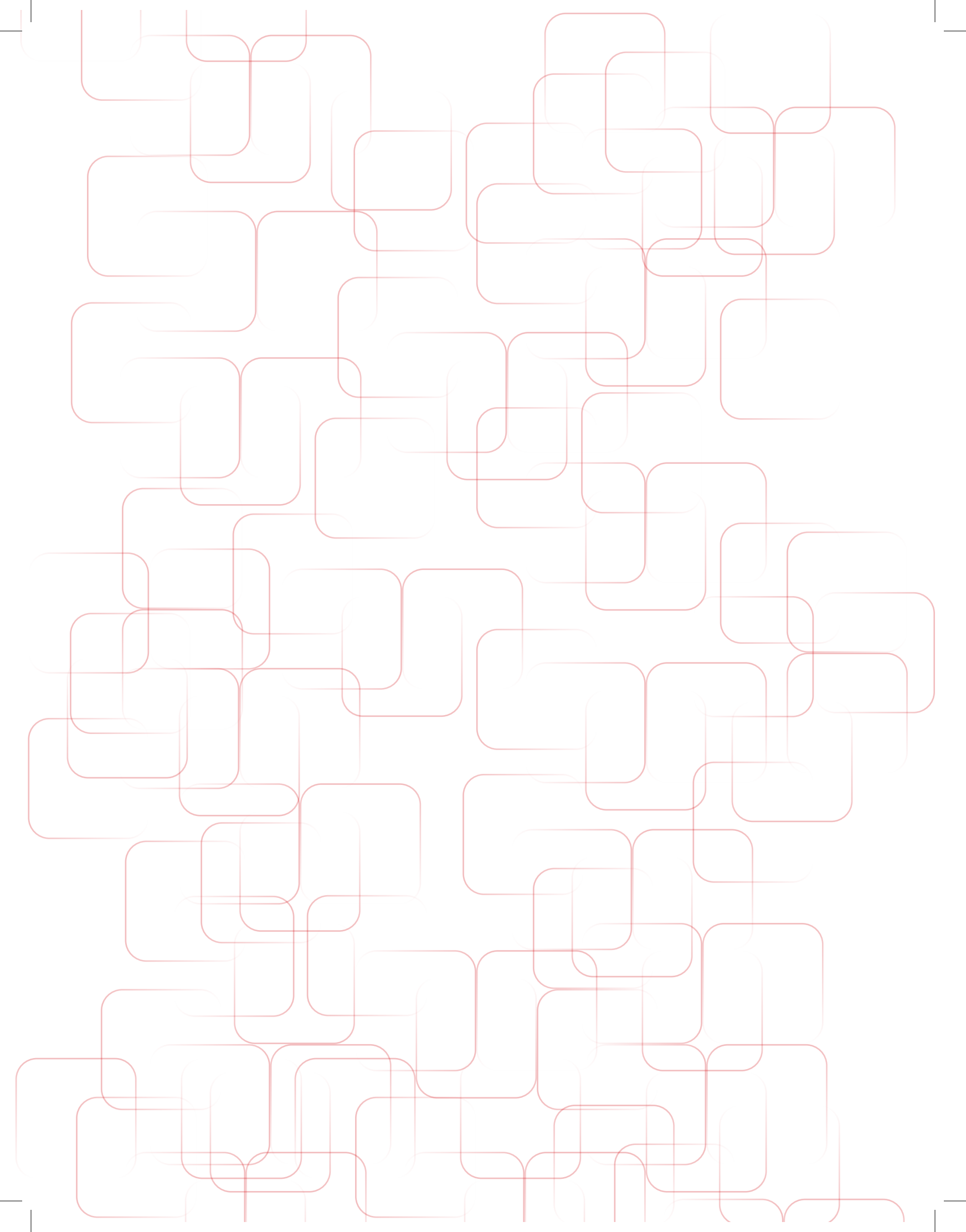
University also became a significant hub, developing specialized programs in Japanese language and history. The establishment of Asian Studies Centers marked the next phase of academic growth in the field. In 2009, Boğaziçi University founded Türkiye's first Asian Studies Center, marking a formal commitment to the interdisciplinary study of Asian societies, cultures, and languages. This was a milestone that laid the groundwork for further academic developments in the years to follow. In the early 2000s, several universities followed suit, including the establishment of Confucius Institutes in universities like Middle East Technical University, Boğaziçi University, Okan University, and Yeditepe University, which

helped expand Chinese language education across the country.

By 2022, a total of 12 Turkish universities were offering programs in Asian languages—Chinese, Japanese, and Korean—as well as graduate-level studies in Asian area studies. These developments were a direct reflection of the growing academic interest in Asia, which coincided with Türkiye's increasing engagement with the region. The expansion of these programs was also part of a broader trend of globalization, which spurred young people's interest in learning languages that could open up international career opportunities.



3. INSTITUTIONS



INSTITUTIONS

In recent years, academic institutions in Türkiye have increasingly turned their attention to Asia, recognizing the region's growing geopolitical and cultural significance. Universities, language and culture centers, and think tanks have become crucial players in Asian studies, each playing a significant role in deepening Türkiye's understanding and engagement with Asia's geopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics. Universities have led the way by establishing dedicated centers and institutes for Asian studies, creating academic platforms for research and teaching across a wide range of Asian regions. Alongside these academic initiatives, language and culture centers have provided important resources for fostering cross-cultural understanding and language proficiency, with programs focused on Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other Asian languages. Meanwhile, think tanks have emerged as influential hubs for policy-oriented research, analyzing the strategic, economic, and political dynamics of the Asian continent. This section examines the

key institutions driving the expansion of Asian studies in Türkiye, highlighting their roles in shaping academic research, language learning, and policy discourse on Asia.

3.1. Universities

Universities are the driving force behind institutions conducting research in Asian studies in Türkiye. Although offering courses and having programs related to Asia has a certain role to increase the number of academic research and activities, the sustainability of education, academic research and activities in this field largely depend on the existence of faculties, institutes and centres dedicated to Asian studies due to availability of dedicated academic staff and budget. Therefore, this report firstly analyzes existing centres and institutes of Asian studies in universities.

In recent years, Turkish universities have established specialized centers to enhance research and academic pursuits in various Asian regions and cultures. These centers focus on different aspects of Asian studies, reflecting a growing interest in understanding the diverse and complex dynamics of the continent.

Language programs at universities play a crucial role in the development of Asian studies. Language learning is one of the fundamental aspects of area studies, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the region's culture, history, and political dynamics. These programs not only equip students with linguistic proficiency but also provide them with the knowledge needed to contribute to academic research in the region. In addition to supporting scholarly work, language learning fosters

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stronger cultural and economic collaborations (Farrelly, 2019). Therefore, Asian language programs are essential for the growth of Asian studies and significantly contribute to the strengthening of this field within Türkiye’s academic community (Ergenç, 2015; Esenbel, 2017).

Boğaziçi University was a pioneer in this field with the founding of its Centre for Asian Studies in 2009. This center marked a significant step in promoting scholarly research on Asian cultures, politics, and economies. Following this early initiative, Social Sciences University of Ankara established the Institute for Area Studies with a focus on the Department of Asian Studies in 2013. The institute was established with the objective of offering a more specialized and in-depth approach to area studies, with particular emphasis on the comprehensive exploration of Asian studies.

Ankara University further expanded its academic offerings by launching the Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center in 2014. This center broadened the scope of Asian studies by integrating different perspectives and social,

economic and political issues related to the Asia-Pacific region. The next few years saw a surge in similar initiatives, with Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University founding the Ottoman-Malay World Studies Application and Research Center (OSMAD) in 2016. This center emphasized the historical and cultural connections between the Ottoman Empire and the Malay world, reflecting the university’s commitment to exploring historical Asian interactions.

In 2017, Koç University, Gazi University, and Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University contributed to the field by establishing their own Asian Studies application and research centers. These centers are dedicated to advancing knowledge and research on various Asian regions, enhancing Türkiye’s academic resources in this field. Istanbul University continued this momentum by launching the Center for Research and Practice in Mongol Studies in 2019, focusing on Mongolia’s historical and contemporary issues. The Asia and Pacific Studies Application and Research Center at Süleyman Demirel University, established in 2018, operated with a very limited number of academic staff and did not attain significant academic visibility; although it was active between 2018 and 2022, it appears to be inactive as of 2025.

The year 2020 was notable for the establishment of several new centers, including İbn Haldun University’s Japan Studies Application and Research Center, which aims to deepen understanding of Japanese culture and history. Işık University also opened the Belt and Road Studies Application and Research Center, focusing on the geopolitical and economic implications of China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Erciyes University contributed to this expanding field with its Eurasia and Korea Studies Application and Research Center, addressing the interconnectedness of Eurasian and Korean studies.

Table 1. Centers and Institutes for Asian Studies in Universities

University	Centres and Institutes	Active
Boğaziçi University	Asian Studies Center	2009
Social Sciences University of Ankara	Institute for Area Studies - Department of Asian Studies	2013
Ankara University	Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center	2014
Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University	Ottoman-Malay World Studies Application and Research Center (OSMAD)	2016-2024
Koç University	Koç University Center for Asian Studies	2017
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	Application and Research Center for Asian Studies	2017
Gazi University	Asian Studies Application and Research Center	2017-2020
Süleyman Demirel University	Asia and Pacific Studies Application and Research Center	2018
Istanbul University	Center for Research and Practice in Mongol Studies	2019
Ibn Haldun University	Japan Studies Application and Research Center	2020-2024
İstinye University	Belt and Road Studies Application and Research Center	2020
Erciyes University	Eurasia and Korea Studies Application and Research Center	2020
Istanbul Gedik University	ASEAN Southeast Asia Strategic Studies Application and Research Center	2021
Istanbul Gedik University	Bangladesh Studies Application and Research Center	2021-2024
Bahçeşehir University	Asia-Pacific, Africa Studies Center (APASC)	2022

The following year, 2021, saw Istanbul Gedik University making significant contributions with two new centers: The ASEAN Southeast Asia Strategic Studies Application and Research Center and the Bangladesh Studies Application and Research Center reflected the university's commitment to advancing strategic and area studies in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh. In 2024, the Bangladesh Studies Application and Research Center was dissolved, and the ASEAN Southeast Asia Strategic Studies Application and Research Center was renamed the Asia-Pacific Strategic Studies Application and Research Center. Last but not least, Bahçeşehir University established the Asia-Pacific-Africa Studies Application and Research Center in 2022.

Despite the proliferation of Asian studies applications and research centers over the past decade, this does not guarantee that research and academic activities are thriving at all universities. Some centers have become inactive or have been discontinued. For instance, on April 2020, the regulation for the Asia Studies Application and Research Center at Gazi University was repealed. Similarly, the Ottoman-Malay World Studies Application and Research Center at Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University was officially repealed on June 30, 2024. Additionally, the Japan Studies Application and Research Center is no longer listed among the research centers at Ibn Haldun University.



Overall, these centers collectively represent a significant commitment by Turkish academic institutions to advancing knowledge and research on various facets of Asia. They provide valuable resources for students, researchers, and policymakers interested in understanding the dynamic and diverse cultures, histories, and contemporary issues of the Asian continent.

3.2. Asian Language and Culture Centers

In Türkiye, Asian language and culture centers have been established over the years to foster cross-cultural understanding and promote the study of Asian languages. The Turkish Japanese Foundation, established in 1992, was one of the earliest initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural exchange between Türkiye and Japan. The Confucius Institutes at Boğaziçi University and Middle East Technical University (METU), both founded in 2008, serve as key centers for Chinese language and cultural studies. Following these, the Korean Cultural Center was established in 2011, promoting Korean language and culture. Okan University and Yeditepe University also joined this cultural network with the establishment of their Confucius Institutes in 2013 and 2017, respectively. In Türkiye, the Confucius Institutes have been established in

collaboration with the following partnerships: METU-Xiamen University, Boğaziçi University-Shanghai University, Okan University-Beijing Language and Culture University, and Yeditepe University-Nankai University. Most recently, the Indonesian Language and Culture Center was inaugurated in 2022, reflecting Türkiye's growing engagement with Southeast Asian cultures. These centers play a significant role in fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between Türkiye and various Asian countries.

The primary area of activity for Confucius institutes is to offer courses and classes focused on the Chinese language. In this context, Confucius institutes can be regarded as important centers for cultural interaction and communication, as they bring together researchers and students who are closely related to and interested in Chinese culture and language. Due to these characteristics, as seen in other examples worldwide, Confucius institutes are considered one of the most important tools of China's soft power (Pan, 2013; Paradise, 2009). Setting aside the political aims and impacts of the Confucius institutes, they can be viewed as a gateway to the Chinese language and culture for students and researchers in Türkiye who are interested in China. In this regard, their presence aims to establish an institutional framework

Table 2. Asian Languages and Culture Centres

Institution	City	Established
The Turkish Japanese Foundation	Istanbul	1992
Boğaziçi University - Confucius Institute	Istanbul	2008
Middle East Technical University - Confucius Institute	Ankara	2008
Korean Cultural Center	Ankara	2011
Okan University - Confucius Institute	Istanbul	2013
Yeditepe University - Confucius Institute	Istanbul	2017
Indonesian Language and Culture Center	Istanbul	2022

for the growing interest in China, as well as to foster cooperation between partner institutions in China and host institutions in Türkiye (Ermeýdan, 2023).

3.3. Think Tanks

Think tanks in Türkiye, especially from the 2000s onwards, have developed significantly, marking a clear shift from earlier periods where such institutions were not as prominent or well-established. Prior to this, there were few noteworthy developments in the field, with limited independent research organizations. Much of the work traditionally occurred in close collaboration with state institutions, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, military, intelligence, and universities. This partnership often centered around strategic and security-focused research. However, from the early 2000s, several independent think tanks began to emerge, expanding their influence and focus areas, reflecting Türkiye's evolving role in both area and global affairs (Aydin, 2006).

Several think tanks focusing on Asian studies have been established in Türkiye, reflecting the country's strategic interest in the region. South Asia Strategic Research Center (Güney Asya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi-GASAM), established in 2004, was one of the first to focus specifically on South Asia, analyzing the region's geopolitical dynamics and their implications for Türkiye. The SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı),

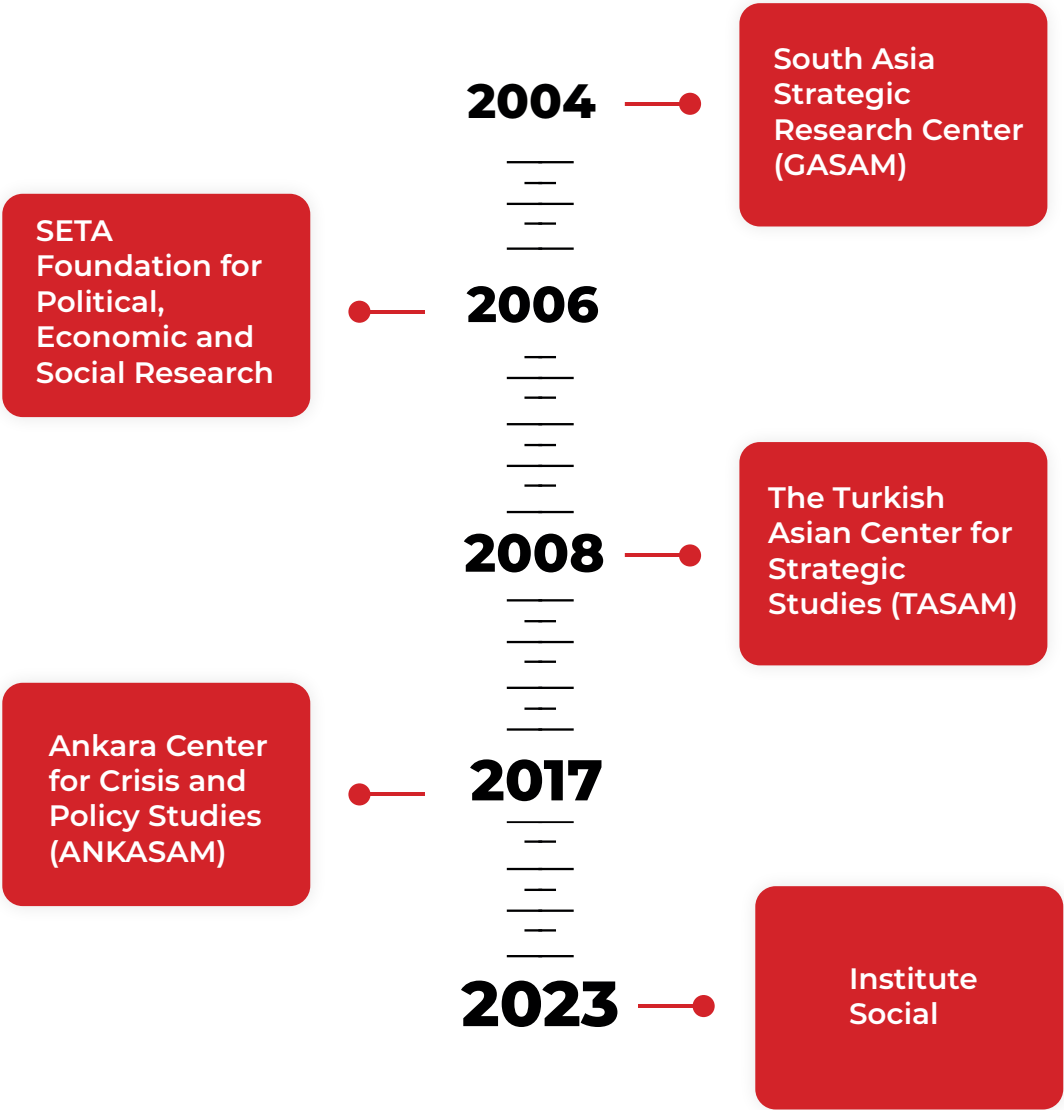
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founded in 2006, is a prominent think tank that conducts extensive research on international relations, including studies on Asia, providing policy recommendations for Türkiye's foreign policy. The Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (Türk Asya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi-TASAM), established in 2008, focuses on broader Asian affairs, promoting dialogue and cooperation between Türkiye and Asian countries. Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (Ankara Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi-ANKASAM), which began in 2017, delves into crisis management and political developments in Asia, offering insights into how this impact global security. Most recently, Institute Social (Enstitü Sosyal), established in 2023, has significantly contributed to the analysis of Asian regions by incorporating social, educational, and cultural perspectives. Through its conferences, seminars, op-eds, news coverage, research projects, and policy reports on the educational, economic, social, and international dynamics of Asian countries, it has enriched the discourse on Türkiye's engagement with Asia. These think tanks continue to play a vital role in shaping Türkiye's understanding of and relations with the Asian continent.

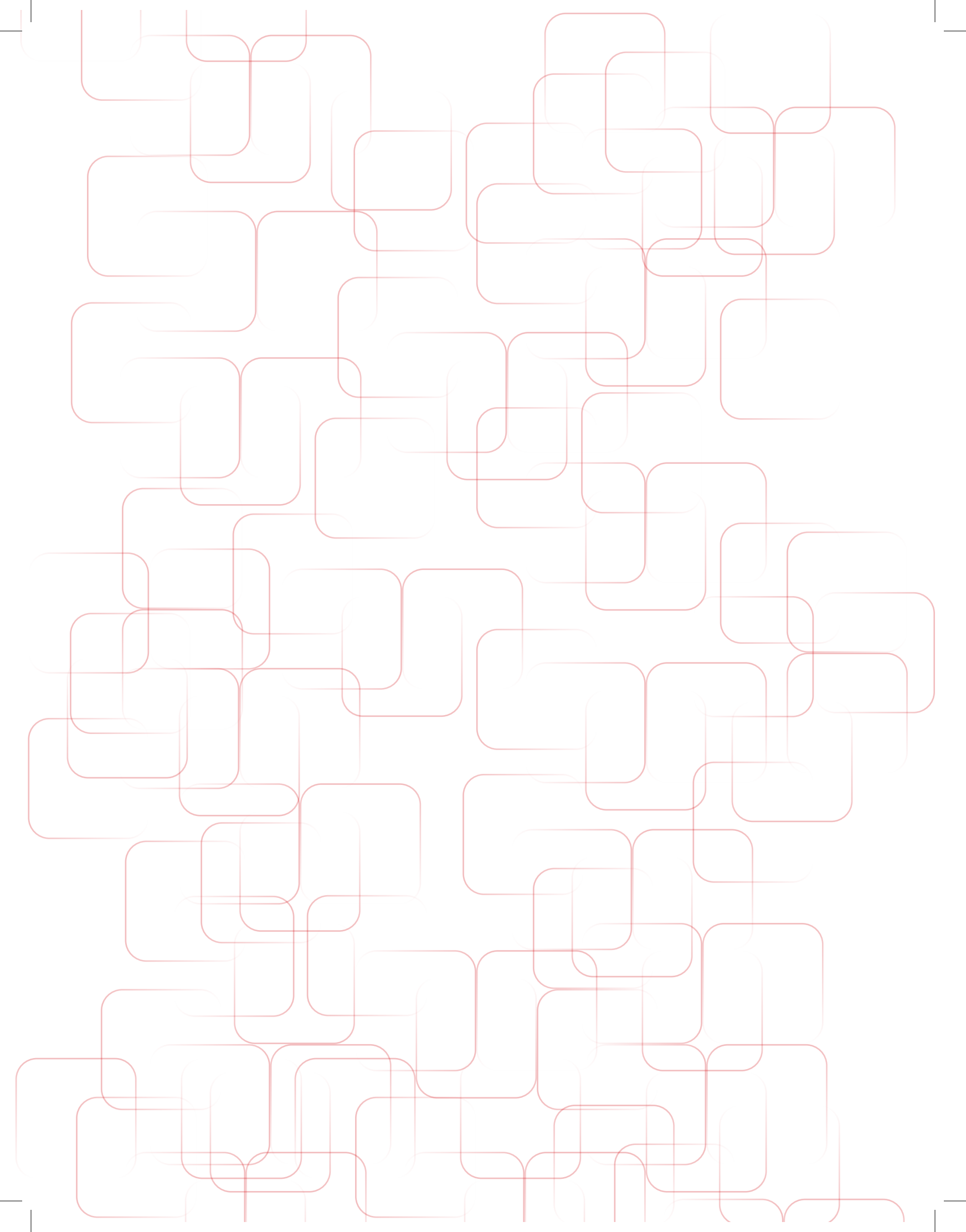


Figure 1. Think Tanks in Asian Studies





4. HUMAN CAPITAL



HUMAN CAPITAL

This section explores two key factors that have shaped the development of Asian studies in Türkiye: the staffing and organizational structure of university centers focused on Asian studies, and the impact of the YLSY scholarship program in fostering academic research in this field. While several Turkish universities have established dedicated roles for Asian studies, the lack of specialized institutes and faculties dedicated solely to area studies, except for the Institute for Area Studies at Ankara University, has created challenges in developing a critical mass of expertise and support. This is reflected in the varying structures of academic staffing across institutions, which often limit the effectiveness and sustainability of research initiatives. However the YLSY scholarship program has played a pivotal role in expanding Türkiye's academic engagement with Asian countries by providing scholarships for study abroad, particularly in Asian studies.

The following sections examine the staffing models at university centers, the distribution of YLSY scholarship recipients, and the fields of study that have been most prominent in the program, shedding light on the evolving landscape of Asian studies in Türkiye.

4.1. Academic Staff at Universities

Due to the lack of institutes and faculties specifically dedicated to area studies, apart from the Institute for Area Studies at Ankara University, academics focusing on this field are often affiliated with faculties and institutes in other social sciences and contribute to the field from outside. Centres at universities typically

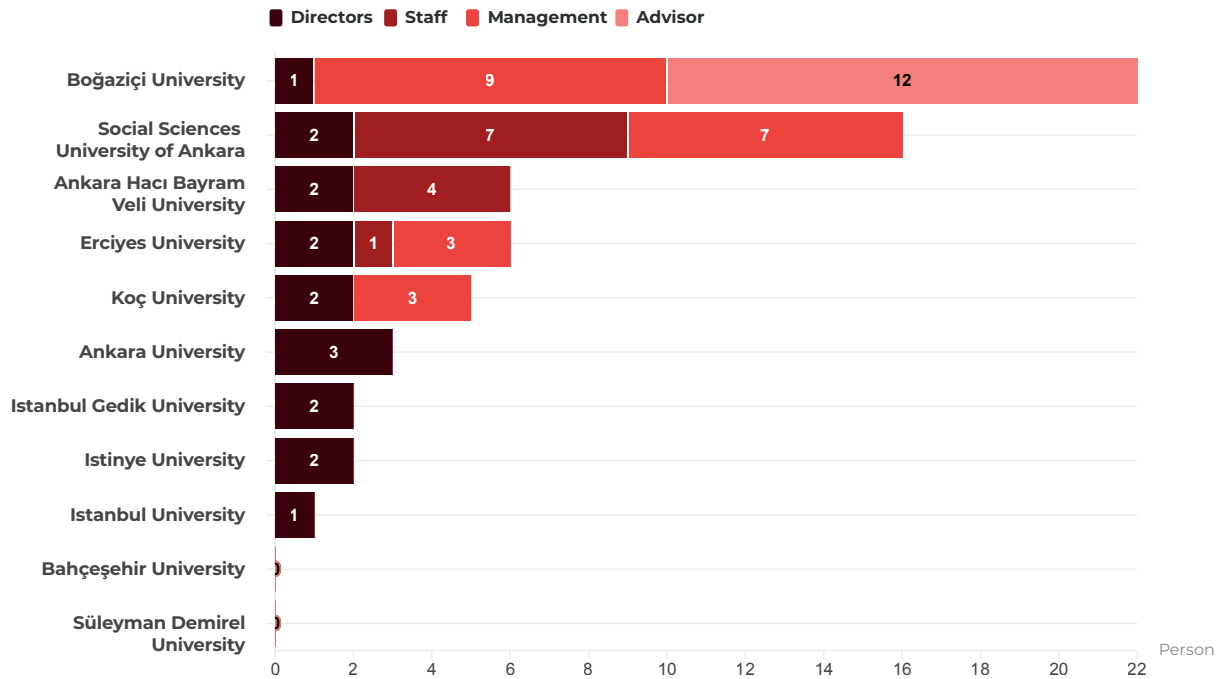
do not have dedicated academic positions or programs as per higher education regulations. As a result, many Asian studies programs are housed within faculties or institutes not specifically focused on Asian studies. Similarly, lecturers in this field are often members of faculties or institutes from various disciplines. However, these centres sometimes still list their affiliated academic, administrative, advisory, and volunteer staff on their institutional websites.

In Türkiye, several universities have established positions dedicated to Asian studies, though the distribution of roles varies significantly across institutions. Boğaziçi University, with one director, focuses heavily on management and advisory roles, with nine management staff and twelve advisors. Social Sciences University of Ankara has an Institute for Area Studies and a specialized department for Asian studies, which enables them to have a larger number of dedicated academic staff focused on this field. The university stands out for having two directors and a substantial staff presence, including seven academic staff members and seven individuals in management roles. Ankara University stands out with three directors but has minimal involvement in other roles, relying on one volunteer. Koç University and Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University both have two directors,

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Figure 2. Staff Positions in University Centers and Institutes for Asian Studies


Source: Data collected by the authors

with Koç focusing more on management and Hacı Bayram Veli on academic staff. Other institutions like Istanbul Gedik University, Istanbul University, and Istinye University have a limited structure, often only appointing one or two directors without additional support staff. Erciyes University has a different structure, with two directors, one staff member, and three individuals in management roles. However, Süleyman Demirel University and Bahçeşehir University appear not to have specific roles dedicated to Asian studies, indicating a potential gap in area expertise within their programs.

4.2. YLSY¹ Scholarship Recipients

Before the establishment of the YLSY scholarship program, independent scholars in Türkiye were among the pioneers of Asian studies, conducting research and laying the foundation for future academic development in this field. However, the number of these scholars and the programs dedicated to Asian studies were quite limited, primarily due to insufficient funding and opportunities for specialized training. The introduction of the YLSY scholarship program after 2010 marked

¹ The YLSY (Yurt Dışı Lisansüstü Eğitim Programı- Overseas Graduate Education Program) scholarship is a program offered by the Turkish Ministry of National Education for Turkish citizens who wish to pursue graduate-level (master's or doctoral) education abroad. The scholarship aims to provide financial support to students, allowing them to study at reputable universities in various countries.

a significant turning point for Asian studies in Türkiye, providing crucial support and resources that have enabled a new generation of scholars to engage deeply with Asian cultures, languages, and societies. This initiative has not only expanded the academic community focused on Asia but has also enhanced Türkiye's capacity to contribute to area and global discourse (Ergenç, 2015; Esenbel, 2017).

The table illustrates the distribution of YLSY scholarship recipients sent abroad for Asian studies on behalf of various Turkish universities and institutions from 2013 to 2019. The Social Sciences University of Ankara has the highest number of recipients, with a total of 49, primarily in 2013, 2014, and 2017. Boğaziçi University and Ankara University have also been significant contributors, with 17 and 18 recipients, respectively, spread across several years.

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University had a notable peak in 2015, sending 10 recipients, but showed minimal activity in other years. Other universities like Istanbul University, Karadeniz Technical University, and Gaziantep University had smaller numbers of recipients, usually concentrated in specific years.

The Middle East Technical University and Marmara University each contributed a few recipients, while National Defence University and Erciyes University were more active in the later years, particularly after 2018.

Two non-university institutions also participated: the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and the Presidency of Religious Affairs. TRT sent 13 recipients, mainly in the later years, while the Presidency of Religious Affairs sent 7 recipients in 2019.

A total of 165 YLSY scholars were sent abroad for Asian studies across the seven-year period,

The absence of YLSY scholars in Asian studies post-2020 marks a pivotal change in academic research priorities in Türkiye. The reduction in this support has led to a noticeable decrease in the number of theses in Asian countries, reflecting a broader shift in research priorities and funding allocations.

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with some institutions consistently contributing, while others were more sporadic in their involvement.

The data presented on the annual count of theses related to Asian countries across various universities from 2013 to 2019 provides a snapshot of research focus and output during this period. However, the trend post-2020 indicates a significant shift: there has been a noticeable decline in the number of theses produced on Asian studies. This decline is notably linked to changes in scholarship programs, particularly the YLSY scholarships, which historically supported scholars in Asian studies but have since been redirected.

The absence of YLSY scholars in Asian studies post-2020 marks a pivotal change in academic research priorities in Türkiye. The reduction in this support has led to a noticeable decrease in the number of theses in Asian countries, reflecting a broader shift in research priorities and funding allocations.

This shift has significant implications for both the academic community and the broader field of Asian studies. The decrease in research output on Asian countries may lead to a gap in the scholarly understanding of the region, potentially affecting areas such as geopolitical analysis, cultural studies, and economic research.



Table 3. YLSY Scholars Sent Abroad for Education in the Field of Asian Studies

University	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Social Sciences University of Ankara	15	15	-	-	19	-	-	49
Ankara University	-	5	5	-	4	4	-	18
Boğaziçi University	-	5	5	-	5	2	-	17
Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University	-	-	10	-	2	-	-	12
Gaziantep University	-	5	5	-	-	-	-	10
Middle East Technical University	-	5	-	-	4	-	-	9
Karadeniz Technical University	-	5	3	-	-	-	-	8
Istanbul University	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	7
Marmara University	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	5
National Defence University	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	5
Erciyes University	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Turkish Radio and Television Corporation	-	-	-	-	3	5	5	13
Presidency of Religious Affairs	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	7
Total	15	40	33	0	44	19	14	165

Source: Ministry of National Education

Furthermore, the reallocation of scholarship resources could impact the depth and diversity of research conducted on Asian countries, limiting the scope of academic inquiry and reducing opportunities for international collaboration. However, the future development of Asian Studies in Türkiye is significantly anticipated to be driven by scholars and institutions which have supported it for the last two decades.

The trend underscores the importance of maintaining support for specialized research programs and scholarships to ensure a balanced and comprehensive academic exploration of global regions. As the focus of scholarship programs evolves, it becomes crucial for academic institutions and policymakers to address these changes and consider the long-term implications for research output and global academic engagement.

The figures reveal a strong correlation between universities with dedicated Asian studies centers and the number of YLSY scholars sent abroad for Asian studies. The Social Sciences University of Ankara, which has the Institute for Area Studies - Department of Asian Studies established in 2013, sent a significant number of scholars (49) between 2013 and 2017, reflecting the university's commitment to this field.

Similarly, Ankara University, with its Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center founded in 2014, sent 18 scholars during the same period, aligning with the establishment of their center.

Boğaziçi University, home to the Centre for Asian Studies since 2009, sent 17 scholars between 2014 and 2018, indicating a consistent focus on Asian studies. Erciyes University sent 5 scholars in 2017, and although their Eurasia

and Korea Studies Application and Research Center was only established in 2020, the sending of scholars prior to this indicates a pre-existing interest in the region.

This pattern suggests that universities with dedicated centers for Asian studies are more likely to send YLSY scholars abroad, demonstrating their institutional commitment to developing expertise in this field.

In contrast, several universities without dedicated centers for Asian studies have also sent YLSY scholars abroad, though generally in smaller numbers. For instance, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University sent 12 scholars between 2015 and 2017, despite not having a specialized center. This suggests that the university still maintains an interest in Asian studies, possibly integrating the field into broader academic programs or preparing to establish a dedicated center in the future.

Similarly, Gaziantep University sent 10 scholars in 2014 and 2015, which indicates a focused yet temporary initiative to engage with Asian studies, despite not having a dedicated institute or center for this field. Middle East Technical University (METU) also sent 9 scholars between 2014 and 2017, demonstrating its engagement with Asian studies, possibly through interdisciplinary programs, rather than through a specialized center.

Other universities like Karadeniz Technical University and Istanbul University each sent 8 and 7 scholars, respectively, indicating a more modest involvement in Asian studies. This may reflect either emerging interest in the region or reliance on existing faculty expertise rather than institutional infrastructure.

Moreover, Marmara University and National Defence University each sent 5 scholars, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs sent 7 scholars, none of which have dedicated Asian studies centers, but they still demonstrate an institutional commitment to Asian studies, possibly driven by specific departmental interests or strategic priorities.

These cases highlight that while academic centers can be a significant driver for sending scholars abroad, universities and institutions without such centers can still participate actively in Asian studies, possibly due to internal academic priorities or emerging interests in the region.

The Table 6 reveals the distribution of YLSY scholarship recipients across various fields of Asian studies from 2013 to 2019, highlighting trends and areas of focus.

Chinese studies consistently received a significant number of scholars each year, except for 2016, with a total of 40 recipients. The years 2014 and 2015 saw the highest numbers, with 10 scholars sent each year, indicating a strong and sustained interest in China-related studies.

Japanese studies also maintained a steady flow of recipients in the early years, with 5 scholars sent annually from 2013 to 2015. However, there was no activity in 2016 and 2019, leading to a total of 21 scholars over the period. This suggests a consistent but slightly fluctuating interest in Japanese studies.

Asia Pacific studies had scholars sent only in 2014, 2015, and 2017, totaling 14 recipients. The limited activity in this field compared to others might indicate a more focused or specialized interest in the Asia Pacific region, covering



Table 4. YLSY Scholars by Fields of Study

University	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
East Asian studies	5	10	10	-	20	12	9	66
Chinese studies	5	10	10	-	8	4	3	40
Indian studies	-	10	3	-	7	-	1	21
Japanese studies	5	5	5	-	4	2	-	21
Asia Pacific studies	-	5	5	-	4	-	-	14
South Asian studies	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	3
Total	15	40	33	0	44	19	14	165

Source: Ministry of National Education

countries like China, India, Malaysia, Japan, and Australia.

East Asian studies emerged as the most popular field, with a total of 66 scholars sent. The field saw significant activity in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017, with the highest number of recipients, 20, in 2017. This reflects strong interest in countries like Korea, Japan, China, and Southeast Asia, making East Asian studies the most prominent area within the YLSY scholarship program.

Indian studies had a more uneven distribution, with a peak of 10 scholars in 2014. A total of 21 scholars pursued studies related to India over the seven-year period, though interest appeared to wane in later years, with only one scholar sent in 2019.

South Asian studies was the least represented field, with only 3 scholars sent between 2017 and 2019. This suggests that South Asian Studies, focusing on regions like Pakistan and other South Asian countries, might be a less prioritized or emerging area within the program.

Overall, 167 scholars were sent abroad for studies in these fields from 2013 to 2019. East

Asian studies and Chinese studies dominated the program, reflecting a strong interest in the broader East Asia and China regions. In contrast, regions like Asia Pacific studies and South Asian studies had fewer participants, indicating more specialized or emerging interest in these fields.

The YLSY scholarship program's strategic decision to cultivate expertise in Asian studies by immersing Turkish scholars in Asian academic environments presents a nuanced dynamic. While the experiential learning and cultural fluency gained are undoubtedly valuable assets, a critical assessment necessitates considering the varying global rankings and research infrastructure of host institutions. A potential strategic refinement could involve a more diversified approach, selectively leveraging the strengths of both leading Asian and established Western universities to ensure a globally competitive caliber of expertise. Furthermore, the efficacy of the YLSY investment is inextricably linked to the proactive engagement of Turkish universities in establishing robust mentorship programs and clear career pathways for returning scholars, thereby maximizing the domestic impact of their international training. To truly catalyze the

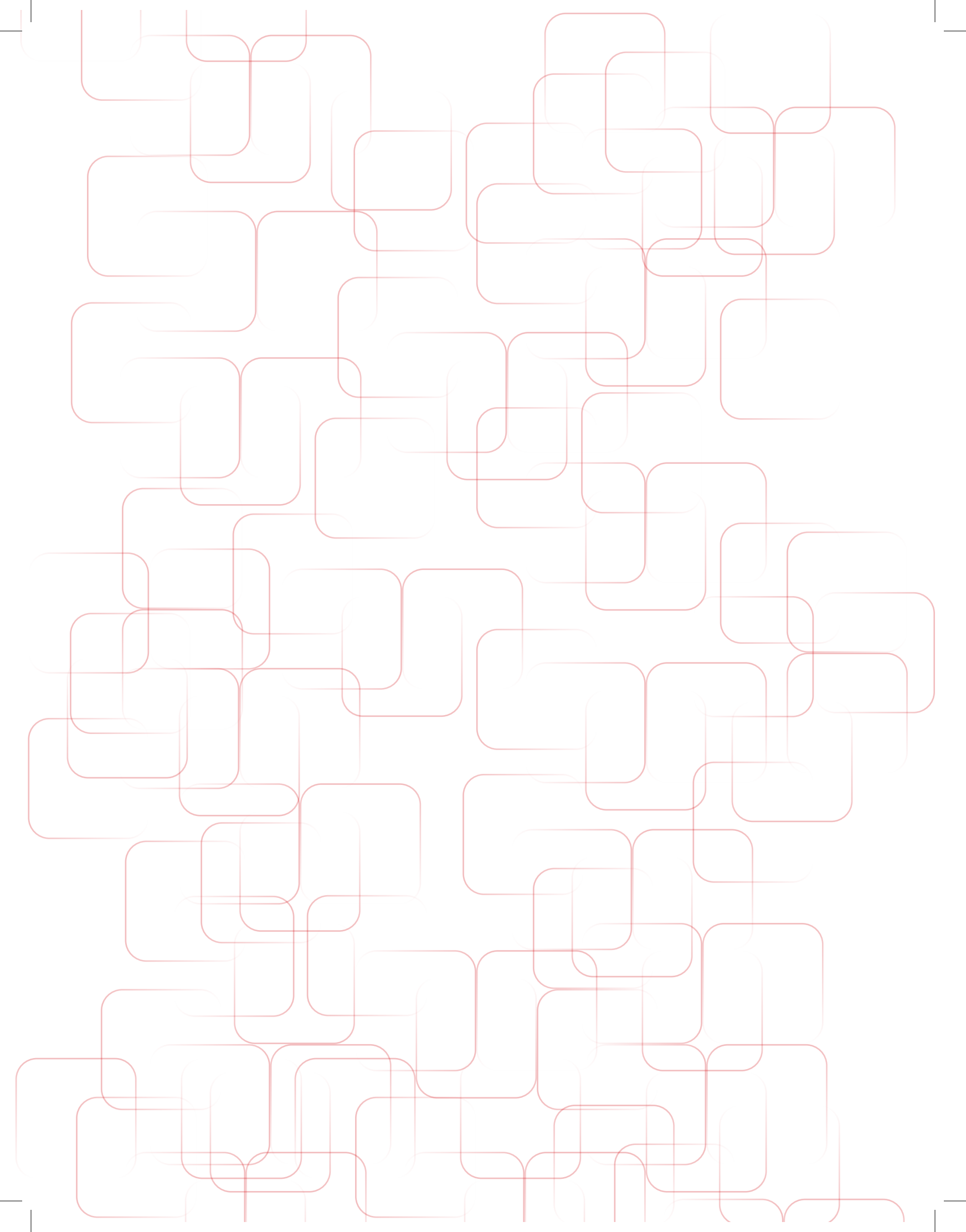
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To truly catalyze the field, a concerted national strategy is required, prioritizing the funding and development of dedicated Asian studies centers within Turkish universities and the sponsorship of high-profile national and international conferences to foster intellectual exchange and elevate Türkiye's contribution to the global discourse on Asia. This holistic approach, balancing immersive experience with rigorous academic training and robust institutional support, is essential for establishing strong Asian studies in Türkiye.

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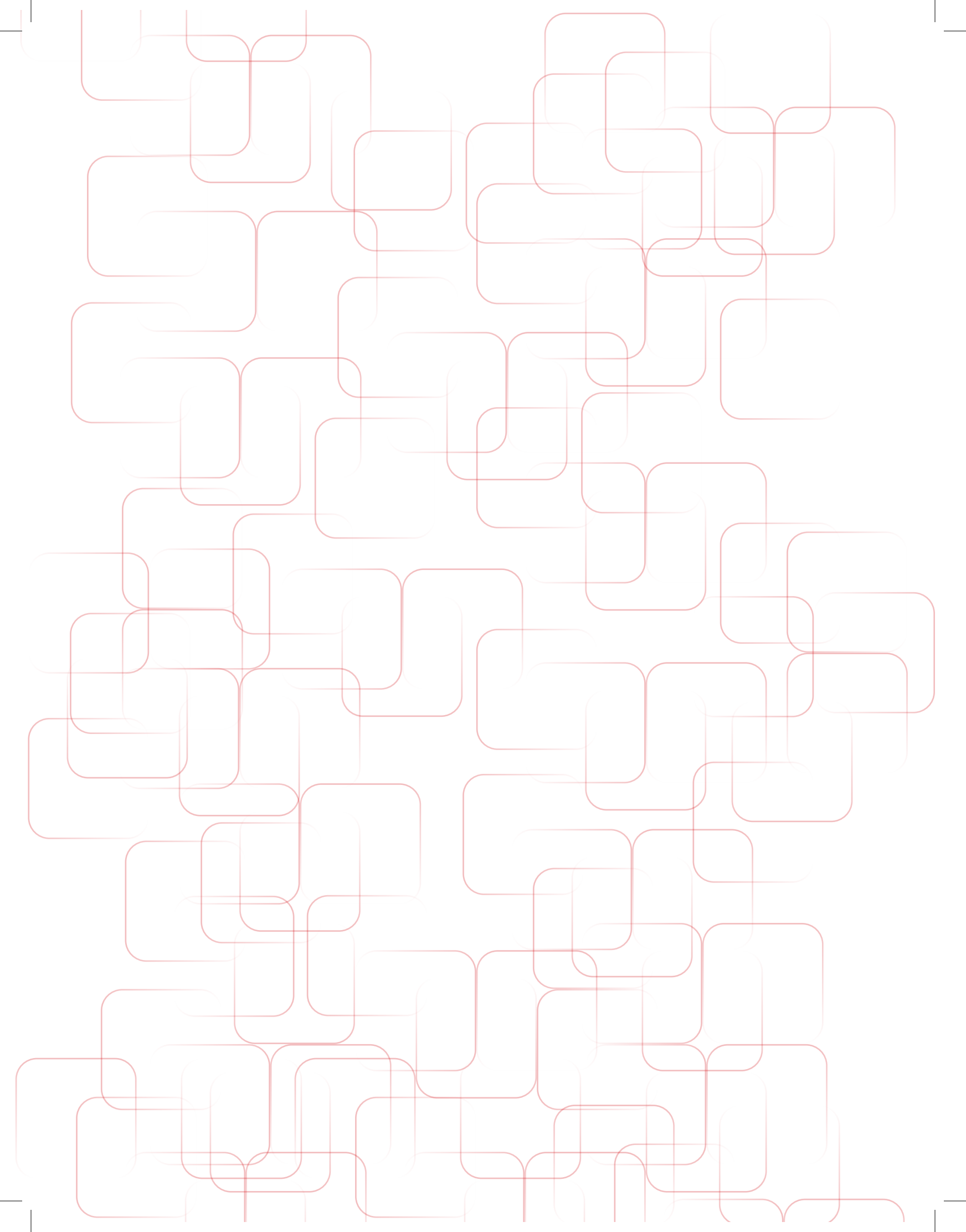
contribution to the global discourse on Asia. This holistic approach, balancing immersive experience with rigorous academic training and robust institutional support, is essential for establishing strong Asian studies in Türkiye.







5. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

This section highlights the growing academic engagement with Asian studies in Türkiye, particularly through university-level programs and non-university educational and research initiatives. Several leading universities in Türkiye have introduced specialized programs focusing on various regions of Asia, reflecting the country's increasing recognition of the strategic importance of the continent. Institutions such as Boğaziçi University, Koç University, and the Social Sciences University of Ankara offer comprehensive master's programs in Asian studies, while Erciyes University stands out with its PhD offering in this field. These programs provide students with diverse opportunities to explore the cultural, historical, and geopolitical dimensions of Asia. In addition to university-based offerings, the "Asia Anew Certificate Program" organized by Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plays a pivotal role in broadening understanding of Asia's global significance, providing participants with both academic knowledge and practical insights. The section also touches on the growing importance of academic mobility, with Turkish universities increasingly engaged in international

partnerships with Asian institutions. This expansion in educational opportunities underscores Türkiye's deepening engagement with Asia and its commitment to fostering expertise in this region across various levels of higher education.

5.1. University Educational Programs

Türkiye has been expanding its academic offerings in Asian studies, with several universities now offering specialized programs at various degree levels. Boğaziçi University offers a master's in Asian Studies, providing in-depth knowledge and research opportunities focused on the Asian continent. Koç University offers an Asian-Eurasian Studies Track Program, allowing students to focus on both Asian and Eurasian regions as part of a broader curriculum.

The Social Sciences University of Ankara and Middle East Technical University (METU) also provide master's programs in Asian studies, reflecting the growing academic interest in this field across major Turkish universities. Istanbul

Table 5. Universities with Asian Studies Programs

University	Programs	Degree
Boğaziçi University	Asian Studies	Master
Koç University	Asian and Eurasian Studies	Track Program
Social Sciences University of Ankara	Asian Studies	Master
Middle East Technical University	Asian Studies	Master
Istanbul Gedik University	Asian Studies	Master
Istanbul Gedik University	South Asian Studies and International Relations	Master
Erciyes University	Asian Studies	PhD



Gedik University offers not only a master's in Asian studies but also a specialized master's program in South Asian studies and international relations, catering to students interested in the South Asian region specifically.

For those pursuing higher academic qualifications, Erciyes University offers a PhD in Asian Studies, making it one of the few institutions in Türkiye providing doctoral-level education focused on Asia. These programs collectively reflect Türkiye's increasing engagement with Asian studies, offering students various pathways to specialize in this strategically important and culturally rich region.

5.2. Non-University Educational Programs

5.2.1. Asia Anew Certificate Program

The “Asia Anew Certificate Program” organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a specialized educational initiative aimed at enhancing understanding of Asia's strategic significance. Spanning several weeks, the program focuses on different regions of Asia, including East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Eurasia. It covers a wide range of topics,

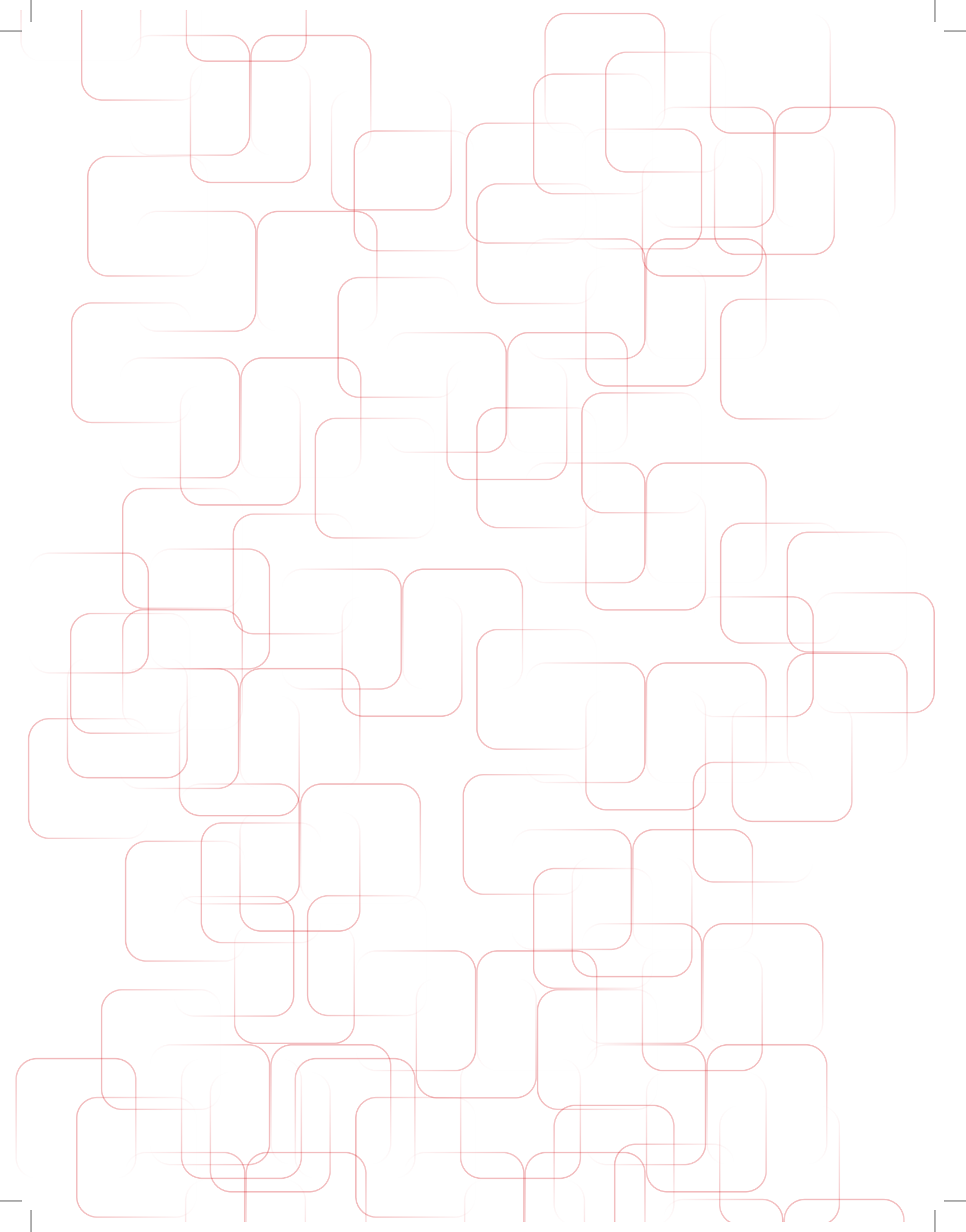
from the historical dimensions of Türkiye's relations with Asia to contemporary economic and diplomatic opportunities available in these regions.

The program features a distinguished lineup of instructors, primarily drawn from leading universities in Türkiye and seasoned diplomats with extensive experience in the Asia-Pacific region. This mix of academic and practical perspectives ensures a well-rounded exploration of the subject matter, providing participants with both theoretical insights and real-world applications.

Participants, who are predominantly university students, engage in discussions on topics such as Türkiye's soft power strategies in the Asia-Pacific, the significance of Asia in Türkiye's trade objectives, and the evolving economic relationships between Türkiye and various Asian countries. Workshops and interactive sessions, particularly focused on regions like East Asia and South Asia, allow for deeper exploration and practical understanding of the issues at hand. This program is a crucial step in equipping Türkiye's future leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the increasingly important Asian geopolitical landscape.



6. STUDENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF MOBILITY

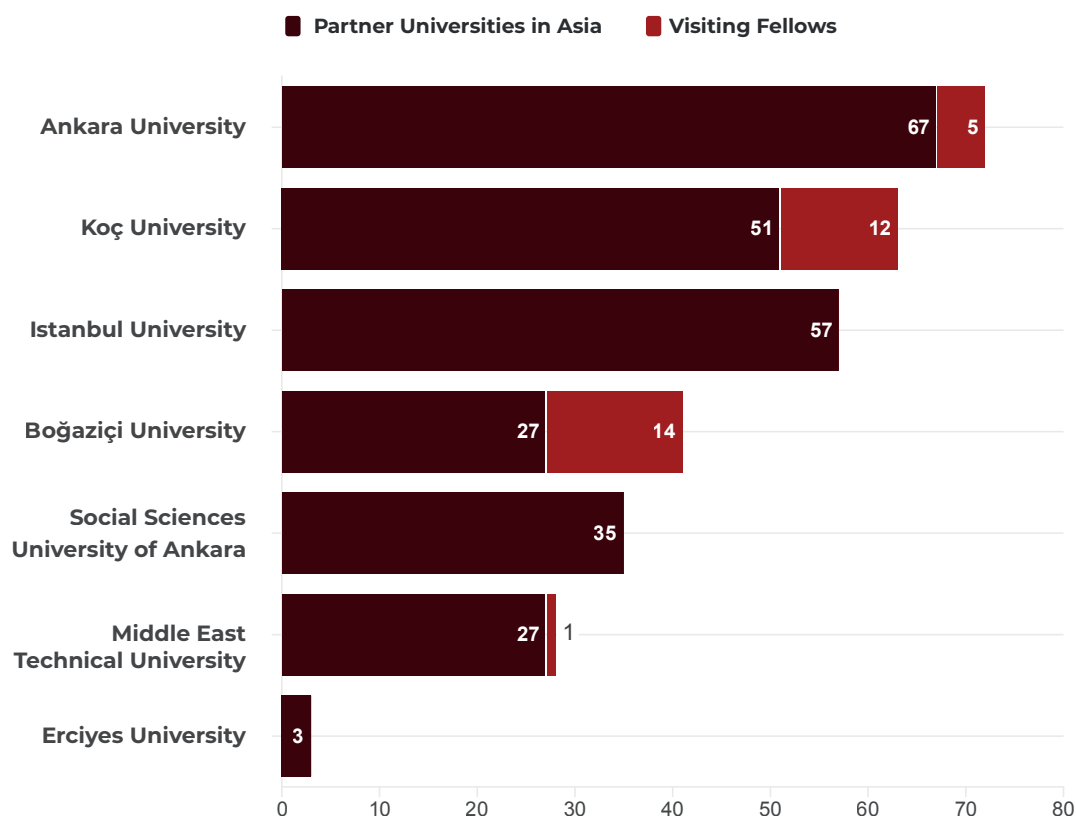


STUDENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF MOBILITY

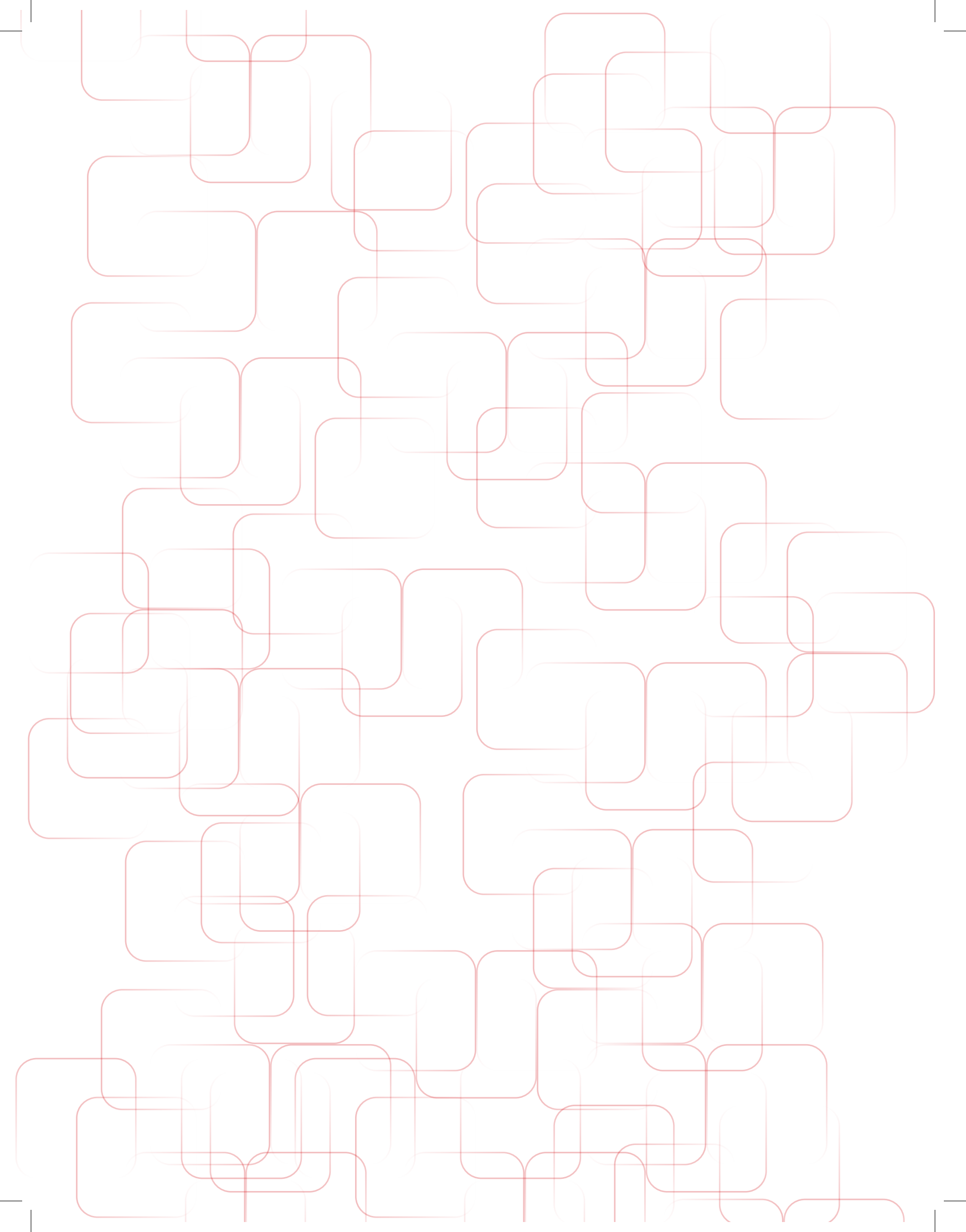
Table 8 illustrates the extent of engagement between selected Turkish universities and their counterparts in Asia, focusing on academic mobility programs. Ankara University leads the list with 67 partner universities in Asia and has hosted 5 visiting fellows, indicating strong international connections. Istanbul University follows closely with 57 partnerships, though it does not report any visiting fellows. Koç University and Boğaziçi University also show significant engagement, with 51 and 27 partner universities respectively. They have hosted 12 and 14 visiting fellows, highlighting their active

role in academic exchange. The Social Sciences University of Ankara and Middle East Technical University also have notable partnerships, with 35 and 27 respectively, though their visiting fellow numbers are lower. Erciyes University has the fewest partnerships, with just 3, and has not hosted any visiting fellows. Overall, the table underscores the varied levels of international academic collaboration and mobility among these Turkish institutions, reflecting different degrees of integration into Asian academic networks.

Figure 3. Turkish Universities' Academic Mobility Programs with Asia: Partnerships and Fellowships in 2024

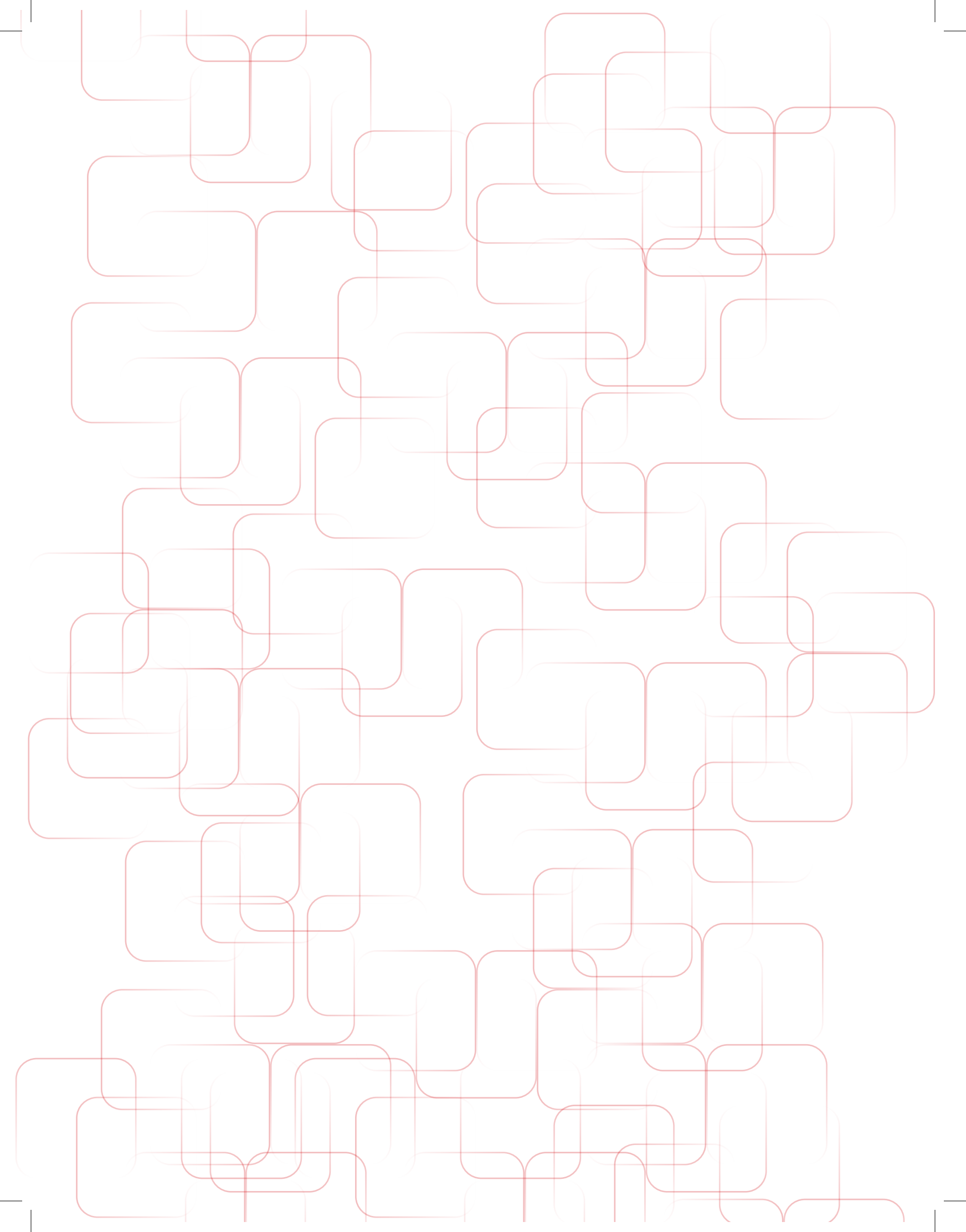


Source: Data collected by the authors





7. ACADEMIC EVENTS



ACADEMIC EVENTS

The data presented in Table 9, which tracks university academic events from 2017 to 2024, reveals significant insights into the academic engagement and priorities of several prominent Turkish universities.

Boğaziçi University emerges as the leader in organizing academic events, with a total of 45 events over the eight-year period. The university's activity in this area began to gain momentum in 2018, reaching a peak in 2021 and 2024, with 12 events each year. This growth suggests that Boğaziçi University has increasingly prioritized academic engagement, possibly as part of a broader strategy to enhance its scholarly reputation and foster academic collaboration.

Koç University also demonstrates a strong presence, particularly in the latter part of the period under review. With a total of 31 events, the university's involvement in academic activities saw a marked increase in 2023 and 2024, organizing 12 events each year. This pattern indicates a significant recent investment in academic events, which could be attributed to new institutional strategies, increased funding, or a desire to strengthen international and domestic academic ties.

Social Sciences University of Ankara recorded a total of 15 events, with a concentrated burst of activity in 2023 and 2024. This suggests that the university has recently begun to emphasize academic events, possibly due to new leadership, strategic initiatives, or a response to emerging opportunities for academic collaboration. The focus on these two years indicates a strong commitment to enhancing its academic profile.

Across the universities analyzed, there is a clear upward trend in academic events, particularly in 2023 and 2024, which together account for 78 of the total 120 events. This increase suggests a growing focus on academic engagement and collaboration, possibly driven by the resumption of in-person activities following the COVID-19 pandemic, the lifting of related restrictions, or new institutional policies promoting such events.

Middle East Technical University (METU) and Ankara University exhibit more gradual involvement in academic events. METU has a total of 8 events, primarily concentrated in 2024, indicating a late but significant engagement in academic activities. This could reflect a strategic pivot or new academic priorities. Ankara University, with 11 events, shows a more evenly distributed pattern, with notable increases in 2023 and 2024, suggesting a growing institutional emphasis on academic activities.

Istanbul University presents a unique case, with all 11 of its events occurring in a concentrated period between 2020 and 2021. The sudden surge in 2020, followed by a sharp decline, might be linked to specific projects or initiatives that were not sustained in the following years. This pattern could reflect short-term funding opportunities, special academic projects, or the impact of external factors.

Across the universities analyzed, there is a clear upward trend in academic events, particularly

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Table 6. University Academic Events by Year (2017-2024)

University	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Istanbul University	1	1	2	5	0	1	1	0	11
Boğaziçi University	7	7	6	2	13	4	2	4	45
Ankara University	1	0	0	1	4	4	0	0	10
Social Sciences University of Ankara	0	0	4	0	2	1	3	5	15
Koç University	1	4	2	4	11	4	4	1	31
Middle Eastern Technical University	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	8
Total	10	12	14	13	30	21	10	10	120

Source: Data collected by the authors

in 2023 and 2024, which together account for 78 of the total 120 events. This increase suggests a growing focus on academic engagement and collaboration, possibly driven by the resumption of in-person activities following the COVID-19 pandemic, the lifting of related restrictions, or new institutional policies promoting such events. The absence of events in 2022 across many institutions stands out and might be attributed to the ongoing effects of the pandemic or other external challenges that disrupted normal academic activities.

In conclusion, the data reflects varied levels of academic engagement across Turkish universities. Some institutions demonstrate consistent commitment to organizing academic events, while others have only recently increased their focus in this area. The overall trend towards more frequent academic events in the later years points to a positive shift in the Turkish academic landscape, emphasizing greater scholarly interaction and collaboration.

The data in Table 10 highlights the distribution of academic event categories across several

Turkish universities, offering insights into each institution's strategic focus and approach to academic engagement.

Boğaziçi University stands out with a significant emphasis on seminars, organizing 35 such events. This focus suggests a strategy centered on fostering frequent academic discussions, where scholars and students alike can engage in in-depth exploration of various topics. Additionally, Boğaziçi University has organized a notable number of workshops (6) and conferences (4), indicating a balanced approach that values both hands-on learning and large-scale academic exchanges. The lack of panels could suggest either a strategic decision to prioritize other event formats or a gap in their event programming.

Koç University also shows a strong preference for seminars, with 29 events in this category. This indicates a targeted effort to create regular opportunities for focused academic dialogue. The university's engagement with other event types is minimal, with only two conferences and no workshops or panels. This narrow focus

may reflect an institutional strategy aimed at maximizing the impact of seminars as a primary mode of academic interaction.

The Social Sciences University of Ankara places a significant emphasis on seminars as well, organizing 14 events in this category. This concentration suggests a strategic alignment with the university's likely emphasis on social sciences, where seminars can play a crucial role in fostering ongoing scholarly debate and exchange. The university's limited engagement with other event types, with only one conference and no workshops or panels, points to a focused strategy that prioritizes seminar-based academic interactions.

Istanbul University presents a more diversified approach, with a fairly even distribution across seminars (5), workshops (4), and conferences (2). This variety indicates a broad strategy that values different forms of academic engagement, from the interactive, practical learning experience of workshops to the more formal, structured discussions typical of seminars and conferences. The absence of panels suggests either a deliberate institutional choice or an area for potential expansion.

Ankara University shows a relatively balanced distribution across different event types, hosting 5 panels, 3 conferences, 2 seminars, and 1 workshop. This variety reflects a comprehensive approach to academic engagement, with a particular emphasis on panels, which are likely chosen for their ability to facilitate multi-faceted discussions on various topics. This diverse event portfolio suggests a strategy that values a wide range of academic interactions, allowing for both focused and broad-based scholarly exchanges.

Middle East Technical University (METU) displays a narrower focus, with 8 seminars and no other types of events. This singular emphasis suggests that METU prioritizes the seminar format as its primary mode of academic interaction, possibly due to its effectiveness in promoting in-depth academic discourse and facilitating close-knit scholarly communities. The absence of workshops, conferences, and panels may reflect a strategic decision to concentrate resources on seminars, potentially to foster a strong, consistent academic dialogue within specific fields.

Overall, the data indicates a clear preference among these universities for seminars as a key

Table 7. Academic Event Categories by University

University	Workshop	Conference	Seminar	Panel
Istanbul University	4	2	5	0
Boğaziçi University	6	4	35	0
Ankara University	1	3	2	5
Social Sciences University of Ankara	0	1	14	0
Koç University	0	2	29	0
Middle East Technical University	0	0	8	0

Source: Data collected by the authors



form of academic engagement, with conferences and workshops also playing significant roles at some institutions. The varied approaches to event organization reflect the different strategic priorities of each university, whether it be a broad, diversified engagement strategy or a focused, seminar-centric approach. This diversity in academic event programming underscores the importance of tailoring academic interactions to the specific goals and strengths of each institution.

The data in Table 11 provides an insightful overview of the distribution of regional academic events by university across various countries and regions in Asia. This distribution sheds light on the strategic priorities and regional engagement of each institution, reflecting their areas of academic focus and collaboration.

Boğaziçi University emerges as a leader in hosting academic events related to Japan, with a total of 16 events. This strong focus on Japan suggests a deep and sustained engagement with Japanese academic institutions and scholars, likely driven by shared research interests or established partnerships. Boğaziçi University also shows considerable involvement with China, hosting 10 events, further indicating its strategic focus on East Asia. Additionally, the university has hosted events related to other regions, such as Korea (3 events) and various Southeast Asian countries, though these are fewer in number.

Ankara University has a more diversified approach, with significant engagement in Japan, hosting 5 events, and smaller but notable involvement in other regions such as Korea (1 event), Taiwan (1 event), Myanmar (1 event), and India (1 event). This distribution suggests a broad strategy aimed at fostering relationships across multiple Asian regions, with a particular emphasis on Japan. The university's engagement in Central Asia, though limited to 2 events,

reflects an interest in this strategically important region.

Koç University, similar to Boğaziçi University, displays a strong focus on Japan, organizing 8 events. Additionally, Koç University has hosted a notable number of events related to China (9 events), indicating its strategic interest in East Asia. The university also shows involvement in other regions, including Malaysia (3 events), India (3 events), and Indonesia (4 events), reflecting a broader engagement with Southeast Asia. This diverse regional focus suggests a comprehensive strategy aimed at building academic ties across a wide range of Asian countries.

Middle East Technical University (METU) presents a somewhat balanced approach, with involvement in Japan (4 events), China (3 events), and Korea (1 event), among others. This distribution indicates a focus on East Asia, similar to other leading universities. METU's engagement with multiple regions, albeit with fewer events compared to Boğaziçi and Koç, suggests a strategy that values regional diversity in academic collaborations.

Istanbul University stands out for its focus on Mongolia, hosting 11 events, which is the highest number of events related to any specific region or country in the table. This singular focus suggests a strong academic partnership or a particular research interest in Mongolia. The absence of events related to other Asian countries or regions might indicate a more specialized area engagement strategy, centered on Mongolia.

The Social Sciences University of Ankara (SSUA) shows a moderate level of engagement with various Asian countries, hosting events in Japan (3 events), Korea (2 events), and Indonesia (4 events), among others. This distribution reflects a strategic effort to engage with a diverse

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Boğaziçi University and Koç University, with their strong focus on Japan and China, clearly prioritize East Asia in their academic collaborations. In contrast, Istanbul University's unique emphasis on Mongolia and the Social Sciences University of Ankara's broader regional engagement highlight different strategic priorities.

range of Asian regions, though with fewer events compared to larger institutions like Boğaziçi or Koç. The university's involvement in a variety of regions suggests an exploratory approach to building academic ties across Asia.

Overall, the data reveals distinct patterns in how Turkish universities engage with different Asian regions. Boğaziçi University and Koç University, with their strong focus on Japan

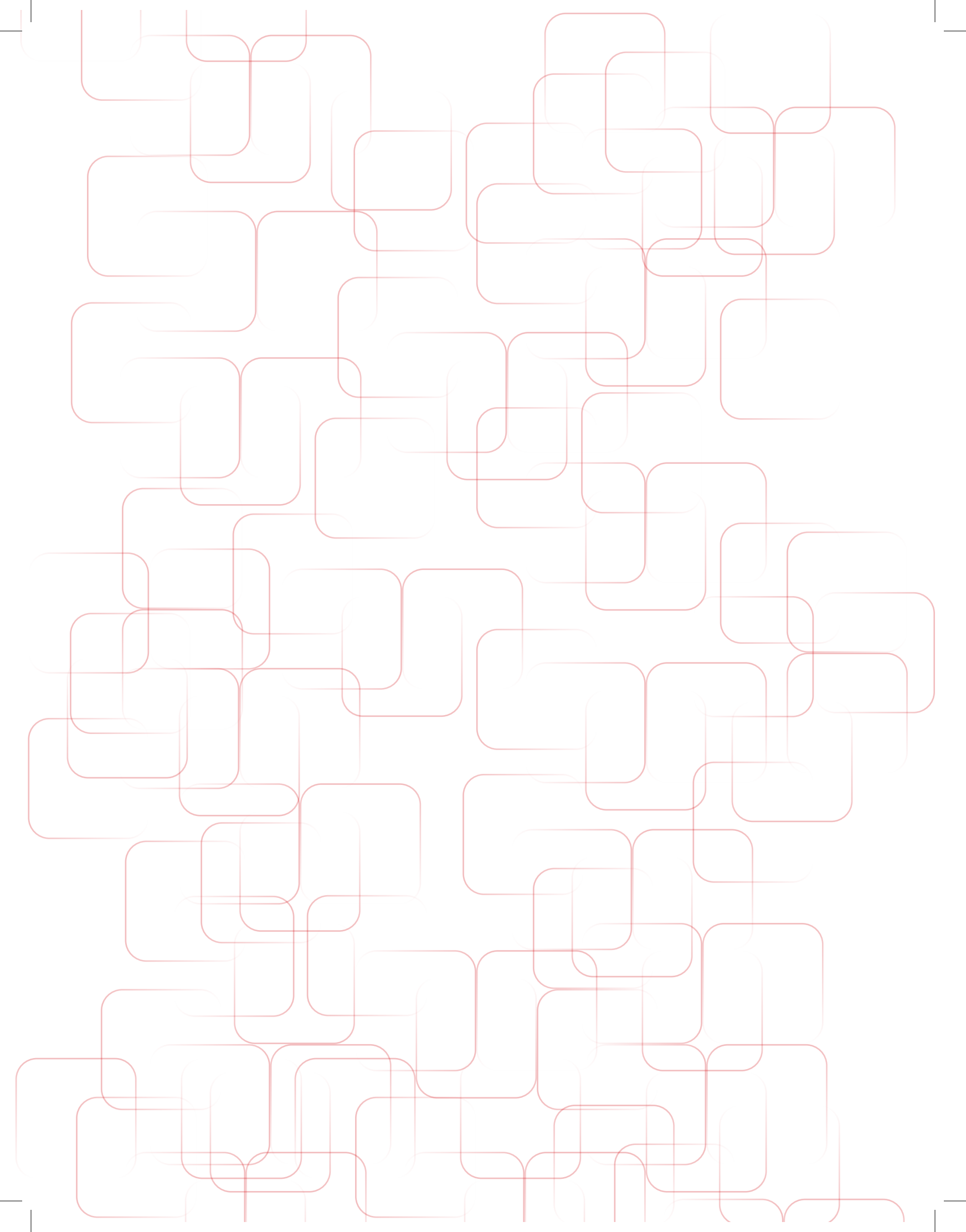
and China, clearly prioritize East Asia in their academic collaborations. In contrast, Istanbul University's unique emphasis on Mongolia and the Social Sciences University of Ankara's broader regional engagement highlight different strategic priorities. These variations in regional focus reflect the diverse academic interests and international strategies of each university, shaping their global academic footprint.

Table 8. Distribution of Regional Academic Events by University

Country / Region	Istanbul University	Boğaziçi University	Ankara University	SSUA	Koç University	METU	Total Events
Japan	0	16	5	3	8	4	36
China	0	10	0	0	9	3	22
Mongolia	11	0	0	1	0	0	12
Korea	0	3	1	2	1	1	8
India	0	1	1	1	3	1	7
Asia	0	1	2	0	1	1	5
Malaysia	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
Indonesia	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
Taiwan	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Myanmar	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Thailand	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
Afghanistan	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Central Asia	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Vietnam	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Singapore	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Southeast Asia	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

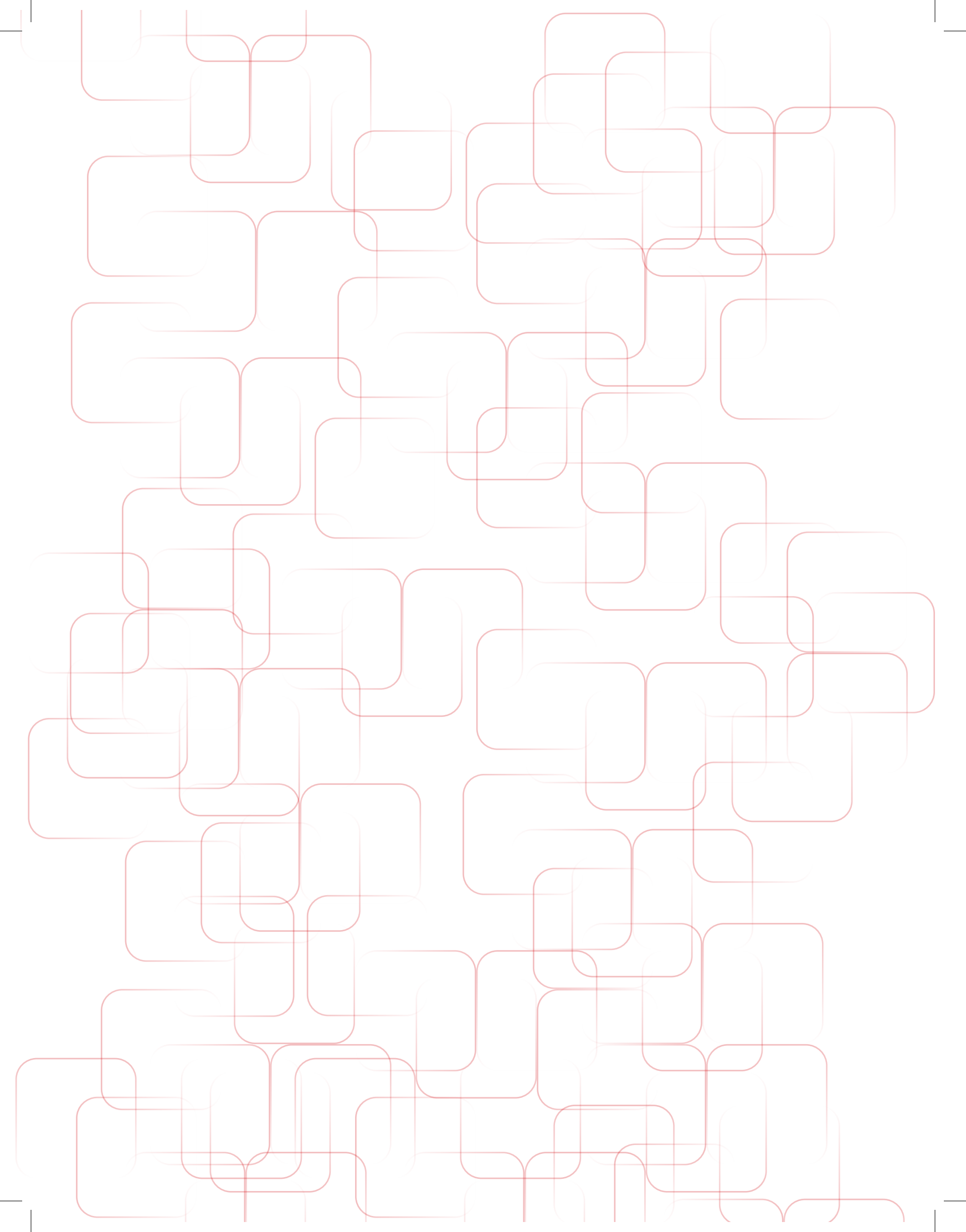
Source: Data collected by the authors







8. RESEARCH



RESEARCH

Analyzing the data on the annual count of theses related to various Asian countries from 2011 to 2024 provides several insights into the trends and patterns of academic interest over the years.

The table shows that the number of theses on China consistently remains the highest among the countries listed. Starting from a lower count in 2011 with 14 theses, the numbers increased significantly, reaching a peak of 106 in 2019. Thereafter, while there is some fluctuation, China continues to be a major focus of academic research.

Japan also sees considerable attention, with a noticeable peak in 2023 (44 theses) and a significant number of theses in other years. The

count is relatively stable, with highs and lows, indicating ongoing interest in Japanese studies.

Afghanistan exhibits notable variability in the number of theses. After a relatively modest count in earlier years, there is a significant spike in 2024 (76 theses), followed by a high count in 2024 (13 theses). This increase may reflect the influence of Afghan students studying in Türkiye, who contribute to the rising number of theses in Afghanistan.

India shows a consistent level of interest with a slight increase over the years, peaking in 2023 with 29 theses. This steady rise suggests a growing academic focus on Indian studies.

Table 9. Annual Count of Theses on Asian Countries by Year (2011-2024)

Year	China	Japan	Korea	Malaysia	Indonesia	Singapore	Pakistan	India	Afghanistan
2024	70	11	12	7	15	13	25	23	75
2023	101	44	38	10	12	9	31	29	67
2022	93	47	38	7	17	13	32	30	51
2021	100	38	31	10	18	6	30	36	33
2020	76	23	20	10	7	3	23	31	43
2019	106	56	46	12	9	7	19	13	52
2018	53	15	18	14	11	4	26	11	22
2017	46	33	23	1	8	4	9	13	28
2016	36	19	11	2	3	2	13	8	10
2015	34	17	15	1	5	1	9	12	14
2014	19	11	9	4	3	2	5	11	10
2013	21	14	5	3	1	1	4	7	10
2012	20	14	6	0	0	2	5	4	9
2011	14	10	4	0	0	0	3	9	6

Source: Council of Higher Education (YÖK)



Korea has a variable trend with a peak in 2019 (46 theses) and lower counts in other years. This variability might reflect shifting academic interests or external factors influencing the research focus.

The countries with generally lower thesis counts include Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Pakistan. Malaysia and Indonesia see occasional peaks, such as Malaysia in 2018 with 14 theses and Indonesia in 2022 with 17 theses. Singapore has a steady but lower count throughout the years, while Pakistan shows an increase in recent years, peaking at 25 theses in 2024.

We find that the focus of academic research on Asian countries is dynamic and influenced by various factors, including the presence of foreign students and shifting geopolitical interests.

The table 12 presents a range of academic journals with distinct focuses and objectives that contribute significantly to the field of regional and area studies. One such journal is *Orta Doğu ve Orta Asya-Kafkaslar Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (ODAK)*, established in 2021. ODAK aims to disseminate high-caliber research on cultural, social, political, and economic issues within the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. The journal seeks to bridge gaps between researchers, educators, and policymakers, fostering a comprehensive understanding of these regions by publishing research articles, reviews, and opinion pieces.

Another notable journal is the *Journal of Asian Studies*, which has been active since Winter 2017. This publication focuses on various aspects of Asia, including history, geography, economy, and culture, and supports interdisciplinary research. It encourages collaboration among higher education institutions and research centers across Asia, aiming to advance

knowledge and development through scholarly discussion and joint projects.

The *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies (CJAS)*, launched in 2019, offers an interdisciplinary approach to area studies, covering regions such as the Middle East, Africa, China, and Central Asia. CJAS engages with a wide range of subjects including international relations, sociology, and global studies. The journal particularly welcomes research that employs critical theories to explore the dynamic interactions between area studies and broader social and political processes, aiming to foster innovative research in these fields.

BRIQ (Belt & Road Initiative Quarterly), which began in 2020, centers on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its global implications. This journal explores how the BRI, a modern revival of the Silk Road, promotes international cooperation and development across multiple continents. BRIQ emphasizes the BRI's potential to reshape global trade and technology while addressing environmental and economic challenges, with the objective of providing insights into how public-driven projects can foster global solidarity and growth.

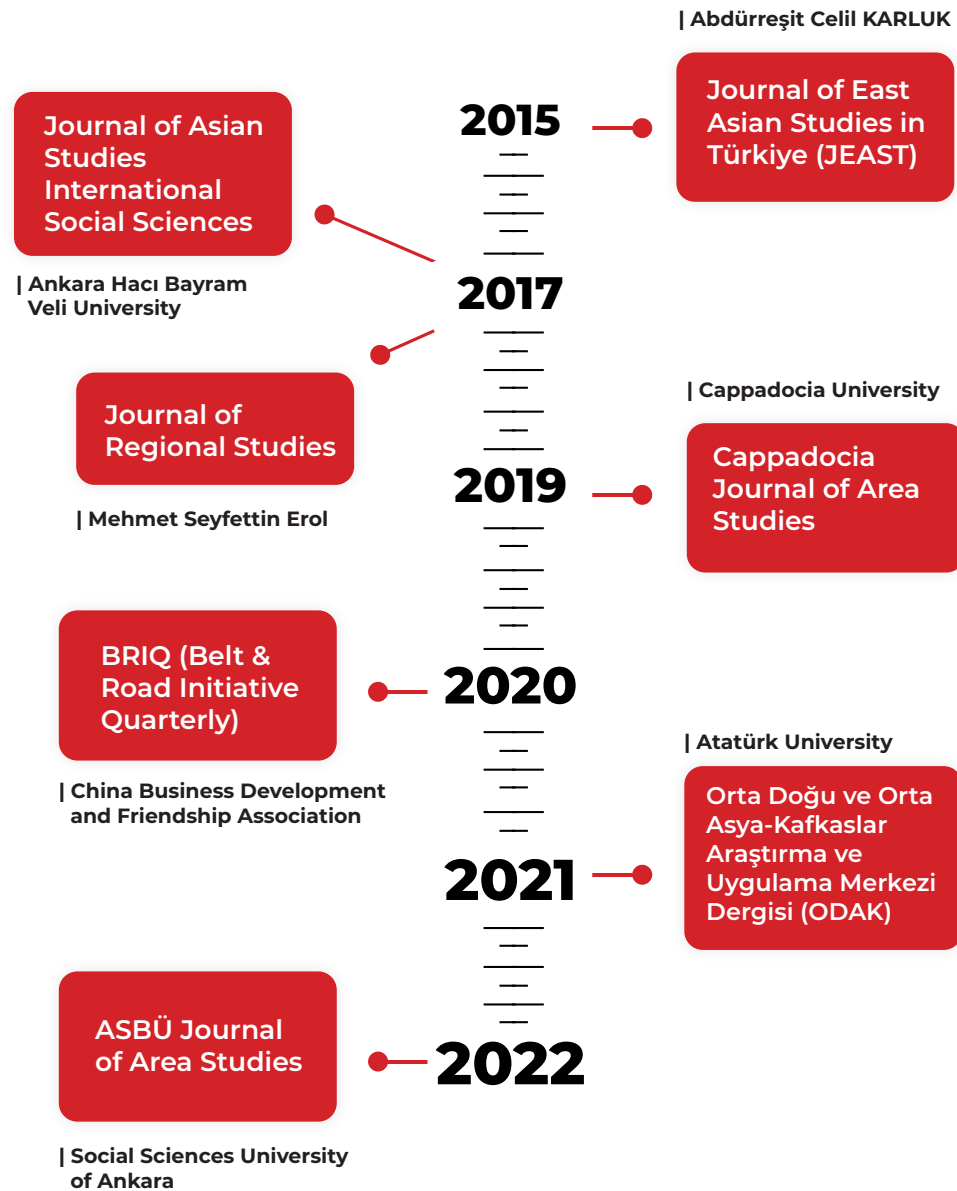
The *Journal of Regional Studies*, operating since 2017, publishes research primarily in political science and international relations, but also includes interdisciplinary studies in fields such as history, economics, and sociology. This journal aims to address and analyze regional issues from various disciplinary perspectives, contributing to the academic discourse on regional dynamics and policy.

Lastly, the *Journal of Area Studies (AJAS)*, which has been active since 2022, focuses on original research related to social and human sciences. AJAS supports studies that use

comparative methods and case analyses, aiming to make significant contributions to the literature on different regions. The journal seeks to advance understanding through detailed research and to encourage scholarly exchange across diverse research institutions and regions.

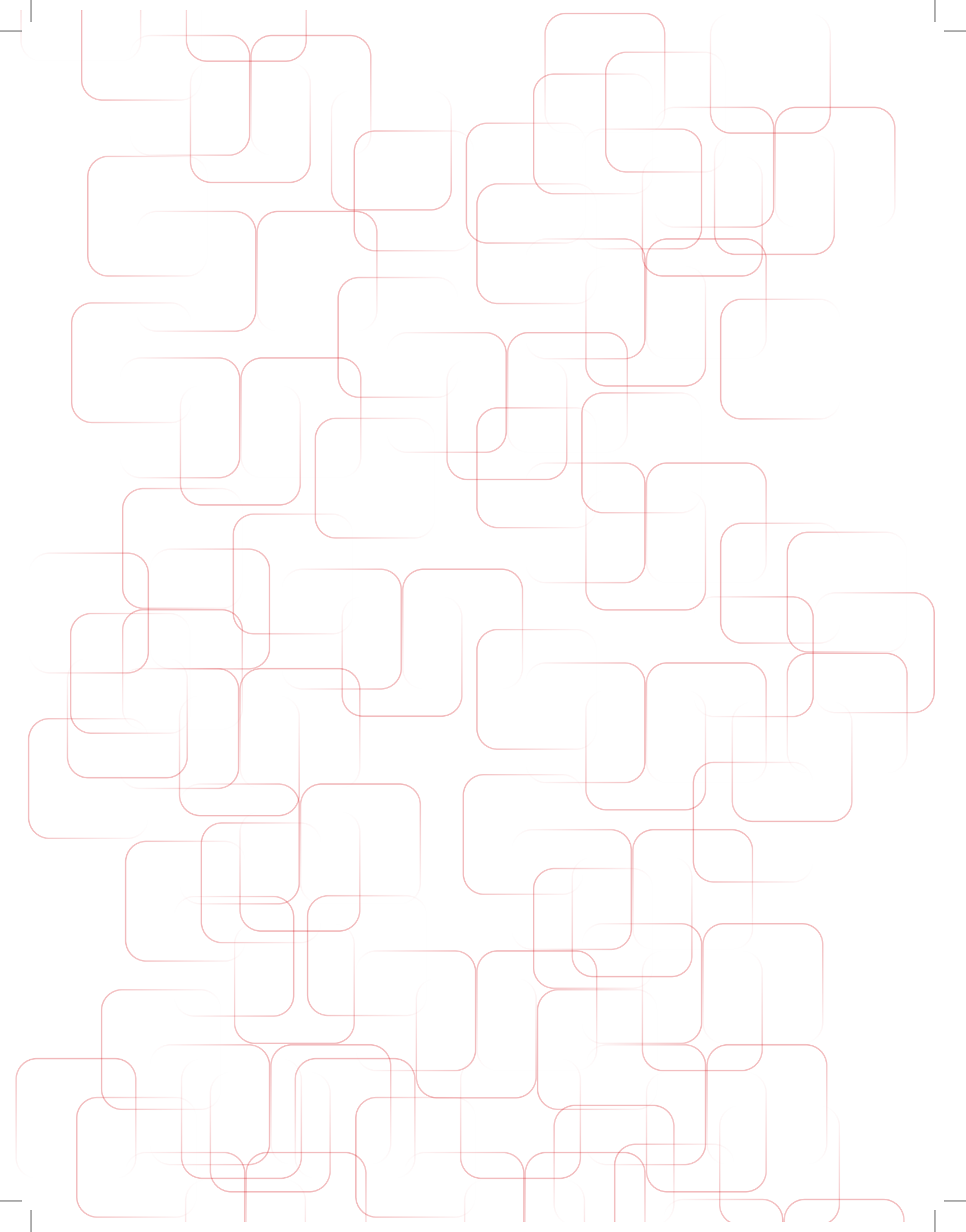
Together, these journals enhance scholarly knowledge by focusing on specific regions and themes, promoting interdisciplinary research, and facilitating global academic collaboration.

Figure 4. Academic Journals in Regional and Area Studies, Founding Years and Publishers



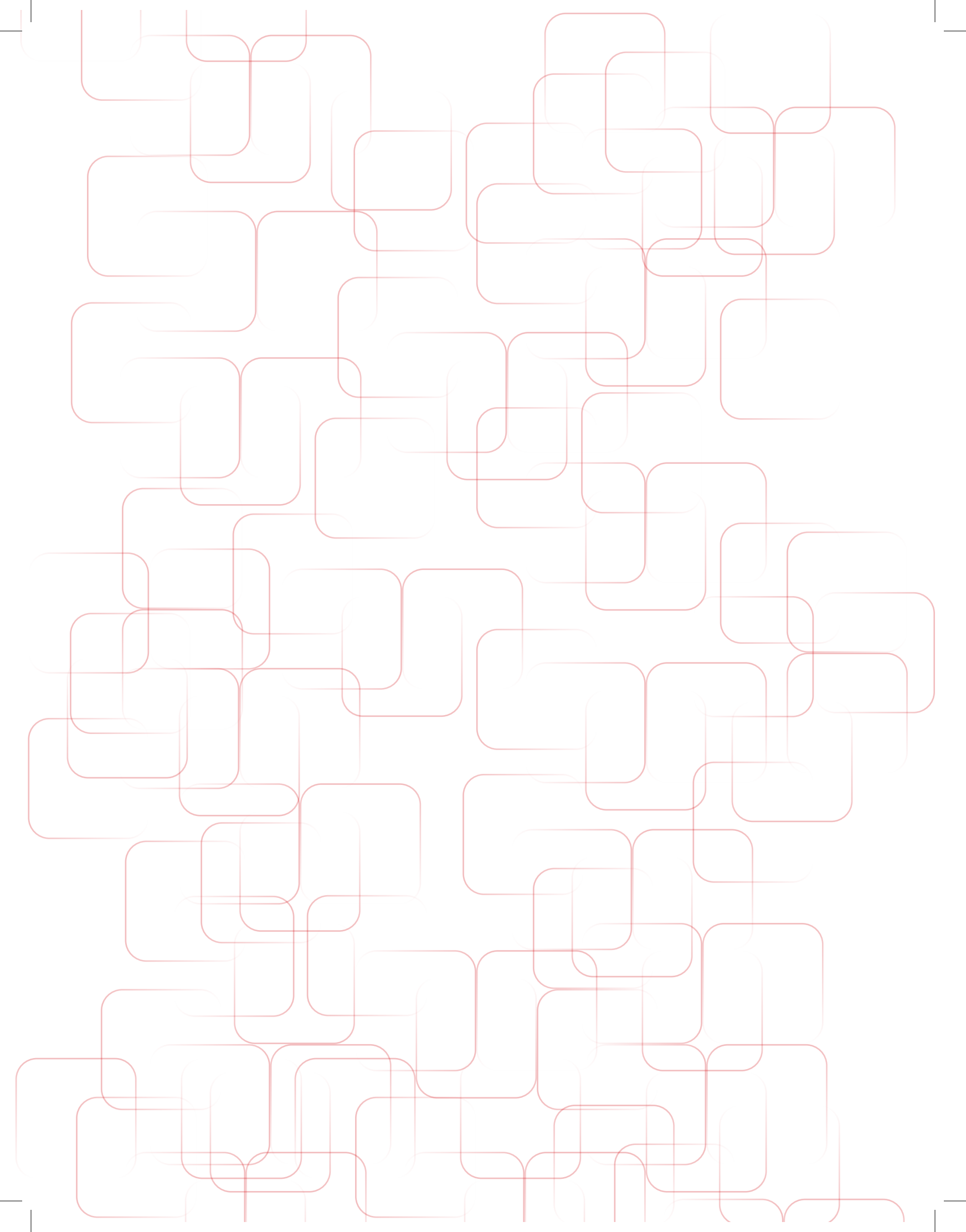
Source: Dergipark







9. INDUSTRY- UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION



INDUSTRY-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

The provided table showcases a dynamic range of academic collaborations between Turkish universities and their international counterparts, focusing on Asian studies and related regions. This collaboration is evident through various academic activities such as workshops, conferences, and seminars held over recent years.

At Istanbul University, collaborations have been notably intensive with Mongolia, featuring multiple workshops and seminars on Mongolian history and language, supported by institutions such as TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and local municipalities. This reflects a consistent effort to deepen historical and cultural exchanges between Türkiye and Mongolia, as evidenced by their annual workshops and conferences from 2017 to 2023.

Boğaziçi University's engagements span multiple Asian regions, including Japan, China, Korea, and Central Asia. The university has hosted a variety of events such as seminars on Japanese media post-Fukushima, conferences on Chinese foreign policy, and discussions on Central Asian anthropology. These events are frequently supported by international partners like Tufts University, Toshiba International Foundation, and Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, highlighting Boğaziçi University's active role in fostering cross-regional academic dialogue and research.

Ankara University has also contributed significantly to the academic discourse on Asian topics. Their events, including panels

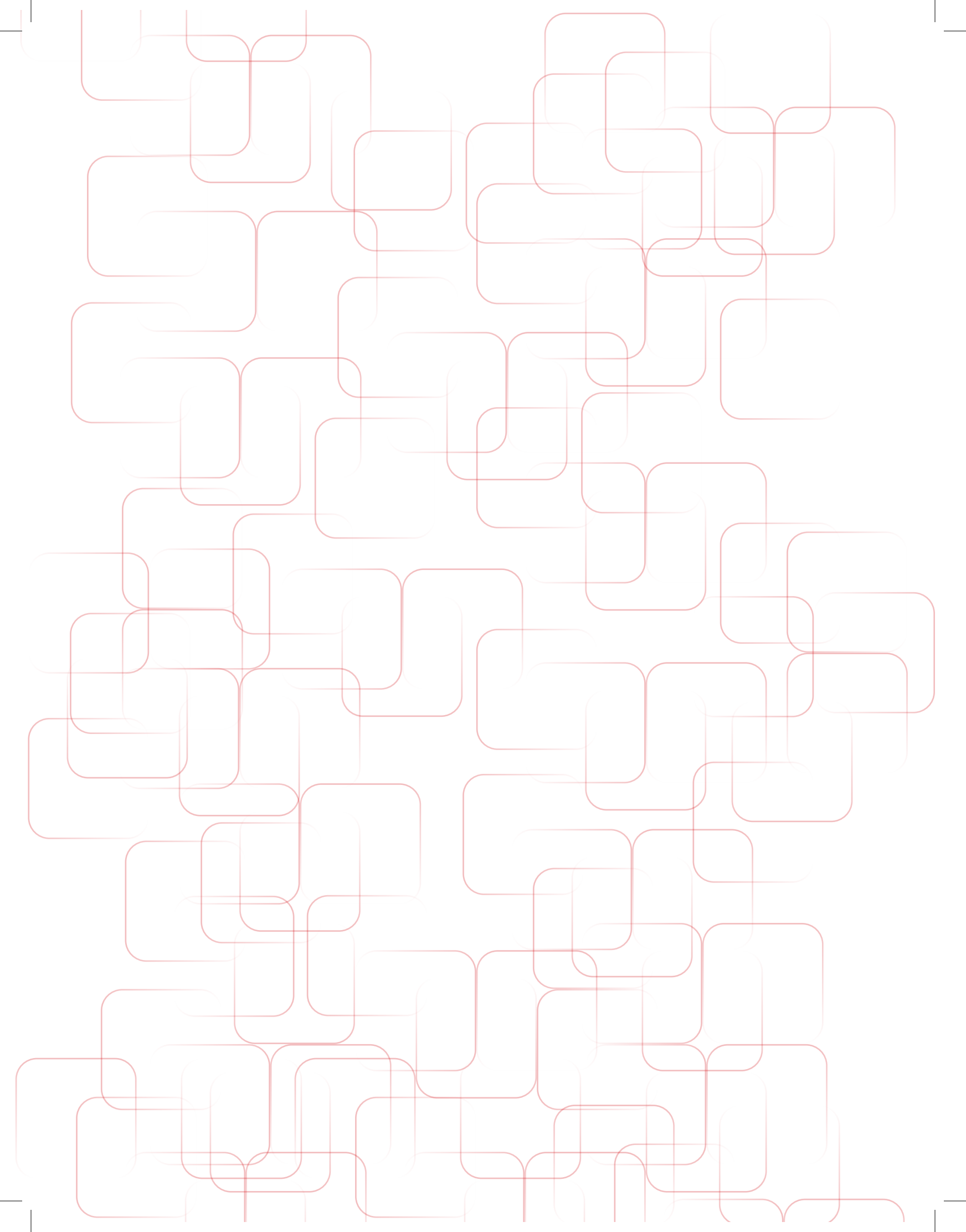
and seminars on maritime issues and historical relations, demonstrate a focus on enhancing bilateral understanding and cooperation. Collaborations with the Japanese Embassy and other regional consulates underline Ankara University's commitment to facilitating in-depth area studies.

Social Sciences University of Ankara and Koç University have further expanded the scope of Turkish academic involvement in Asian studies. Social Sciences University of Ankara's events cover a broad spectrum, from historical relations with India and Taiwan to contemporary issues in Indonesia and Vietnam. Koç University's contributions include seminars on China's Belt and Road Initiative and Thailand-Türkiye relations, supported by international academics and organizations.

METU continues this trend by hosting seminars on a range of topics from Japanese cinema to China-Middle East relations, with support from organizations like JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). These activities reflect METU's engagement in addressing contemporary and historical issues in Asian contexts.

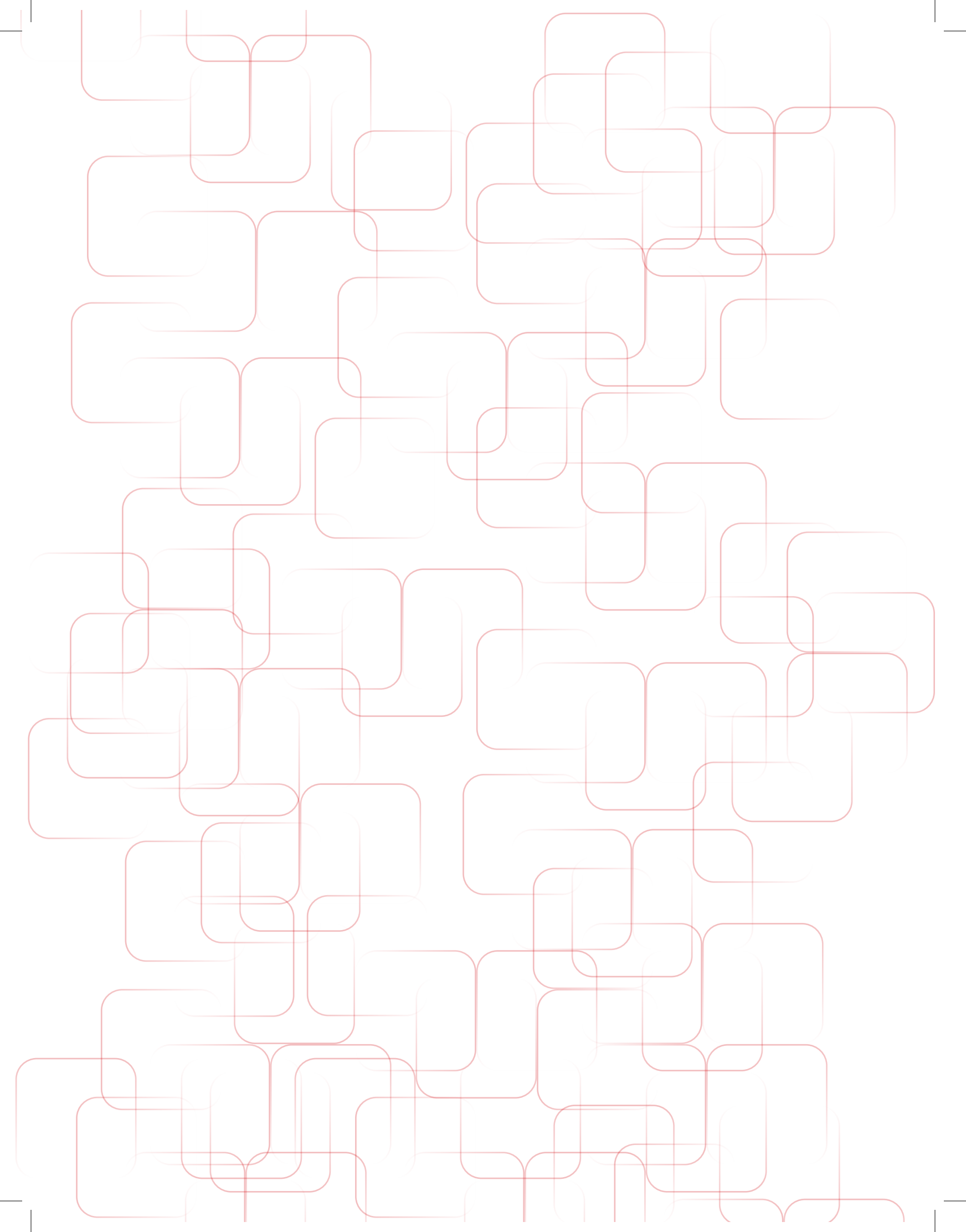
Overall, the table underscores a robust and varied pattern of university collaboration on Asian studies, reflecting a strong commitment to enhancing academic understanding and fostering international partnerships.







10. CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this report has provided a comprehensive overview of the state of Asian studies in Türkiye, highlighting the multifaceted nature of its development and current status. We have traced the historical development of Asian studies within Türkiye, detailing how the field has grown from its nascent stages to a well-established domain of academic inquiry. This growth is reflected in the establishment of dedicated centers and institutes at Turkish universities, as well as specialized language and culture centers that focus on various Asian regions.

The presence of think tanks and the active involvement of experts in Asian studies, particularly academic staff and YLSY scholarship recipients, underscores Türkiye's commitment to advancing knowledge in this field. The investment in cultivating a specialized workforce through these scholarships and the emphasis on sending scholars abroad for further expertise have significantly contributed to the depth and breadth of Asian studies in Türkiye.

Educational programs, both within universities and through external initiatives such as the Asian Studies Certificate Program by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, play a crucial role in nurturing the next generation of experts. The analysis of student and academic staff mobility, including visiting fellowships, further highlights Türkiye's integration into the global academic

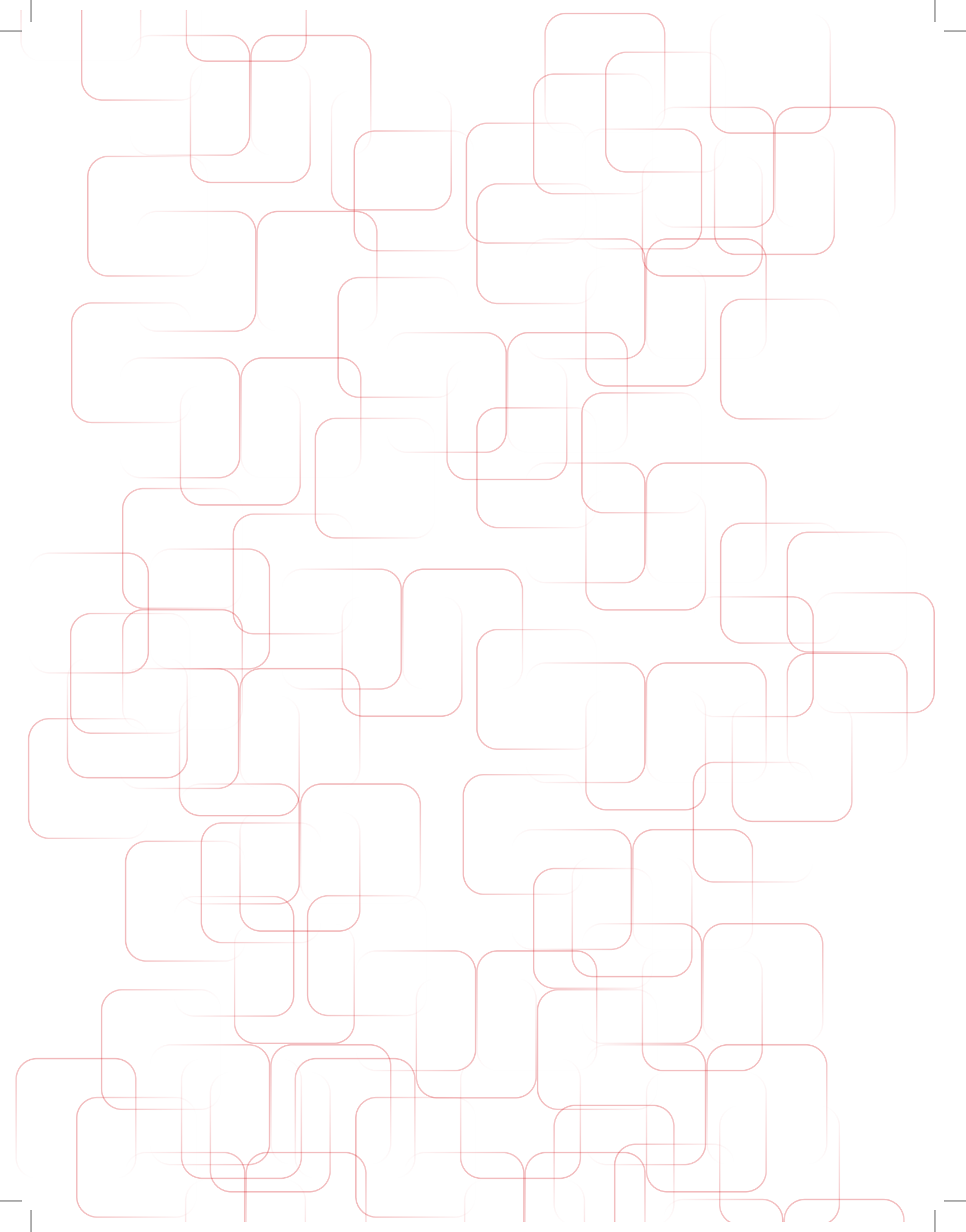
community and its efforts to foster international collaboration.

Academic events, including conferences, seminars, panels, and workshops dedicated to Asian studies, provide vital platforms for knowledge exchange and intellectual engagement. These events facilitate the dissemination of research findings and foster dialogue among scholars, enhancing the academic landscape of Asian studies in Türkiye.

The presentation of theses and journals dedicated to Asian studies reflects the active research environment and scholarly output in this field. Additionally, the exploration of industry-university collaborations reveals the practical applications and interdisciplinary connections being made, which are essential for bridging academic research with real-world industry needs.

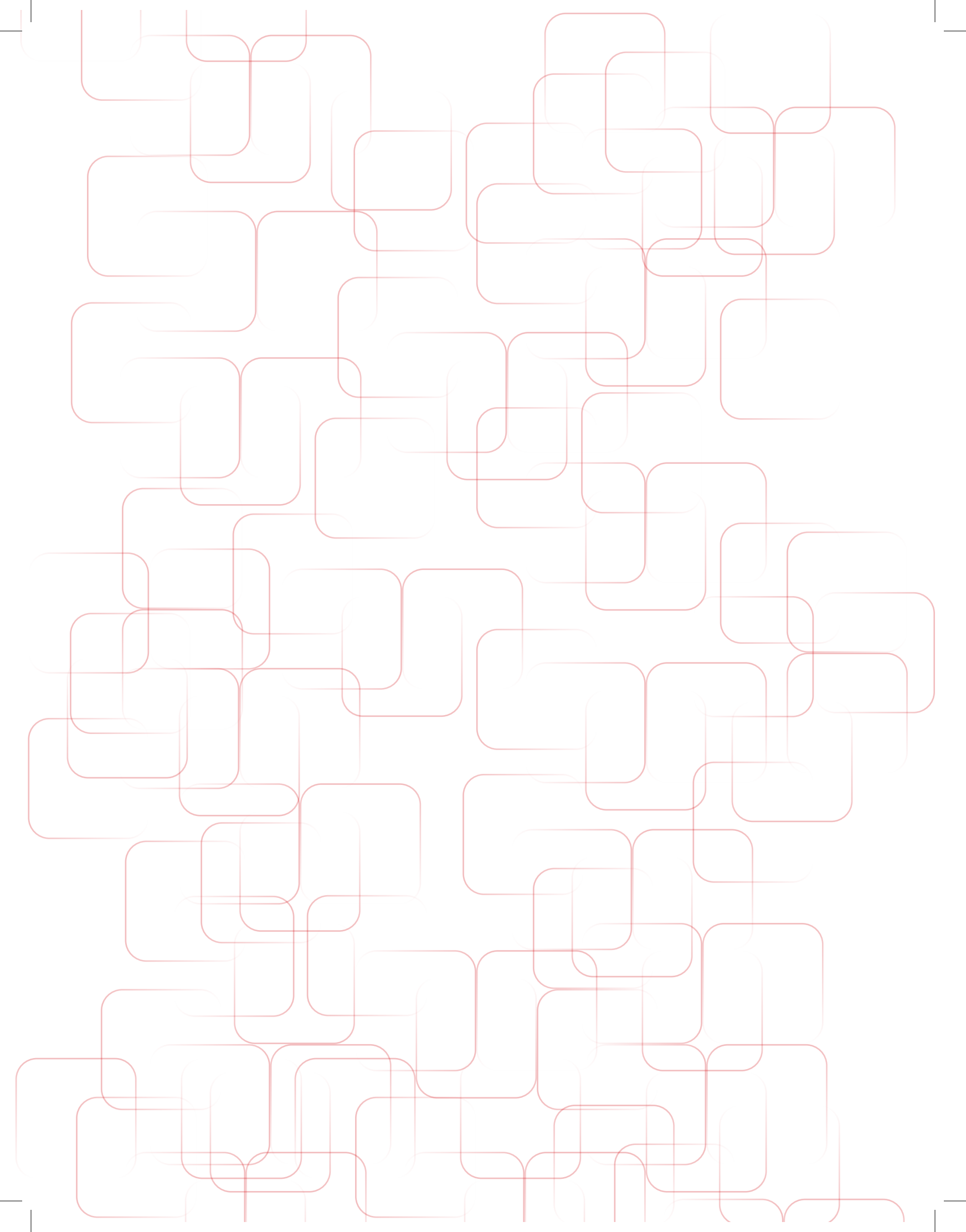
Overall, the development and expansion of Asian studies in Türkiye demonstrates a significant commitment to understanding and engaging with Asian cultures, languages, and political dynamics. The various initiatives, programs, and collaborations outlined in this report collectively contribute to a robust and evolving field of study that is poised to address the complexities and opportunities presented by Asia's diverse and dynamic landscape.







11. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines key recommendations aimed at enhancing the field of area studies in Türkiye, focusing on the establishment of robust academic frameworks and partnerships that align with national needs.

- **Consolidation of Area Studies Faculty:**

Identify and recruit faculty members specializing in area studies at leading universities, particularly in major metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and Ankara. This strategic concentration of expertise will foster collaboration and enhance the quality of education and research in the field.

- **Establishment of a University Dedicated to Area Studies:**

Create a dedicated university focused exclusively on area studies, offering interdisciplinary programs that address the complexities of the region. This institution can serve as a hub for research, teaching, and dialogue on relevant area issues, strengthening Türkiye's academic landscape.

- **Development of Tailored Programs:**

Design academic programs that cater specifically to the needs of public and private institutions in Türkiye. By aligning curricula with sectoral requirements, these programs will better prepare graduates for the job market and enhance their employability.

- **Partnerships with Public and Private Institutions:**

Establish formal agreements with governmental bodies and private enterprises to create internship and job placement opportunities for students. Collaborate on research projects that address real-world challenges faced by these institutions, facilitating a practical approach to education.

- **Capacity Building and Training Workshops:**

Organize workshops and training sessions for faculty and students to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills in area studies. These initiatives can include guest lectures from international experts, hands-on research projects, and collaborative initiatives.

- **Promotion of Interdisciplinary Research:**

Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among various university departments to enrich the study of regional issues. Joint research projects, conferences, and publication efforts should bring together diverse perspectives and expertise.

- **Increased Funding and Grants:**

Advocate for increased funding for area studies programs from both government and private sectors. Enhanced financial support will enable the development of research initiatives, scholarship programs, and necessary infrastructure improvements.



- **Networking and Alumni Engagement:**

Create networks for alumni of area studies programs to facilitate professional connections and collaborations. These networks can aid in mentoring current students and providing valuable insights into various career paths.

- **Partnerships of Turkish and Asian Institutions:**

To forge stronger and more impactful connections between Turkish and Asian institutions, a proactive and sustained effort is required. Turkish universities with a focus on Asian Studies must prioritize the development of formal, reciprocal partnerships with their counterparts across Asia. These collaborations should actively promote the exchange of students and faculty, facilitating cross-cultural learning and research collaboration. Joint research initiatives should be strategically aligned with

areas of mutual concern and potential for impactful contribution.

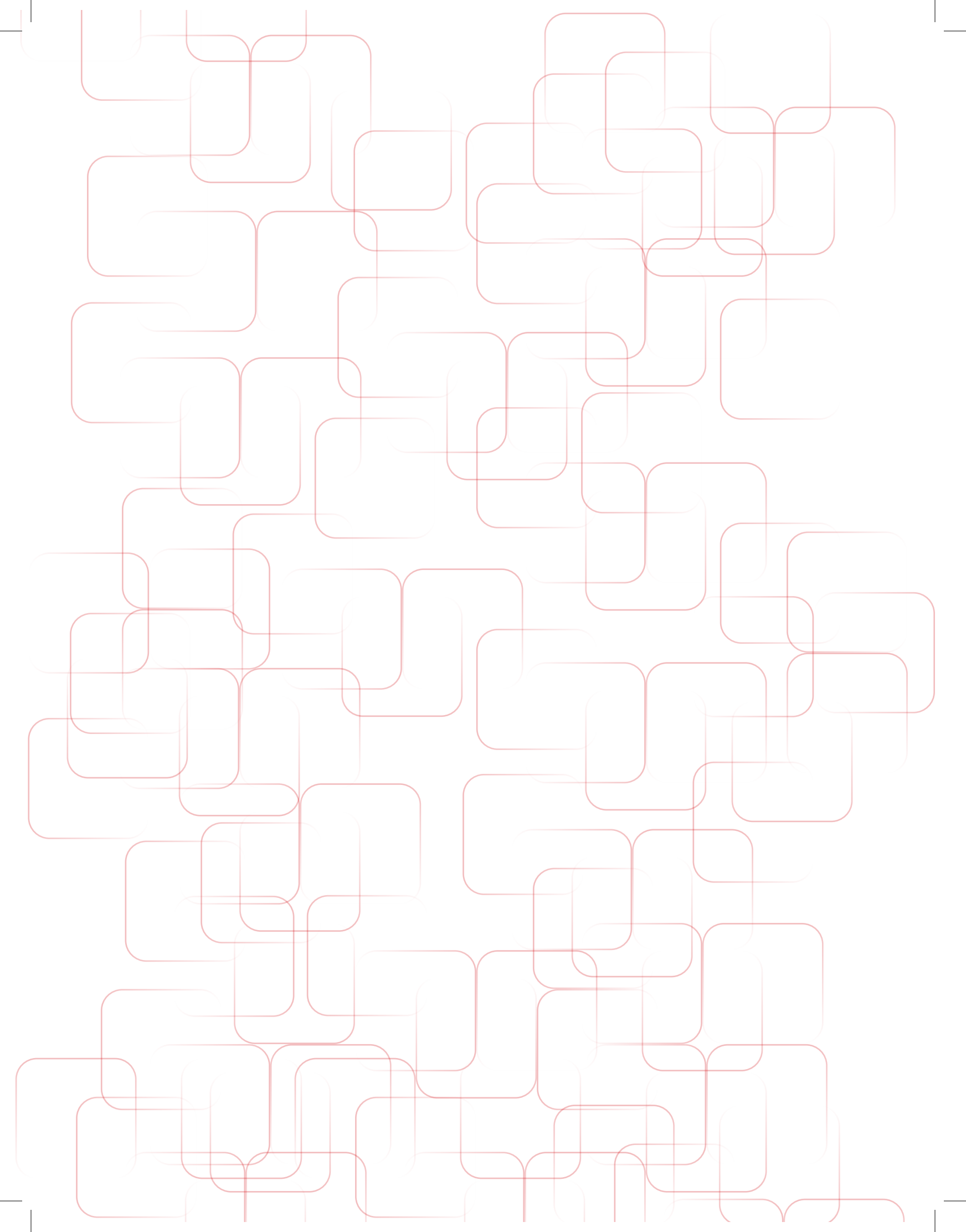
Implementing these recommendations will strengthen the academic infrastructure for area studies in Türkiye, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of area dynamics and enhancing Türkiye's role in national and international discourse.

- **Empowering International Relations Departments and Consolidation of Area Studies Faculties:**

Identify and recruit faculty members specializing in area studies at leading universities, particularly in major metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and Ankara. This strategic concentration of expertise will foster collaboration and enhance the quality of education and research in the field.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Table 10. Websites of Centers and Institutes for Asian Studies in Universities

University	Centres and Institutes	Address Information
Boğaziçi University	Asian Studies Center	https://asya.bogazici.edu.tr/tr
Social Sciences University of Ankara	Institute for Area Studies - Department of Asian Studies	https://bce.asbu.edu.tr/en
Ankara University	Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center	https://apam.ankara.edu.tr/
Koç University	Koç University Center for Asian Studies	https://kuasia.ku.edu.tr/
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	Asian Studies Application and Research Center	https://hacibayram.edu.tr/asyam
Istanbul University	Center for Research and Practice in Mongol Studies	https://mogolcalismalari.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/_
Istinye University	Center for Belt and Road Studies (CBRS)	https://arastirma.istinye.edu.tr/merkezler/kuycam/hakkinda
Erciyes University	Eurasia and Korea Studies Application and Research Center	https://www.erckseurasia.com/
Süleyman Demirel University	The Asia and Pacific Studies Application and Research Center	https://w3.sdu.edu.tr/sayfa/5896/asya-ve-pasifik-calismalari-uygulama-ve-arastirma-merkezi
Istanbul Gedik University	ASEAN Southeast Asia Strategic Studies Application and Research Center	https://www.gedik.edu.tr/arastirma/uygulama-ve-arastirma-merkezleri/asya-pasifik-stratejik-calismalar-uygulama-ve-arastirma-merkezi
Istanbul Gedik University	Bangladesh Studies Application and Research Center	https://www.gedik.edu.tr/arastirma/uygulama-ve-arastirma-merkezleri/banglades-calismalari-uygulama-ve-arastirma-merkezi/hakkimizda
Bahçeşehir University	Asia-Pacific, Africa Studies Application and Research Center	https://bau.edu.tr/akademik/12643-asya-pasifik-afrika-calismalari-merkezi-apacm





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