

# The Role of Turkey as a New Player in the G20 System

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Turkey has a huge and growing market with a population of 73.7 million and a strategic geographical location as a gateway to European, Middle Eastern, North African and Central Asian markets. It has a competitive industry and the Customs Union with the EU for 16 years. According to IMF and OECD reports, Turkey has been one of the most rapidly growing economies in 2010 and 2011. Recently, Turkey's GDP recorded a 11% year-on-year rise in the first quarter of 2011, which makes it one of the fastest growing economies among G20 countries. As a mid-size economic power, Turkey has been the fastest growing economy in Europe. Turkey ranks as the world's 17th largest and Europe's sixth largest economy. Recently, Turkey's high economic performance was appreciated by British Prime Minister David Cameron. During his visit to Turkey in October 2010, he identified Turkey as the "BRIC of Europe". In his press conference, he said "Everyone is talking about 'BRIC' countries and the rapid growth in [the group's] economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. We think that Turkey is a BRIC country of Europe".<sup>1</sup>

Besides being one of the 20 largest economies, Turkey is an important regional power. Compared to other G20 members, Turkey can be seen as a "middle power" that "cannot act alone effectively, but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution." Turkey has been one of the most important economies of the Muslim world. In addition to this, Turkey is a member of NATO and OECD, and acceding member state to the EU. Among the G20 members, Turkey is the only country which has been carrying on accession negotiations with the EU since October 2005. So far, only one chapter (science and research) has been provisionally closed. Twelve more chapters have been opened: free movement of capital, company law, intellectual property rights, information society and media, food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy, taxation, statistics, enterprise and industrial policy, Trans-European networks, environment, consumer and health protection, and financial control. However eight chapters including Free Movement of Goods, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Financial Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union and External Relations were blocked with the decision

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<sup>1</sup> Hürriyet Daily News, " 'Turkey is BRIC of Europe', British PM Cameron Says", 13 October 2010. Available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=dauid-cameron-regards-turkey-as-bric-of-europe-2010-10-13>.

of the General Affairs and External Relations Council in December 2006, due to Turkey's refusal to apply to the Republic of Cyprus the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement. Since Turkey refused to open its ports and airports to Cypriot ships and airplanes in accordance with the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Protocol, the Council decided that these relevant chapters would not be opened and no chapter would be provisionally closed until Turkey has fulfilled its commitment. Turkey negotiates with the four prominent EU member states, Germany, France, UK and Italy, on an equal basis within the context of G20. This demonstrates Turkey's growing significance and power in the global arena. In this sense, Turkey is a "non-negligible country" for global policy makers who want to establish a forum to deal with global challenges.

Although Turkey has been a member of *G-groupings* from the very beginning of 1999, the global financial crisis led to Turkey's membership in the G20 and increased the confidence and assertiveness of Turkish policy-makers. Furthermore, it provided Turkey an opportunity to actively participate in the process of shaping the new rules and institutions of the post-crisis global economy, as opposed to its previous standing as a peripheral partner and the passive complier of rules imposed from above by the powerful core.<sup>2</sup> As put forward by Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey has become an "order-creator" country in the new juncture in the post-crisis global economy. In other words, G20 membership enabled Turkey to play a prominent role in global governance reform by throwing its weight behind the G20 as the new top global steering committee.<sup>3</sup> As a response to global recession, Turkey has been adapting itself to the new global context by means of diversification of economic relations and the opening of new markets, especially at a time when Europe has fallen into deep stagnation and the global economic axis has been shifting from west to east with the global financial crisis.<sup>4</sup> This raises the question of whether Turkey is moving in the direction of the BRICs (Brasil, Russia, India and China) which are increasingly taking a more active role in the changing global environment, particularly in the aftermath of the recent global financial crisis.<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to other emerging markets, Turkish economy was not hit hard by the recent global economic crisis, which created an incentive towards the broadening of global economic governance structures. Turkey did not receive the IMF Fund with a much better regulated banking and financial system in

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<sup>2</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Multiple Faces of the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique", *Insight Turkey*, (Vol. 13, No. 1, 2011), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Colin I. Bradford Jr. and Jonannes F. Linn, "The G20 Summit – Its Significance for World and for Turkey", *Uluslararası Ekonomik Sorunlar Dergisi Krize Özel Sayısı*, p. 64. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/kriz-ozel.tr.mfa>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

the aftermath of the 2001 crisis. Consequently, Turkey was able to avoid the typical financial and balance of payments crisis which it had frequently experienced in the past. It can be argued that a more independent and IMF-free path in national economy complements and leads to a more independent and assertive style of foreign policy.<sup>6</sup>

As well as the economic assets of Turkey, G20 membership is closely related to Turkey's pro-active foreign policy strategy during the Justice and Development Part era. In recent years, Turkish foreign policy has become more independent and assertive. Turkey adopted "360 degrees foreign policy", which means that Turkey should establish relations with states all around the world and intensify its visibility and presence in various multilateral platforms. Turkey has broadened its engagement with other partners in its wider neighborhood, including Central Asia, North Africa and the Arab World. Thus, Turkey aspires to establish relationship with all countries outside the EU, which makes Turkey an even more attractive partner for the EU.

Being a secular Muslim country and a democracy with a liberal market, Turkey becomes a "model" country for the Middle East. Furthermore, Turkey's attractiveness as a soft power has increased, especially in the Arab Middle East. With regard to the debate on political and economic reform of the Arab world, Turkey possesses the necessary assets, the will, and the credibility to be a soft power in the region. In fact, the main asset is what Turkey has become. Compared to its neighbors in the Middle East, Turkey has achieved significant socioeconomic and political development.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, in dealing with the Middle East, Turkey has diversified its tools and strategies. Turkey's increasing ambition to play third-party roles in the management and if possible, the resolution of regional conflicts constitutes one of the novelties in Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Turkey has increasingly been involved in conflict management and resolution in the region and it has been accepted by various regional and international actors.

Hence, Turkey has increasingly supported its military and economic power with its soft power in the Middle East region particularly through its rising appeal and its ties with conflicting regional actors.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has an ambitious vision of an integration

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Meliha Altunışık, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, (Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008), p. 43. And Hüseyin Bağcı, ZEITGEIST, Global Politics and Turkey, Orion Publications Ankara, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 53. And Hüseyin Bağcı, "Turkey's Identity and Strategy: A Game of Three Dimensional Chess" in *Power and Principles, International leadership in a Shrinking World*, edited by Michael Chiffer and David Shorr, Lexington Books, Maryland, 2009, pp. 197-225.

project, envisaging free movement of goods and people from the city of Kars to the Atlantic, and from Sinop to the Gulf of Aden. Such a kind of bold project, which already has a tangible element to it, is that the freer movement of people has been well received by the Arab public.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, Turkey's foreign policy activism has a global scope. Turkey is investing diplomatic capital in various regions in the world. Beside its diplomatic involvement in its adjacent regions such as Europe, Black Sea, Mediterranean, Balkans, Middle East, and Caucasus, it has also opened several new embassies in Africa and Latin America.<sup>11</sup> These official efforts are complemented by frantic transnational activities by the employers' federation and civil society organizations all over the world. Beside its G20 membership, Turkey also enhances its visibility in various multilateral forums. It held a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 2009-2010 for the first time since 1961.<sup>12</sup> Over the years, it has actively participated in various peacekeeping operations carried out by the UN, NATO and EU in former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Darfur and Afghanistan. Turkey is one of the four countries which benefitted from the 2006 ad hoc quota increase in the IMF to give prominent emerging powers a greater say and responsibility and now Turkey is expecting to benefit from another quota reform.<sup>13</sup>

In line with this foreign policy activism, Turkey hosted the NATO Summit, the annual meeting of IMF and World Bank in 2009, Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2010, and UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries in May 2011 in Istanbul. In the coming few years, Turkey is a candidate to host a G20 summit as a chair. Besides, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has been headed by a Turkish Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, since 2005.<sup>14</sup> The Chairmanship-in-Office of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) was assumed by Turkey from June 2009 to June 2010. Turkey has assumed the Chairmanship of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) for 2010-2012. Turkey assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from November 2010 to May 2011. Also, Turkey assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for a six-month period starting in November 2010. Turkish parliamentarian Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu

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<sup>10</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, (Vol. 13, No. 2, 2011), p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Dries Legase and Yusuf Kaçar, "Turkey's Profile in the G20: Emerging Economy, Middle Power and Bridge-builder", *Studia Diplomatica*, (Vol. 63, No. 2, 2010), p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

has been assuming the Chairmanship of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for a two-year period starting in 2010.

Consequently, the G20 Summits offer Turkey an important opportunity for increasing its international standing. In the G20 system, Turkey is recognized as a prominent global player. Turkey plays a leading role in areas of special interest to it, such as energy security, Middle East peace, global financial stability and reform of the international financial institution. In these and other areas of national interest, Turkey can form coalitions with other like-minded G20 members in the quest for broad agreements, compromise solutions and coordinated responses to urgent global issues.<sup>15</sup>

In the G20, Turkey can play a unique and persuasive role in representing the aspirations of the non-Western world to play responsible roles in what has been until now a predominantly Western approach to addressing serious global challenges. In the resolution of the current financial crisis, the leadership of Turkey and other key emerging market members of the G20 is very critical, because without their leadership, the G20 itself may just be an episode rather than becoming the transformative mechanism for global leadership in a new era of international cooperation, which the world requires very much at the moment.<sup>16</sup>

It is in Turkey's vital national interest to make the G20 a success. Due to its unique place as a country spanning from traditional North-South, East-West cultural divides, Turkey can play a discrete leadership role. This means that Turkey should actively engage all the aspects of the G20 summit process. It should use its diplomatic influence and its representation in all relevant international forums to support the continuation and strengthening of the G20 summit as a major component of the global governance system.<sup>17</sup> Turkey's proactive involvement in making the G20 summit a success will enable Turkey to enhance its role as a respected and effective member of the international community all through.<sup>18</sup>

Turkey could act as a bridge between Europe and Asia, as well as between the advanced industrial economies and emerging markets.<sup>19</sup> Turkish officials believe that Turkey can play a specific and constructive role within the G20 both as an OECD member and an emerging market.<sup>20</sup> Reform of the Bretton Woods institutions is a top priority for Turkey. Concerning IMF, Turkey is

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<sup>15</sup> Bradford and Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Bradford and Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> Bradford and Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Bradford and Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, pp. 130-131.

mostly interested in quota reform and a doubling of the IMF's total quota in order to increase the institution's capacity.<sup>21</sup>

The Turkish government's position on the future role of the G20 is quite ambiguous. Turkey strongly supports a gradual broadening of the G20 summit agenda, to include less classical economic matters as well. However, Turkish officials understand that at the outset most of the more political issues, which are now addressed in the G20 such as development, poverty eradication, food security, climate finance, marine environment protection, energy security are still in a way connected with the G20 core financial and economic agenda in response to the crisis.<sup>22</sup>

The Turkish government is definitely ready to invest in the G20. It has already implied that it is a candidate to chair and host a G20 summit in coming years, probably in 2013. Moreover, Turkey has been supporting the idea of the establishment of a permanent secretariat for the G20.<sup>23</sup> Within the G20 context, Turkey is indeed centrally located geographically, while it has a political advantage of being an intercultural bridge-builder and independent middle power maintaining good relations with a broad range of players.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, Turkey considers the G20 as an international group of countries which are going to have more global responsibilities. As an "emerging soft power and global player" Turkey is also insisting on the development of new social, cultural and political values which are binding on the universal values of the Western world. Turkey's expectations from the G20 are high, but whether or not the G20 can develop into a global governance system is an open question. Realistically, it is difficult but the world is "changing" very fast and Turkey is part of this global change. Therefore, Turkey can still hope for and contribute to better global governance.

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<sup>21</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> Legase and Kaçar, *op.cit.*, p. 138.