

EU & THE EMERGING POWERS

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CAN TURKEY BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE EU AND THE BRICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA?

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The emerging major economies in the world BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) showed that their growing economic strength might be converted into new rivalries in the multipolar world when they succeed in converting their economic power into political power (Ünver Noi 2011, 194). When Russia and China vetoed and Brazil, South Africa and India abstained from a draft resolution condemning Syrian repression, we have witnessed BRICS are siding with each other on the issues which are opposed to policy preferences of the EU despite the EU's strategic partnership with Russia and EU-China High Level Strategic Dialogue (Portela 2012, 6).

In this international milieu, Turkey's soft power and its economic, social, and political performance during the past decade have inspired the Arab world. While Turkey turned toward greater development of its relations with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), it also took some steps to develop its relations with the BRICS. Turkey, a NATO member, became a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 2012² – an organization in which three of BRICS, Russia and China are full members

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² Given the SCO's own stance on its enlargement, which is a reluctance to admit new members, and the position of other candidates that have been waiting longer than Turkey, it remains to be seen what

and India has observer status.³ Rapprochement between Turkey and the countries of the MENA and developing relations with the BRICS led to some initiatives for resolving crisis in the MENA. Diplomatic initiative which had been carried out by Turkey and Brazil for a nuclear fuel-swap deal with Iran in 2010 and the Turkish proposal which calls for regional talks among regional actors, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt to find a solution to Syrian Crisis can be given as examples of these initiatives. In this context, this paper tries to find an answer to the question that whether Turkey's emerging role as a regional power in the MENA and its relations with the BRICS help to act Turkey bridging the gap between the EU and the BRICS for resolving crisis in the MENA.

Turkey's Relations with the Countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Turkey's desire to bury its non-involvement in the MENA and to increase its sphere of influence that had been lost almost 100 years ago emerged with Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu's "strategic depth" approach which emphasizes the importance of Turkey's Ottoman past and its ties to the Middle East. The Ottoman legacy is seen by him and people who think like him as a positive building block that could enable Turkey to play a more active regional and global role (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008, 76).

Turkey's new foreign policy shaped by Davutoğlu is premised on the notion that Turkey is a regional leader in the areas once part of the Ottoman Empire. This approach is not driven by religious considerations. It has historical and geopolitical motivation (Brzezinski, 2012, 136). Turkey's aim to have an independent foreign policy and to have a deepening of relations with other countries in the MENA led to some shifts from its previous policies (Fuller, 2010, 168). Since 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has Islamic roots, shifted Turkey's foreign policy toward the Arab and Islamic world while maintaining its ties with the West (Ünver Noi, 2012, 65).⁴

Turkey's chances among these countries are of becoming a full member of the SCO (Ünver Noi, 2013).

³ The unipolar structure of international politics in the post-Cold War era compelled the emerging and the great powers to establish new international linkages such as Sino-Russian security and economic cooperation -Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)- (Davison 2008, 4).

⁴ Changes in Turkish foreign policy occurred since 2002 because Davutoğlu was appointed as a Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister and as an Ambassador by the AKP following November 2002 elections. On May 1, 2009, he was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 60th Government of the Republic of Turkey (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011).

A significant change within Turkish society, which is the rise of Muslim bourgeoisie in Anatolia, which is also called as “Anatolian tiger”, and the decline of the traditional secular establishment based in the major cities, has been realized as a part of general Islamic trend in the MENA in the post-Cold War era (Gerges 2012, 155). Besides this, a shift from “political Islam” to “conservative democracy” in the AKP has been realized as a result of this evolution of Turkey’s capitalism, which created an entrepreneurial Muslim bourgeoisie in Anatolia, under the leadership of Turgut Özal in the 1980s (Taşpınar 2012, 128).

As Taşpınar stated that new Muslim bourgeoisie have been more concerned about maximizing profits, creating access to international currency markets, and ensuring political stability than about introducing Islamic law or creating a theocracy (2012, 128). This also can explain why Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rejects defining the AKP in religious terms. He instead calls the party agenda “conservative democracy”. As a part of this understanding, Turkish foreign policy preferred good relations with its neighbors rather than hostile ones, which enables Turkey to develop its socio-economic relations not only with neighbors but also other countries of the MENA. This policy helped Turkey to be ranked as the world’s seventeenth largest economy (Brzezinski, 2012, 136).

Soap operas displaying parts of Turkish way of life in a very attractive way, Turkish schools, business and charity networks in the MENA, all serve cultural infiltration of Turkey in the Arab world. Turkey’s increasing “soft power”, which commenced to define and shape political and cultural trends in the MENA, and its active involvement in the affairs of the MENA made Turkey a pivotal state (Gerges 2012, 151). Increasing relations between Turkey and the countries of the MENA through establishing free trade areas, removing visa requirements, allowing real estate purchase also led to greater interaction among the people.

The process of democratic consolidation of Turkey, which progressed rapidly, is seen as an example by the people of the MENA. Economic success of Turkey and the rise of a post-Islamic governing elite made Turkey a regional power that has vision aimed at transforming its Middle Eastern neighbors in which Islamism is a major trend (Lynch 2012). Independent strategy that Turkey pursued in the MENA and some concrete steps taken in this respect such as Turkey’s decision to oppose the invasion of Iraq, its support of the Palestinians and the Arab uprisings earned it high praise (Gerges 2012, 155).

Turkey's Relations with Brasil, Russia, China, India and South Africa (BRICS)

Since the center of gravity has been started to be shifted from West to East, the potential impact of the US' demise on national interests of Turkey and the EU's reluctance to make Turkey full member of the EU became much more effective in Turkish foreign policy and its move to carve out its regional sphere, particularly in the area of the old Ottoman Empire (Brzezinski, 2012, 2, 77). Disappointment of Turkey due to the lack of the US understanding for its regional ambitions reduced largely American influence with Turkey (Brzezinski, 2012, 100).

Economic and financial crisis, which commenced in 2008, combined with the continuing growth of the Chinese, Indian, Brazilian, Turkish and other economies seem to portend an irreversible shift in global economic power. Turkey like Brazil, India and South Africa is enjoying a period of economic growth (Kagan 2012, 102, 109). For Kagan (2012), this economic growth does not lead to decline in the US' position as the predominant power since there is no simple correlation between economic growth and international influence (107) unless they do have ability to change the behaviour of others to its point of view and translate their growing economic power into military strength (Kagan 2012, 109).

Yet, as stated by Jim O'Neill (2011, 5) -the inventor of the acronym BRIC- the importance of the BRICS in global economic growth is beyond dispute. This was first emphasized by O'Neill's following words in 2001 when he created the acronym BRIC: "the G7, G8 and IMF were no longer suitable entities to deal with the challenges of the new world order" (2011, 169). Moreover, the BRICS summits and the common acts the BRICS have taken for international affairs overtly indicate their current and potential power to shape the global affairs on its own vision. BRICS showed that they have potential to convert their economic power into political power which might influence international affairs when China and Russia vetoed and other three BRICS namely Brazil, India and South Africa abstained from a draft resolution in the Security Council that had strongly condemned Syria (UN News Center 2011). In other words, this event indicated that BRICS are siding with each other on the issues which are opposed to policy preferences of the West.

Contrary to Barry Buzan's (1991) claim of the post-Cold War period - obstacles to international institution that had persisted throughout the Cold War were no longer present

and they are universal-, the BRICS today criticizes international institutions such as IMF which is often ideologically regarded as a tool of Western dominance.⁵ Brazilian President, Lula's chief foreign policy strategist, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães divides the world into sovereign states and subordinate ones, and contended states versus contesting states placing Brazil in the latter category of each juxtaposition (Stuenkel, 191). BRICS argue that Western World Order structured and designed to preserve Western power and interests does not represent an extension of liberal democratic state structures today.⁶ They also criticize institutions such as WTO for being a symbol of globalization which is described as a tool of Western imperialism (Stuenkel, 192).

Given the BRICS success, the other countries that are the next tier of emerging economies and called as MIST (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey) by Jim O'Neill show their willingness to become part of the BRICS. Mexican, Indonesian and Turkish policy makers told him it should have been BRICM, BRICI and BRICT (O'Neill 2011, 6). This also indicates us that BRICS is becoming gradually a "force of attraction" with its economic success once the US and the EU had.

O'Neill suggested a new "Growth 8" which is composed of the Growth Markets – he uses this term instead of emerging economies- Brazil, Russia, India, China, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, and Turkey which would be a more sensible than G7 in terms of economic criteria rather than political influence (O'Neill 2011, 171). Turkey was described as an emerging global power along the lines of China, India and Brazil by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in 2009 (Gerges 2012, 193). Turkey, as a part of its foreign policy that is developing ties with all states, has developed its relations with the BRICS as well.

Relationship between Brazil and Turkey have strengthened both economically and politically during the Presidency of Lula and led to cooperation not only in the energy sector but also involving to address global challenges. As a result of these policies, trade between

⁵ Buzan (1991) predicted the emergence of an international order with a multi-centered core which is composed of US, Japan, Russia, China, India, and the EU. He also argued that the leading capitalist powers formed a globally-dominant "security community."

⁶ The official announcement of the South African President, Jacob Zuma at the fifth BRICS Summit held in Durban, South Africa shows the realization of establishment of development bank which will present alternative solution to the Western-dominated global banking system comprised of institutions of the Bretton Woods, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund: "Not long ago we discussed the formation of a developmental bank... Today we are ready to launch it," (PressTV, 2013).

Turkey and Brazil increased and became four times bigger than in 2000. They also attempted to resolve Iran's nuclear crisis and signed nuclear-fuel swap deal with Iran (Stuenkel FGV TASAM).⁷

Turkey is also cooperating with Brazil at the G20, UNSC and the Alliance of Civilizations. There is a partnership between MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) and Turkey (Pamir, FGV TASAM).⁸ With the aim of institutionalizing Turkey-MERCOSUR relations the "Memorandum for the Establishment of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Mechanism between the Republic of Turkey and the MERCOSUR member states and associate members" was signed at the MERCOSUR Summit on December 16, 2010. Turkey's negotiations continue for Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with MERCOSUR. Since having close relationship with emerging countries gained pace, Turkey- Brazil relations has been developed. Turkey-Brazil Business Council established in 2006. Turkey and Brazil agreed on an "Action Plan for Strategic Partnership" during Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visit to Brazil between 25-29 May, 2010 (MFA 2011a).

As a part of policy to develop relations with the BRICS, Turkey changed its former policy approach to China, particularly its approach to separatist Uyghurs in Xinjiang, that has resulted complicated relationship between Turkey and China for years.⁹ Turkey was once criticized for its proposal to discuss the Xinjiang crisis at the UN Security Council by China, whose position was supported by the other SCO members at the SCO summit in Yekaterinburg in 2009 (Famularo 2012).

Turkey's changing policy towards Xinjiang, which can be described as a hard line against any separatist or terrorist groups instead of supporting the secessionist policies of the Uyghurs in "Eastern Turkistan" Xinjiang and strong emphasis on the territorial integrity of China by abandoning its former pan-Turkist stance over Xinjiang, led to normalization and the improvement of the relationship between Turkey and China (Famularo, 2012).

⁷ Trade volume with Brazil in the first 11 months of 2011 was 2,7 billion USD.

⁸ Brazil is founding member of MERCOSUR.

⁹ Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan referred to the events that occurred during the Uyghur riots in 2009 as "genocide" and urged Beijing to "address the question of human rights and do what is necessary to prosecute the guilty" (Famularo, 2012).

Erdoğan's visit to China on April 10, 2012 - after 27 years - led to cooperation on particularly energy investments. Turkey and China signed two deals on cooperation in nuclear power plant building. The strategic deals have filled "27 year gap". At his visit to China, Chinese Vice President, Xi Jinping described the relationship between Turkey and China with these words: "To respect and to support each other on issues regarding core concerns is not only a manifestation of political trust between China and Turkey, but also the foundation of healthy growth of our strategic cooperative ties"(Chinaembassy, 2012).

Turkish-Russian relations, which has long histories of conflict, deep structural differences and divergent views, have steadily improved after March 2003 with a tactical decision by Ankara to explore a new rapprochement with Russia. Disappearance of divisive issues such as Chechnya and the Kurds, convergence of Russia's and Turkey's stance on Iran, Syria and other states in the MENA before the Arab Spring, increasing trade and tourism between two countries and energy deals, all paved the way for both Turkey and Russia to develop their relations.¹⁰ The priorities given by both of them to place a high premium on stability in their neighborhood also contributed to this end (Hill & Taşpınar 2006, 81).

Disagreements between Ankara and Moscow on foreign policy issues such as NATO missile defense system agreement signed between Turkey and NATO, Patriot missiles to be deployed on Turkey's border with Syria and Turkey's support to Syrian opposition do not negatively affect strong economic and energy friendship between two countries (Voice of Russia 2012). Turkey's increasing weight in the MENA and energy projects between Turkey and Russia lessen the negative effects of political disagreements. Acceptance of Turkey to the SCO as dialogue partner in June 2012 at the Beijing Summit of the SCO despite disagreements between Russia and Turkey on several issues is the clear evidence of shared pragmatism which will help to keep Turkey-Russian relationship strong.

India and Turkey, which are both emerging economies, are also developing economic and strategic ties. Indo-Turkish ties are non-problematic except for Turkey's Pak-centric policies (Aspen Institute 2012, 7). Yet, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, undersecretary of the Turkish foreign ministry, said that Turkey's relations with Pakistan should no impact on India although Turkey-Pak ties pose hurdle to India's entry to Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). He

¹⁰ Putin and Erdoğan reached an agreement to support each other's positions on Chechnya and the Kurds at the meeting in Sochi in July 2005 (Hill& Taşpınar 2006, 84).

also added that Turkey wants to enhance its ties with India on its own merit (The Times of India 2013).

Indian's dependency of oil makes Turkey a necessary subset of any alternative system of fossil fuel supplies coming to India from and through the Eastern Mediterranean. It would complement any existing structures that run through the Persian Gulf that is both India's primary energy source and increasingly geopolitically unstable part of the world.¹¹ These alternative systems of oil supplies are extending the North-South corridor to the Caucasus and Turkey, natural gas pipelines and searoutes running from Turkey through Israel or Egypt to the Red Sea-Indian Ocean (Aspen Institute India 2012, 7).

At the meeting, which was organized by the Aspen Institute India in September 2012, and the Prime Minister Special Envoy, Ministry of External Affairs official, business and industry leaders, analysts and former diplomats, senior armed forces officers participated, some proposals to further ties between Turkey and India and enhance their influence in the region were discussed. Working closely at various forums and groupings on key global issues and using India's and Turkey's administrative experiences to assist the Arab world as stable democracies of the region are some of the topics in this context which were discussed. They finalized the meeting emphasizing that Turkey and India -two democracies- are playing significant role in their respective regions and emerging economies that intend to shape global discourse in the coming years (Aspen Institute India 2012,).

Finally, Turkey-South Africa relations has been developed recently as a part of Turkish active foreign policy which is supported by civil initiatives in Africa.¹² Seven Turkish schools operating in South Africa which have approximately 2,500 students (Bozkurt 2011). South African Turkish Business Association (SATBA), which is non-profit organization aiming to enhance business relations between South Africa and Turkey, founded in 2007 (SATBA). The First Meeting of the Turkey-Republic of South Africa Joint Economic Commission was held in 2008. During Turkish Prime Minister's visit to South Africa in

¹¹ The growing need for natural gas and oil for rapidly growing Indian industry forced India to make plans for building an Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline. The US offered India to supply nuclear reactors to upgrade the US-Indian strategic partnership as a compensation of its abandoning of IPI gas pipeline project to prevent other countries' oil and gas investments in Iran (Ünver Noi 2011, 218).

¹² TUSKON (the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey) members participated forum held by SATBA in 2013.

2005, three agreements were signed between Turkey and South Africa: Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (TEC), Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (ADTA) and Agreement on Customs Mutual Assistance (MFA 2011b). South African citizens interest in Turkey has been increasing since tourists from South Africa visited Turkey which was 14.000 in 2007 rose to 25.000 in 2009 (MFA 2011b). Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's 2011 visit to South Africa was a testament of growing interest on the Turkish side in promoting ties with South Africa. Turkey sees South Africa as a potential key strategic partner not only in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also for global issues.

Turkey's Relations with the European Union (EU)

Turkey has long pursued the goal of becoming a member of the EU, culminating in the declaration of Turkey as a candidate country in 1999 and in the opening of accession negotiations in 2005. This journey began with Turkey's application for associate membership of the European Economic Community in 1959 and continued with an association agreement signed in 1963 and an agreement to create a customs union between Turkey and the EU in 1995 (Ünver Noi 2012, 78, 79).

The accession negotiations, which had commenced under French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhardt Schröder, decelerated when President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel assumed their leadership positions. Merkel and Sarkozy have indicated that Turkey should have a "special relationship" based on "privileged partnership" rather than "full membership" in the EU. As a part of this policy, Sarkozy vetoed the opening of several chapters in Turkey's accession talks. Relations between France and Turkey deteriorated further when the French senate passed an Armenian genocide bill, which would make it a crime to deny that genocide took place. Sarkozy also used his opposition to Turkey's EU accession as a political tool during the 2012 election campaign. The deceleration of accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey has led to Turkish skepticism and created an anti-EU backlash in Turkey (Davutoğlu, 2010, 550, Fuller, 2010, 168).

Turkey's new foreign policy approach, which is based on having relations with all states and an independent foreign policy, have seen some shifts from its earlier Europe-centric and Washington-centric policies (Davutoğlu, 2010, 550, Fuller, 2010, 168). As a result of

these developments, the scope of the foreign policy dialogue between the EU and Turkey has lessened in recent years. Before the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, Turkish representatives met regularly with the EU troika (the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the current EU President, and the future EU President). Turkey also formerly met representatives of the EU member states at intergovernmental conferences related to Turkey's accession discussions. During the heyday of Turkey-EU relations, Turkey enthusiastically aligned its foreign policy positions with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) on issues not fundamental to Turkish foreign policy (Tocci, 2011). Cyprus blocked negotiations with Turkey on the CFSP, so there were no official talks between the EU and Turkey on the alignment process, and this situation could not be improved during the 1 July-31 December 2012 Cyprus EU presidency (Ünver Noi, 2012, 79, 80).¹³

Accession talks with the EU have been opened in 2005, but the progress has been slow since 17 chapters out of 35 chapters have been blocked and 4 chapter have not been opened. 13 out of 35 chapters have been opened by Turkey and only one chapter-science and research-is provisionally closed. Yet, slow progress and reluctance of some EU member states to accept Turkey as a full member to the EU led to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's remarks on Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an alternative to the EU membership following Turkey 's acceptance as a dialogue partner in June 2012. His remarks show that Turkey has many alternatives and it is not obliged to the EU (Enhaberler, 2013).

The relationship between Turkey and the EU is now less comprehensive than it was during the Cold War. Forty years of Turkey's slog toward EU membership and foot-dragging by some EU member states, particularly France and Germany, have resulted in anti-EU backlash in Turkey. But it does not appear that Turkey is abandoning a Europe-centric poliy. Geographic ties and historic ties and close, deep economic relations between the EU and Turkey hinder Turkey's turning completely away from Europe (Fuller, 2010, 168). Deceleration of Turkey's accession to the EU and economic considerations along with global changes have left more room for Turkey to develop and implement relationship that fall outside the purview of the EU. Both Europe and Turkey agree that relationship should not be broken, but progress seemed impossible or limited under the EU which is reluctant to accept Turkey as a full member to the EU (Turan, 2011).

¹³ Turkey frozen its relations with the EU during Cyprus presidency.

Besides this, increasing disadvantageous position of the customs union agreement for Turkey as a result of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed between the EU and other countries lead to unfair competition for Turkey since these agreements refrain the countries which signed the FTAs with the EU to sign FTA with Turkey. The FTA, which will be concluded between the EU and the US, will adversely affect the Turkish economy. This deal, which will be started by June between the EU and the US, have raised concerns in Turkey and led to arguments that Turkey may seek revisions to customs union (Today's Zaman, 2013).

Unjust treatment of Turkey by the EU might alienate it from the EU path and push it to seek new alternatives that has been voiced by Erdoğan recently. As Brzezinski stated that “the dividing line between Europe on the one hand and Turkey and Russia on the other is a geographical abstraction”. The EU embrace Turkey on more equal terms and engages Russia politically as well as economically since such an expanded West can help anchor the stability of Eurasia (Brzezinski 2012, 132). The EU's role in democratization of Turkey is undeniable. Turkey's continuing exclusion from Europe might “contribute to the risk that if the democratic experiment in Turkey were to fail, Turkey could turn back toward a more assertive Islamic political identity or succumb to some form of nondemocratic military regimentation” (Brzezinski 2012, 137). This denial of Turkish aspirations might lead to hostility which could generate a fundamentalist revival and hinder its role which might facilitate the EU's access to oil and gas of the MENA (Brzezinski 2012, 136). Some signals of changes in the EU policy towards Turkey have occurred in the post-Sarkozy France and post-Cyprus EU presidency. The negotiations, which will be restarted under the EU rotating presidency of Ireland, and the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius announcement that France will officially remove its veto over Chapter 22 regional policy and assist in chapter's opening, can be given as examples of this change (EU Observer 2013).

Turkey and the BRICS in the MENA

Turkish foreign policy approach, “zero problem with neighbors”, first normalized and then helped it to improve its relations with its neighbors – Iran, Syria and Iraq – before the Arab Spring. Turkey's foreign policy targeting to develop its relations with all states also paved the way for Turkey to develop its relations with the BRICS and even to play a mediator role between conflicting parties. For instance, developing economic and political relations between Turkey and Brazil made them significant allies to structure a new global governance.

As Stuenkel said that Turkey and Brazil attempt to deal with Iran's nuclear program indicated that there are other countries willing to assume international leadership¹⁴ (Stuenkel , FGV TASAM). This view was voiced by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Davutoğlu at the meeting of Ambassadors of Brazil in the Middle East and North Africa held in 25 February 2012, with his following words:

“We have excellent bilateral relations in political, economical cultural dialogue, we have excellent relations coordinating our regional foreign policy and even contributing in global peace through our joint initiative back in 2010 regarding Iranian nuclear program together with my dear colleague, Minister Amorim. Now we are further improving relations with my dear colleague Mr. Patriotta. Sometimes every week, sometimes twice a month we are talking to each other on different occasions and coordinating our efforts, because in this critical historic turning point, not only consultation in the UN, when we were in the UNSC consultation among the 10 non permanent members, but sometimes consultation among the influential, regional powers which may have global effect. Global influence is as important as other coordination between Turkish and Brazilian diplomacies. We have close cooperation and it is a great asset from this perspective. Because we share the same vision, same ideals such as transparency and accountability. We have the same approach in diplomacy; these are multilateralism, regional ownership, more diplomacy rather than sanctions or threats, more dialogue like Alliance of Civilizations, now mediation, friends of mediation initiative also, we are playing a significant role.” (MFA 2012).

Similar views and approaches of two countries in global influence and diplomacy led to Brazilian President Lula and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan travel to Tehran for nuclear fuel swap deal (Kurlantzick, 2013, 160). A nuclear fuel swap deal signed by Iran with Turkey and Brazil, in May 2010, through which Iran agreed to send uranium abroad for enrichment. The White House stated: “While it would be a positive step for Iran to transfer low-enriched uranium off of its soil as it agreed to do last October, Iran said today that it would continue its 20% enrichment, which is direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions.” Almost immediately after the deal, and upon US insistence, the UN Security Council decided to impose new sanctions on Iran (UN Security Council Resolution 1929) on June 9, 2010, with Turkey and Brazil voting against it (Ünver Noi, 2011, 214).¹⁵

¹⁴ Turkey and Brazil attempt to deal with Iran's nuclear program did not have a positive repercussion on the international community (Stuenkel, FGV TASAM).

¹⁵ Undercutting the efforts of Turkey and Brazil through Turkish-Brazilian initiative to allow Russia to enrich uranium for Iran by tightening sanctions against Iran in 2010 led to Turkey's decision to act in

At the BRICS latest summit (Fifth Summit) held in Durban, South Africa, BRICS once more stated their stance toward Iran's nuclear issue with these words: "there is no alternative to a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue". They also added that "they are concerned about threats of military action as well as unilateral sanctions" (MEA 2013).

The BRICS common approach towards Palestine and the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) is as follows:

"We welcome the admission of Palestine as an Observer State to the United Nations. We are concerned at the lack of progress in the Middle East Peace Process and call on the international community to assist both Israel and Palestine to work towards a two-state solution with a contiguous and economically viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We are deeply concerned about the construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which is a violation of international law and harmful to the peace process. In recalling the primary responsibility of the UNSC in maintaining international peace and security, we note the importance that the Quartet reports regularly to the Council about its efforts, which should contribute to concrete progress" (MEA 2013).

The BRICS common approach which has been specified at the BRICS summit in Durban shows that their approach to the issue is similar to Turkey's approach. The new emerging powers also adhere to principles of nonintervention and sovereignty. Turkey's opposition to the Libya intervention which had been called as "unthinkable" and "absurd" by Turkish Prime Minister, Erdoğan can be partly explained within this framework (Kurlantzick, 2012, 162).¹⁶ The BRICS generally seek peaceful alternatives to satisfy their national goals rather than relying on the military leverage contrary to the hard power realists who continue to dominate the foreign offices of most Western powers. Turkey along with Brazil has prefigured such an approach in a persisting effort to find ways to defuse regional tensions in the Middle East (Falk 2013).

Turkey's strong position in the MENA and recent increasing Turkish-Chinese security and economic cooperation increased possibility of Turkish support for China's Middle

line with Brazil to vote against sanctions. Rejecting containment policy of the US and the EU Turkey embraced an open-dialogue with Iran (Gerges 2012, 192).

¹⁶ It was not only related to applying principles of nonintervention and sovereignty. Turkey was reluctant to support military intervention in Libya owing to its past investment in the country.

Eastern agenda. The two sides discussed how to deal with the ongoing crisis in Syria and reached energy cooperation and technology transfer agreements. Changing policy towards the Uyghurs accelerated the momentum toward enhanced bilateral cooperation between Ankara and Beijing (Famularo, 2012).

In other words, Turkey's increasing weight and the post-Arab Spring developments in the MENA along with Turkey's changing attitudes towards China facilitated the development of relations between Turkey and China. For China, the "new Arab Cold War" between Iran and Saudi Arabia and its possible implications in the region -- Saudi Arabia's pressure on the Assad regime; the possibility of regime change in Syria, which may weaken Iran -- do not serve China's interests in the region. From this perspective, developing relations for China with Turkey, which supports the Syrian opposition and which has good relations with the newly established governments of the MENA in the post-Arab Spring era, might be interpreted as a way to decrease the Saudi sphere of influence in the Middle East and Syria and "extremism" in the region (Ünver Noi, 2013).

In addition to this, the growing resistance of Sunni groups in Syria against the Shiite Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad does not serve Russia's interest in the region, because Russia supports Shiite Iran and Shiite Alawite Syria against the spread of the Sunni Salafist form of Islam supported by Saudi Arabia. This opposition to President al-Assad in Syria poses a threat to Russia (Ünver Noi, 2013). This can be explained by the existence of Muslim communities of Russia's Caucasus which practised Sufism and turned gradually into Salafism. Growing Salafi insurgents have increasingly targeted state-backed Sufi religious leaders that are accused of assisting the government crack down on "true Islam" (The Star, 2012). Turkey's changing policy to support overtly pro-Chechen separatists and pragmatic approaches that have been taken by the government in this respect also helped to Turkey to improve its relations with Russia despite its support to Syrian opposition (Ünver Noi, 2013).

Tunisia, Egypt and other newly elected Islamist governments of the post-Arab Spring era have shown a desire to follow the Turkish path. Turkish model is seen as the favored one by young Arabs today. India with its Muslim population that is the world's third largest is wary of the politico-religious influences that comes from other Muslim countries. Turkey's model of Islam would best fit into the socio-political milieu that India would like to propagate (Aspen Institute India 2012, 8).

With regards to Syrian crisis, Turkey and BRICS are not on the same side in terms of approaches to the Assad regime. BRICS expressed their concerns and views on Syrian issue with these following words at the latest BRICS Summit held in Durban:

“We express our deep concern with the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria and condemn the increasing violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law as a result of continued violence. We believe that the Joint Communiqué of the Geneva Action Group provides a basis for resolution of the Syrian crisis and reaffirm our opposition to any further militarization of the conflict. A Syrian-led political process leading to a transition can be achieved only through broad national dialogue that meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society and respect for Syrian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty as expressed by the Geneva Joint Communiqué and appropriate UNSC resolutions. We support the efforts of the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative. In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, we call upon all parties to allow and facilitate immediate, safe, full and unimpeded access to humanitarian organisations to all in need of assistance. We urge all parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers” (MEA 2013).

Russia’s Foreign Minister’s reaction to the Arab League’s decision to recognize the opposition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people at the Arab League’s Summit in Doha, Qatar clearly indicates the Russia’s stance towards the Syrian issue (VOA, 2013).¹⁷

Changing international environment as a result of the Arab Spring and its repercussions on Turkey and its neighbors also serve to change Turkey’s position in the region along with other developments, which have considerable effects on Turkey’s relationship with Russia and China. The lack of international community consensus and the potential for spillover have made Western powers hesitant to intervene militarily in Syria and in turn have led to Turkey seeking alternative solutions to the Syria issue in consultation with Russia (Ünver Noi, 2013).

Turkish proposal, which calls for regional talks among regional actors, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt to find a solution to Syrian Crisis, is an attempt of Turkey for

¹⁷ Lavrov called the move of the League “illegal and indefensible” by saying that the Syrian government still a legitimate UN member state (VOA, 2013).

alternative solution to the Syria issue by including a country of BRICS-Russia-. The proposed mechanism which will have three way talks explained by Erdoğan is as follows: “We said let’s have three-legged approach. One leg could be the trio of Turkey, Egypt and Iran. Another leg could consist of Turkey, Russia and Iran. And finally, there could be the trio of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt” (Today’s Zaman 2012).

Turkey and the EU in the MENA

Disintegration of the Soviet Union which led to major changes in the Middle East by enlarging the definition of the Middle East as the Greater Middle East, emergence of new threats which are transboundary, the Islamic resurgence in the MENA and the geographic proximity of both Turkey and the EU in this region, which made them more vulnerable their destabilizing effects, compel them to involve in the affairs of the MENA. The EU has developed its relations with the MENA through several projects which is based on stabilization through cooperation and partnership in the post-Cold War era such as Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). With this formula, the EU aimed to export its values, norms, and standards to its neighbors (Ünver Noi 2011, 7, Ünver Noi 2012, 70).

The EU is described as “normative power” which has the ability to shape conceptions of normal in international relations. In this respect, it aimed to promote its own norms and values that are democracy, respect for the rule of law, human rights and economic liberalization to the MENA through these projects (Manners 2002, 236, 241). Another concept that can be applied to describe international role of the EU is “soft power” which is the ability to shape preferences of others and its ability of being “force of attraction” (Nye 1990, 166). The EU’s soft power comes from its norms and values (El-Sayed Selim 2004, 228).

Developments in the EU and in the MENA effected negatively the EU’s “normative power” which is ability to attract others to its point of view. Austerity measures applied across Europe as a result of economic and financial crisis that reached its peak in 2008 undermine democratic and social rights in the EU member states (Doc. 12948, 2012). It has negative impact on its “normative power” and its influence in the MENA since it has been lost its “force of attraction” as being democratic and welfare state. The apparent failure of the EU’s

democracy and social model-welfare state- in the MENA lessened the possibility for the EU to shape the region to suit its interests since the democratic model which took shape and came to the fore in 19th century Europe is being eroded and is perceived as outdated (Doc.12279, 2010). Moreover, the trust of EU citizens in democratic institutions that is the basis of their legitimacy has been fading (European Conference 2012).

According to the French Professor, Guy Hermet, who claims that “democracy is spreading at the peripheries of the world, but exhausted in the center”, the basic reason of the decline of the political democracy is that “our societies came to their material limits”. For him, “Petrol of democracy are material promises...the welfare state is now sitting on the sand, unable to finance any promises anymore”. Hence, he argues that “the hope, upon which democracy was based, has been destroyed” (Doc. 11623, 2008, 9). Furthermore, the correlation between economic development and democracy, which was made by American sociologist Ronald Inglehart, has been eroded today.¹⁸ The rise of BRICS can be given as an example to the erosion of the correlation between economic development and democracy.

Besides this, the Arab Spring has presented the EU with a foreign policy test. It provides both a challenge and an opportunity to regain some credibility lost in the MENA. Several EU member states remain reluctant to talk about engagement with Islamist parties in the post-Arab Spring era. The reluctance of the EU member state to talk with the Justice and the Charity movement in Morocco can be given as an example. As Dunne and Youngs stated that “Arab democratic activists judge the EU to have under rather than over played its hand” (Dunne & Youngs 2013, 4).

Turkey, which has ability to use its “soft power” through several instruments, became a role model for the countries of the MENA particularly for Egypt and Tunisia in the post-Arab Spring era although the AKP government recently has been criticized because of democratic shortcomings in Turkey.¹⁹ Its economic success and political confidence impress the countries in the region. In the post-Arab Spring era, it is perceived as a model for Egypt and Tunisia in economic and political respects (Gerges 2012, 196).

¹⁸ Economic development tends to bring long-term social and cultural changes that eventually tend to bring democracy producing a strong correlation between the two (Inglehart & Welzel 2010, 19).

¹⁹ By 2012, the AKP government has been criticized due to democratic shortcomings. The more power Erdoğan won at the elections, the less interest he appeared in taking steps in freedom of expression, human rights (Taşpınar 2012, 135).

Tunisia's moderate Islamist party, Ennahda Party leader, Rachid Ghanusshi voiced this view and openly stated that it will styled themselves after Turkey's "progressive Islamists" Justice and Development Party (AKP) –building Tunisian democratic institutions, upholding individual freedoms and separating mosque and state (Kurlantzick 2013, 15). A 2012 Gallup survey also showed that 11 percent of Egyptians cited Turkey as a political model for Egypt's future government although most Egyptians express skepticism toward external "models" (Younis 2012). The role model they inspired has not been Western style democracy, it was Turkish style democratic model. It remained to be seen which model of governing they would inspire and implement at the end of the day in their respective countries, but the effect of Islam is undeniable. Moreover, "Salafisation of Muslim Brotherhood" on major issues in Egypt indicated that there is a kind of rivalry among regional powers to influence their own model in the region.

Turkey's soft power seems to have brought it much closer to the MENA. Turkey's lack of prerequisites for establishing close relations with MENA countries, along with its soft power and economic success, could make Turkey a more trusted partner in the region, as opposed to the EU. As a Muslim country governed by a democratic regime, Turkey has the benefit of being a potential model for the countries of the region, as opposed to the EU. Its economic growth is another factor that makes it attractive to the countries of the region (Ünver Noi 2012, 81). It would be much better for the EU to get back its credibility lost in the MENA by aligning itself with regional power which supports the spread of democracy in the Middle East, such as Turkey rather than aligning itself with regional powers which resist the spread of democracy, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Portela 2012, 5).²⁰ Turkey's increasing regional power in the MENA might make it a partner of the EU that needs to develop its relations with the newly elected Islamist governments of the region.

Although there was a divergence between the EU and Turkey over handling of the 2011 crisis in Libya, the coordination between the EU and Turkey regarding the Assad regime in Syria, as well as Turkey decision to accept NATO's nuclear missile defense against Iran,

²⁰ Saudi Arabia's active involvement and support for opposition groups in Syria can be clearly explained by its aim to weaken Shiite Iran through weakening its ally, Alawite Assad regime. It is not related to spreading democracy since it acted as a counterrevolutionary force since the beginning of the Arab uprisings. Its act of Saudi Arabia as counterrevolutionary force at the beginning of the uprisings harmed its relationship with its former Pro-Western ally, Egypt and its new government Muslim Brotherhood, but not lasted too long due to Egypt post-revolutionary economy.

indicate some convergence in their political approaches and possible coordination of foreign policies where needed (Ünver Noi 2012, 81). These acts also verify the reality that Turkey's commitment to NATO and the EU remains strong.

Conclusion

The newly emerging international milieu in the post-Arab Spring era and its parameters appear to be changing the existing balance of power in the Middle East as well as in Central Asia. China and Russia have already shown signs of this change as in when they vetoed UN sanctions against Syria and Iran (Ünver Noi, 2013). Assad's act of sending letter to the leaders of the BRICS to "work for an immediate cession of violence" and guarantee a "political solution" in Syria (VOA, 2013) revealed once more different approaches between the BRICS and the EU, US, Turkey and Arab League countries and the potential of the issue to be used by the regime in crisis for its advantage to survive.

It is obvious to say that reactions of global powers to crises and upcoming changes are mostly driven by interests which are opposed the policy preferences of the EU. EU's strategic partnership with Russia did not help to the EU to win the support of Russia and other emerging powers. Even Russia constitutes the main obstacle hindering sanctions on Syria. EU-China High-Level Strategic dialogue contains one single reference to Syria (Portela 2012, 5, 6). The Syrian issue showed that Turkey, both a key regional power and a NATO ally which does not enjoy the status of a strategic partner, has aligned itself with the EU and the US contrary to Russia and China (Portela 2012, 6).

Turkey as a country which has ties with both sides may act as a mediator between conflicting issues in the MENA. Its diplomatic leadership may help to exert it a major influence in the region. Moreover, its model of Islam might be preferred by the BRICS such as Russia and China. Russia worries about the political Islam, particularly Salafi form of Islam that is on the rise in the MENA and its possible repercussions on its Muslim population which is composed of 25% of total population of Russian Federation. The Chinese position is very similar to Russian, concerning democracy and Political Islam (Kawakibi 2012, 164).²¹

²¹ This partly explains why Russia is opposed to any Western action to step down Assad regime in Syria. Kremlin and Beijing also worry about the spread of democracy in their territories (Kawakibi 2012, 164).

Regional tensions which pose dangers for Turkey owing to its geographical proximity to the region compel it to take actions such as conflict resolving initiatives. This is not to say that all these initiatives became successful to resolve conflicts and crisis of the MENA, but reveals acceptance of the rise of Turkish to prominence on the global stage of diplomacy (Falk 2013).

Changes in Turkey and Israel relations after Netanyahu's acceptance to meet Turkey's three conditions for normalizing relations including his mea culpa to Turkish Prime Minister for Israeli role in Gaza flotilla raid, which led to nine pro-Palestinian activists, acceptance of Turkey's three conditions and acceptance of his apology by Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan might be interpreted as a step towards normalization of relations between two countries.²² As said by Jamal Al-Kkodary, Chairman of Popular Committee Against the Siege "this apology shows that Turkey is a powerful regional country and knows how to reach its goal with determination and through all diplomatic methods despite many Israeli attempts to ignore Turkish conditions" (The Real News 2013). This normalization of relations between two countries might lead to the possibility of Turkey's constructive engagement with Israel to find a solution to Israeli-Arabs that once it had through initiating indirect talks between Israel and Syria before the Gaza War of 2008.

Turkey asserts itself as a more independent actor rather than as a subservient client of the West which makes it more attractive for the rest (Gerges 2012, 196). Alienation of Turkey from the EU as a result of the EU's policies blocking Turkey's accession negotiations and rejecting to embrace Turkey on more equal terms are the major obstacles to enable Turkey bridging the gap between the EU and the BRICS. This might be partly overcome by applying Western European Union (WEU) practise to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)²³ or holding regular meetings between Turkish foreign minister and the EU high representative for foreign and security policy as well as between Turkish diplomats and the European Security Committee of the European Council and institutionalize these meetings or fully overcome by opening the CFSP (Tocci 2011). Treatment of Turkey on equal footing with the

²² During the telephone conversation between Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Netanyahu said that Israel had substantially lifted the restriction on the entry of civilian goods into Gaza and this would continue as long as calm prevailed that is Turkey's third condition.

²³ However, Turkey never formally expressed itself satisfied with its treatment as an associate member and on various occasions argued that it should have access to the status of full membership since it fell short of the status it had enjoyed in the WEU (Blockmans 2011, 147, 152).

other candidate countries would be the best way to improve relationship between Turkey and the EU that also help Turkey to act as a powerful regional power between the EU and the BRICS on the issues of the MENA. The signal of developing relations with both sides the EU and the BRICS increases the possibility of these kinds of initiatives and their successes to resolve conflicting issues of the region which are vital for the EU and Turkey due to their geographic proximity to these problematic regions and possible geographic spillover effects to them.

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