

## ARTICLE

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# Turkey's Grand Strategy in the Context of Global and Regional Challenges

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### Abstract

*Global governance is undergoing a systemic transformation involving alterations in states' military, economic and demographic capabilities. This global restructuring is coupled with the emergence of new challenges and increasing uncertainty over what the global order will look like in the next 50 years. It is within this rapidly transforming global environment that Turkey has adopted an active foreign policy. Turkey's foreign policy is changing in response to the global restructuring and the new challenges it entails, and is partly driven by its aspirations to be recognized as a regional power and global player. Turkey's emphasis on national survival, assertive policy implementation and autonomous foreign policy choices all add up to demonstrate that Turkey is developing a new grand strategy in the international arena. This paper aims to assess Turkey's grand strategy in the light of these global challenges by looking at the developments in its global capabilities and foreign policy endeavors.*

### Keywords

Turkey, grand strategy, foreign policy, global governance, regional challenges.

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## Introduction

On December 22, 2018, when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed, “We are putting together an epic story in Turkish foreign policy, unprecedented in modern history,”<sup>1</sup> he was referring to the formulation of a more assertive, visible, autonomous presence in the international system. Turkish foreign policy is one of many contrasts.<sup>2</sup> In the Cold War years, Turkey was a committed participant in the Western alliance, with an integral place in the European order. It was a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949, joined the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) when it was first set up as the OECC in 1948 and became a NATO member in 1952. In the Cold War years, Turkish foreign policy choices followed American and European preferences, and Turkey was a reliable ally in many ways. Similarly, in the post-Cold War era, Turkey played a critical role in the 1990-91 Gulf War, an active role in the Western Balkans and the newly independent former Soviet republics, and assumed new roles in support of the Western world in the post-9/11 dynamics.<sup>3</sup> Today, this seems to be no longer the case, partly because the global order has become increasingly complex, and uncertainty prevails in unprecedented levels.

What will global governance structures look like in 50 years? What key issues will global governance structures be dealing with that we are unable to foresee today? Will the role of states be the same or radically different in coping with critical issues? Which states will be the key players, and which of today's main players will lose their importance and perhaps lose their dominance? In other words, what kind of a future are we looking at in global governance dynamics? These questions automatically bring forth possible avenues of inquiry for Turkey's new role in the changing global order, as well as the need to identify Turkey's grand strategy.

In recent years, Turkey has increasingly followed a proactive foreign policy, characterized by rapprochement with Iran, friendly relations with Russia and engagement with less-developed countries in Asia and Africa.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it is engaged in a tug of war in the Middle East with other regional powers, and is caught between the U.S. and Russia in the contest over the future of the region.<sup>5</sup> Turkish foreign policy has changed drastically in the last decades, moving away from its traditional pro-Western, pro-European stance, and leading to question marks over its foreign policy orientation.<sup>6</sup> There is a major transformation evident in Turkish foreign policy choices, with a possible move away from the Euro-Atlantic vision.<sup>7</sup> Yet, despite such a move, Turkey still plays an important role in global dynamics through its engagement in its neighborhood.<sup>8</sup> Parallel to the shift in Turkish foreign policy, it needs to

be noted that the Western alliance itself is suffering from internal division,<sup>9</sup> and that the EU and the U.S. have held increasingly diverging positions on multiple international issues.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of a unified Western front, Turkey's foreign policy choices, driven by its material interests, likewise seem to be more diversified.

Given its strategic location and the sheer size of its economy- the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in Europe and 16<sup>th</sup> in the G-20, even with the latest economic crisis, Turkey remains a significant partner for the U.S. and the EU. At the same time, Turkey frequently attempts to revise the status quo on a number of international issues by working bilaterally and multilaterally on many geographic fronts.<sup>11</sup> Turkey's revisionist policy is tied to its aspirations to be recognized as a regional power and a global player,<sup>12</sup> in particular with regard to its former territories under the Ottoman Empire and drawing upon its ethnic, religious and linguistic ties.<sup>13</sup> Its emphasis on national survival, assertive policy implementation and autonomous foreign policy choices all add up to demonstrate a different Turkey in the international arena, indicating its grand strategy as formulated in recent years. In other words, Turkey is developing a strategic vision for an ever more turbulent, tumultuous global order increasingly characterized by multi-polarity.

Parallel to its global and regional aspirations, Turkey is suffering from the consequences of international crises, such as a volatile relationship with the U.S., a collapse of state authority in its neighbors and increased instability along its southern borders.<sup>14</sup> While Turkey has always constituted a unique example of a country of contrasts-Muslim but secular, economically developed yet democratically struggling, of Europe but not yet in Europe, Middle Eastern yet not fully in the Middle East-the multiple layers of complexities in the Turkish political system have never been so profound, nor more visible. It is these complexities that underline Turkey's new challenges and motivate a new global strategy.

This is why, in 2016, President Erdoğan claimed "it was time for Turkey to openly think about alternatives, suggesting, for example, joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)"<sup>15</sup> and also developing new ties with Russia-both clearly radical steps that do not sit comfortably with Turkish foreign policy's traditional orientations. This search for alternatives might be related to the sense of alienation from the Western world that has taken root in Turkey, especially given the perceived lack of empathy from its European<sup>16</sup> and American partners in terms of the multiple foreign and domestic challenges it has found itself facing since 2016.<sup>17</sup>

Most importantly, Turkey has recently begun to assert itself in both global and regional politics. It has found itself in a renewed tug of war between the Western world and the Middle East. Turkish foreign policy choices since 2010 already indicate a sharp pull away from the Western world, yet without severing its ties in the Western alliance.<sup>18</sup> Its relations with the Middle Eastern countries are, however, not without significant problems of their own. Turkey finds itself under multiple pressures from its Middle Eastern neighbors, coupled with heightened tensions in global politics. This begs the question as to whether Turkey has a new grand strategy in its foreign policy and what the basic pillars of this strategy would be.

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Turkey aims to enhance its national security and protect its territorial integrity, while also striving to be recognized as a regional and global player.<sup>19</sup> Its key ambitions seem to revolve around recognition as an international player—the desire to receive a higher degree of visibility while maintaining sustained economic growth and protection from external threats. The main purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how Turkey responds to ongoing global transformation with its grand strategy, in particular by identifying the dilemmas it faces arising from this transformation. To do so, first the paper identifies the main processes underway leading to global transformation; second, it provides a comparison of the main pillars of global restructuring vis-à-vis Turkey's position, assessed in line with this restructuring. Third, it analyzes different trajectories for Turkish foreign policy as formulated according to its grand strategy. This paper's key contribution lies precisely in this aspect: it offers an assessment of the contours of global transformation at large, and examines how Turkey's grand strategy is altering in response to and perhaps contributing to this global transformation.

## Global Governance: Transforming the Old, Bringing in the New

Grand strategy refers to a country's ability to utilize its limited military, economic, political and diplomatic resources for the realization of its key national interests in its foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> However, when international actors shape their global strategies, they do so within the contours of global governance and systemic dynamics.<sup>21</sup> The international system is shaped by the power distri-

bution among major players,<sup>22</sup> and reflects to a large extent the main political preferences of the dominant powers.<sup>23</sup> Global governance has evolved under the hegemonic leadership of the Western world, in particular the U.S., in the post-WWII period in the form of a liberal international order.<sup>24</sup> However, in recent decades, there has been a dissolution of the Western alliance, with the U.S. and European countries going in different directions, as well as a rise of authoritarian systems in multiple countries in the world, including even the former champions of liberal democracy.<sup>25</sup> What needs to be stressed significantly is that there are major challenges to a convergence of interests between the European countries and the U.S. as well as Turkey in both security and economic arenas.

Current global developments are leading to both increased question marks and a restructuring of the post-WWII global order.<sup>26</sup> The global restructuring underway encompasses multiple pillars ranging from economic-financial,<sup>27</sup> to political and security as well as normative concerns.<sup>28</sup> While increasingly culturally visible, the main axis around which such global restructuring seems to be revolving also brings forth questions about the legitimacy and supremacy of the American-Western European dominated international institutions.<sup>29</sup> As emerging powers question both the status quo and the ongoing power balances, a struggle for influence between traditional and emerging powers becomes inevitable.

Accordingly, there are multiple assumptions on which this paper on Turkish grand strategy is based; first, there is a need for an academic assessment of how the bipolar international order has transformed, first into a unipolar system<sup>30</sup> and later on into a multipolar system,<sup>31</sup> and second, this academic assessment has to involve a reconceptualization of Turkey's interactions with multiple international actors, along with its role and position in the international system, in particular with its transatlantic partners. Finally, this reconceptualization of Turkish foreign policy has to bring forth a solid foundation for the generation of new policy options. Therefore, this paper also aims to understand Turkey's standing in the newly emerging global order along with its possible trajectories in the new order.<sup>32</sup> This task brings forth questions about the multilateral institutions that Turkey joined in the Cold War era,<sup>33</sup> and which shaped its relative position in the multilateral order.<sup>34</sup> It is in the anarchical order that states like Turkey strive to survive. As there is no such thing as a world government or a central political authority at the global level, multilateral institutions emerge with the ultimate aim of reducing uncertainty by creating international rules<sup>35</sup> and generating information on the costs and benefits of violating these rules.<sup>36</sup> Yet, the creation of these rules and possible sanctions

on the free riders that break these rules depend upon the presence of a handful of powerful actors that choose to cooperate to enforce them.<sup>37</sup> Global governance relies on this cooperation,<sup>38</sup> mostly driven by a convergence of interests between these powerful actors. This is precisely what has happened in the post-WWII order. However, in today's complex international environment, the powerful actors of the past no longer hold onto their positions, and there is a lack of convergence of interests among today's powerful actors. It is within this milieu that Turkey is seeking a niche for itself.

A related inquiry examines the possible role that Turkey might play as a global and/or regional leader, which seems to be the main motivation of Turkish political leaders in recent years. While there is a striving for such a leadership role, it remains to be seen whether Turkey could play such a role in the international system with other players such as Brazil, China, India or even Iran, aspiring to similar leadership positions. Turkey argues that the current international institutional constellations-shaped by European and American power dynamics

in the post-WWII period-do not reflect the current power balances. It is for this reason that President Erdoğan proposes that the 'world is greater than five', implying that it is high time for reform in the UN. There is a need for reformulating these institutions' decision-making dynamics in line with the current distribution of power that does not seem to hold sway in the international system yet. As the emerging powers demand systemic alterations, an integral part of such global restructuring would clearly involve changes in the voting procedures in multilateral institutions such as the permanent membership rights and veto power of the great powers-the U.S., UK, Russia, France and China-in the UN Security Council. According to Müftüleri-Baç and Peterson, "the rise of new powers such as China, India, Russia and Brazil means that key stakeholders now contest the rules that have emerged and are sufficiently powerful to challenge existing constellations of global governance."<sup>39</sup>

There seems to be, therefore, a pressing need for a restructuring of global governance that might lead to possible adaptations in international trade, international financial rules, mobility of capital, economic security, foreign aid, international norms, migration governance as well as international security governance structures. Parallel to this restructuring underway, the increasing visibility of emerging powers in international relations is currently seen as a

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challenge to more traditional powers.<sup>40</sup> It is within this context that Turkish grand strategy needs to be assessed. While it was easier to predict Turkish foreign policy in both the Cold War and post-Cold War era, it has now become increasingly difficult to do so, given the multiple layers of complexity in the international system. This is why it remains critical to assess how Turkey's grand strategy will take shape in this global transformation.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequently, the ongoing transformation in global dynamics with regard to military, economic and demographic capabilities play an important role in determining the context within which Turkish foreign policy is taking shape.<sup>42</sup> This analysis would form the basis for capturing the relative position that Turkey holds within the international system. An analysis of capabilities, in turn, would enable an assessment of how the Turkish grand strategy rests on challenging the hegemonic roles of the U.S. and the European powers in global governance structures. Finally, it remains to be seen whether there are common denominators between Turkey and other emerging powers in questioning the current global and regional power balances.

Parallel to the challenges posed by global transformation, the former leaders of the global order, the U.S. and the European great powers no longer dominate global dynamics in terms of their military, economic and demographic capabilities.<sup>43</sup> This, in turn, has translated into the loss of their ability to shape global governance architecture, along with increased questions about their ability to respond to global needs on a larger scale. For example, between 1990 and 2010, the economic capabilities of the emerging powers were less than ½ of the combined European and American economic capabilities, yet by 2018, they had reached twice their size. Similarly, there is an increasing gap among the traditional powers and emerging countries with regard to their population sizes. While in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the populations of the European countries made up around ¼ of the whole global population, today this has shrunk to about 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the global population. According to UN projections, by 2030, the combined populations of the U.S. and the European continent will reach 887 million out of a total global population of 7.556 billion, and by 2050, they will constitute around 918 million out of a global population of 8.876 billion.<sup>44</sup> While population growth is not necessarily a source of global power, the shrinking population of the former great powers is an important concern in global dynamics. These changing population dynamics matter in determining the key concerns in global governance, where so-called third world concerns of economic growth, eradication of poverty and climate change would become central issues to be dealt with. A similar transformation can be seen in military capabilities, with the U.S. and the European powers

facing significant challenges to their military superiority. However, one major difference is that while the traditional great powers in Europe are losing ground in all aspects of power-economic, military and demographic-the U.S. does not seem to be doing so. This trend might lead to a situation where the U.S. could develop new alliances across the board, rather than remaining tied to the increasingly redundant European powers.

While there is no consensus on the exact configurations of the emerging global dynamics in international relations (IR) literature, there is also a lack of consistency in terms of identifying the key changes and/or global challenges among different IR traditions.<sup>45</sup> Despite the fact that different scenarios are being floated to predict the outcomes of global restructuring, there is a consensus that the current global order is no longer tenable and/or sustainable.<sup>46</sup> Based on these different theoretical formulations, the paper proposes the following scenarios for Turkish grand strategy:

- *Hypothesis 1:* The liberal international order that encompasses Turkey within the U.S.-dominated Western order will expand by taking in new members, and the Turkish grand strategy will be reformulated as one of harmony/cooperation with its global partners.

This hypothesis takes into account the fact that global transformation enables the incorporation of emerging powers into mainstream power structures, granted that they do not question or challenge the rules of the existing multi-lateral institutions.<sup>47</sup> In other words, there are more great powers in the loop, perhaps replacing the former great powers, so there is turnover at the top, but the new powers do not challenge the basic pillars of the Western-dominated hegemonic order. However, there are already some emerging powers-for example Iran-that do actually question the American-dominated order, and the rules set up under this hegemony, ranging from nonproliferation to financial constraints. Given this contestation by some emerging powers, there seems to be a need for a competing view which forms the 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis in this paper.

- *Hypothesis 2:* There are challenges to the Western-dominated liberal international order from the rising powers. Turkey, identifying with this group, moves further away from its traditional allies in the West and looks for new allies.

This hypothesis draws upon the logic that, as a result of the global power transition, a new global order might be evolving. It is within this new global order that Turkey is looking for a role for itself, and it is far from certain that it will remain with its previous partners, most importantly the European countries. Given the stalling of the accession process with the EU, and the increasingly



transactional character of Turkey-EU relations, Turkey's role in the Western order seems to be questioned.<sup>48</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis foresees a possible convergence of interests between Turkey and other emerging powers, yet this is far from certain, which brings forth the 3<sup>rd</sup> proposition of the paper.

- *Hypothesis 3:* Turkey is moving away from its former partners in the U.S. and Europe, but is not developing new cooperation patterns with emerging powers, either. As a result, Turkey's grand strategy is pushing Turkey further into international isolation in global governance constellations.

While this is a possible scenario, it seems more plausible that Turkey is looking to build a network of similar-minded states, with which it could act as a block. Thus, a possible final hypothesis would be:

- *Hypothesis 4:* Turkey seeks to establish a network of similar-minded middle powers with which it could act together to balance out the American, Russian and Chinese-driven coalitions.

These hypotheses differ from each other in their contemplation of the trajectories of international restructuring, as well as the possible paths of a Turkish trajectory. Yet, despite the differences in these trajectories, it is beyond doubt that Turkey's grand strategy is being reformulated. In that respect, the paper relies on an intersection between neorealism,<sup>49</sup> and neoliberal institutionalism to assess the validity of these hypotheses.<sup>50</sup> It is also possible that none of these hypothesis could point to Turkey's future trajectories, while still indicating a mix and match of possible routes. For example, Turkey might act together with its traditional allies in some policies, but could build coalitions with emerging powers on others. In addition, what sets Turkey apart is its cultural appeal that draws upon its imperialistic roots, and its cultural, religious, historical and linguistic ties with its neighbors in the region. The culture-based dimension of Turkey's grand strategy plays an important role in setting it apart from other emerging powers. The increased emphasis on Turkey's obligations

to its former territories under the Ottoman Empire, or that Turkey represents the interests of the underdog in such venues as the UN draws from this culturally driven rhetoric.

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## Turkey's Position in Global and Regional Power Dynamics

In the global order shaped in the aftermath of WWII in 1945, the newly established international institutions formed the cornerstone of the liberal international order. The UN, the Council of Europe, the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reflected the global balance of power.<sup>51</sup>

The powers that had the largest share of the global economic pie—the U.S. and the former colonial powers in Europe—also had the most significant shares in both voting weights and representation in these multilateral institutions. The multilateral order between 1945 and 2003 revolved around these players.<sup>52</sup> Yet, as stated above, the current economic and military distribution of power no longer resembles what existed in 1945.<sup>53</sup> The multilateral institutions (UN, the Bretton Woods system, the international trade regime) established under the co-leadership of the U.S. and the European powers in the past are now increasingly questioned, and there are also demands for governance tools to correspond to newly emerging needs. Turkey finds itself playing a new role in this global transformation, and has some potential to play a new global role in response. Yet, it is not yet clear what kind of a role Turkey is evolving toward; it is essential to assess the Turkish grand strategy precisely for this reason.

The tables below provide a detailed ranking and comparison of the military, economic and demographic dimensions of the ongoing global transformation. The tables clearly demonstrate that there is a global restructuring underway. Nonetheless, it is not clear what kind of a new global order is emerging. Table 1 demonstrates the ongoing transformation in military power and military spending.

Rank	Country	Firepower	Military Spending in billion USD (Rank)
1	U.S.	0.0615	716 (1)
2	Russia	0.0639	44 (8)
3	China	0.0673	224 (2)
4	India	0.1065	55.2 (4)
5	France	0.1584	40.5 (9)
6	Japan	0.1707	47 (7)
7	South Korea	0.1761	38.3 (10)
8	United Kingdom	0.1797	47.5 (6)
9	Turkey	0.2089	8.6 (25)
10	Germany	0.2097	49.1 (5)
11	Italy	0.2277	29.2 (12)
12	Egypt	0.2283	4.4 (45)
13	Brazil	0.2487	29.3 (11)
14	Iran	0.2606	6.3 (33)
15	Pakistan	0.2798	7 (28)
16	Indonesia	0.2804	6.9 (30)
17	Israel	0.2964	19.6 (15)
18	North Korea	0.3274	7.5 (26)
19	Australia	0.3277	26.3 (13)
25	Saudi Arabia	0.4286	70 (3)

**Table 1:** Military Power and Spending, 2019

Source: *Global Fire Power*, 2019, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>.

While Turkey ranks in the top ten of the most powerful militaries in the world, its current military spending does not correlate to its power. For example, in 2018 Turkey ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the world with \$10.2 billion in military spending, but it declined in 2019 to 25<sup>th</sup>. Despite this decline in its military spending compared to its competitors in the region, Turkey consistently ranks among the top 20 of the world's most powerful militaries. However, as demonstrated in Table 1, military spending among newly emerging players, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is on the rise. This finding indicates that regional and global balances might change in the near future. Saudi Arabia in particular deserves special mention, precisely because it has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest military spending in the world, bypassing all the

major powers in Europe as well as Russia. Given the competition between regional players in the Middle East, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the latter's increased military spending indicates the possibility of an even fiercer power competition looming on the horizon. The military ranking shown in Table 1 provides empirical proof for Hypothesis 1 in terms of the magnitude of global transformation with new powers entering the game of international politics. However, as security interests among the major players continue to diverge, the alterations in global rankings might indicate a rising potential for future discord. Despite the American hegemonic military presence, smaller players might find the opportunity to wage war and create havoc in the world. Thus, in an attempt to answer the opening questions of the paper in terms of what the future of global governance might look like, one possible answer might turn out to be a higher degree of insecurity. The American decision to withdraw from Syria in October 2019, its stated aim to reduce its troops globally and its declining support to NATO might add up to a situation in which, in the absence of the American security umbrella, both the Middle East and the European continent become less safe. It is precisely this possibility that Turkey is trying to prepare for through its development of new technology and the creation of safe zones in its southern periphery. With increased question marks over the role of NATO along with the American commitment to collective defense, security governance might be mostly a national endeavor. While it is beyond the premises of this paper to delve further into the Syrian conflict, the evolving security dynamics following the American withdrawal and Turkish intervention in the North demonstrate how Turkish grand strategy is directly shaped by security concerns and regional dynamics.

These alterations in military power are taking place simultaneously with and parallel to the transformation in global economic balances. For example, while the U.S. and the European powers had  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the global economic pie between 1945 and 1970, their share has constantly declined over the last three decades. These changing economic balances form the basis of trade wars, crises in international capital flows and economic tugs of war. There is also significant uncertainty over what kind of a new financial/trade system might emerge, and which rules would be altered in the future. Table 2 demonstrates the economic changes at the global level, along with projections for 2021.

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
U.S.	17,348.08	17,947.00	18,558.13	19,284.99	20,145.05	21,016.06	21,873.55	22,765.72
China	10,430.71	10,982.83	11,383.03	12,263.43	13,338.23	14,605.29	16,144.04	17,762.01
Japan	4,596.16	4,123.26	4,412.60	4,513.75	4,562.21	4,675.79	4,800.06	4,895.42
Germany	3,874.44	3,357.61	3,467.78	3,591.69	3,697.31	3,821.51	3,958.72	4,065.95
India	2,042.56	2,090.71	2,288.72	2,487.94	2,724.76	3,006.95	3,315.36	3,660.21
UK	2,991.69	2,849.35	2,760.96	2,885.48	2,999.29	3,123.27	3,256.30	3,373.92
France	2,833.69	2,421.56	2,464.79	2,537.92	2,609.06	2,700.05	2,804.26	2,894.99
Italy	2,141.94	1,815.76	1,848.69	1,901.67	1,943.30	1,994.45	2,050.82	2,091.57
Brazil	2,417.16	1,772.59	1,534.78	1,556.44	1,608.74	1,677.46	1,749.35	1,828.64
Canada	1,783.78	1,552.39	1,462.33	1,530.70	1,595.50	1,666.61	1,740.00	1,803.87
South Korea	1,410.38	1,376.87	1,321.20	1,379.32	1,434.95	1,498.76	1,566.40	1,628.61
Russia	2,029.62	1,324.73	1,132.74	1,267.55	1,355.36	1,447.13	1,530.61	1,607.95
Australia	1,441.95	1,223.89	1,200.78	1,262.34	1,330.25	1,398.73	1,468.69	1,535.84
Spain	1,383.54	1,199.72	1,242.36	1,291.36	1,332.04	1,379.81	1,433.49	1,476.05
Mexico	1,297.85	1,144.33	1,082.43	1,166.60	1,228.49	1,299.64	1,380.69	1,467.42
Indonesia	890.60	858.95	936.96	1,024.00	1,109.96	1,193.19	1,291.66	1,427.88
Turkey	798.33	733.64	751.19	791.24	833.86	882.91	935.34	985.64
Holland	880.72	738.42	762.52	794.25	821.10	851.38	885.10	914.28
Saudi Arabia	753.83	653.22	618.27	659.66	699.64	741.40	778.26	813.00
Nigeria	574.00	490.21	537.97	620.95	682.77	710.28	734.70	759.42

**Table 2:** The Largest 20 Economies in the World and IMF projections (in million USD)

As Table 2 demonstrates, Turkey, along with India, Brazil and Mexico, is among the top 20 of the world's largest economies, yet the global economic rules are set based on the preferences of the U.S. and the European powers. Even though the G-20 emerged in 2003 to allow for the more effective participation of these newly emerging powers in the global economic order, the dominant rules are still those set by the post-1945 institutions. As American hegemonic leadership in economic governance is not likely to alter in the near future, there is not much possibility of a change in these governance patterns. Yet, the European powers-with the possible exception of Germany-do not seem to be playing a central role in global economics any more. Economic reconfigurations globally will lead to the formations of new economic coalitions, especially among the emerging powers. The 2008 economic crisis already created a permanent loss of confidence in Western-dominated liberal capitalism and alternative models of economic development have been put forward, most notably by China.

Turkey's role in this new economic balance needs to take into account that it will need to forge new economic ties with other emerging powers, but also with countries in Africa, such as Nigeria, which might be transformed into the economic powerhouses of the future. The changes in Turkish trade patterns over time also reflect this alteration of economic power, with Turkish trade increasingly directed toward other markets, rather than remaining bound to its traditional European trade partners. Table 3 demonstrates these changing patterns for Turkish trade.

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Rank	Country	Total exports (2009-2018)	% in Total exports
1	Germany	126,075,767	9.6
2	United Kingdom	91,659,536	5.8
3	Iraq	86,716,048	5.0
4	Italy	72,980,092	5.8
5	U.S.	59,151,968	3.2
6	France	57,638,614	6.1
7	UAE	50,141,960	2.8
8	Spain	46,814,638	2.8
9	Russia	44,853,657	3.1
10	Iran	40,940,646	2.0
11	Netherlands	33,442,254	2.1
12	Egypt	29,058,085	2.5
13	Saudi Arabia	28,679,682	1.7
14	Romania	28,292,809	2.2
15	Israel	26,879,447	1.5
16	Belgium	26,288,040	1.8
17	China	26,222,595	1.6
18	Poland	22,295,495	1.3
19	Bulgaria	19,734,407	1.4
20	Greece	15,591,231	1.6

**Table 3:** Turkish Exports by Country (2009-2018), in thousand USD  
Source: *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Trade*, <https://www.trade.gov.tr/>

What needs to be noted here is that Turkish trade has become increasingly varied,<sup>54</sup> yet the main pillars of economic governance, such as reliance on the American dollar as the key currency for trade, have remained unchanged. It is also partly for this reason that President Erdoğan stressed “Turkey’s willingness to trade with its top trade partners like China and Russia in local currencies instead of the U.S. dollar”<sup>55</sup> in order to reduce dependence on the American dollar.

Table 3 demonstrates that Turkey has multiple trade partners that no longer consist predominately of the European countries, and is increasingly diversifying its trade partners. For example, over time, countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Iraq have become more prominent as Turkey’s trade partners. This points to the possibility that Turkey’s economic and military position in the region will play a critical role in determining its grand strategy at the regional level.

Finally, demographic capabilities play a new role in altering global balances as a third pillar of governance transformation. It is possible that trade wars, military competition and demands for global representation will be affected by the changing global demographic balances. Table 4 demonstrates the global demographic balances and the changes expected in the near future.

Country	World Bank 2018 Population Data	World Bank 2030 Population Projection	Country	World Bank 2030 Population Projection
China	1,386,395,000	1,410,343,000	India	1,512,985,000
India	1,339,180,127	1,512,985,000	China	1,410,343,000
U.S.	325,719,178	355,695,000	U.S.	355,695,000
Indonesia	263,991,379	295,595,000	Indonesia	295,595,000
Brazil	209,288,278	225,472,000	Nigeria	264,068,000
Pakistan	197,015,955	244,248,000	Pakistan	244,248,000
Nigeria	190,886,311	264,068,000	Brazil	225,472,000
Bangladesh	164,669,751	185,585,000	Bangladesh	185,585,000
Russia	144,495,044	139,540,000	Mexico	147,540,000
Mexico	129,163,276	147,540,000	Ethiopia	139,620,000
Japan	126,785,797	120,238,000	Russia	139,540,000
Ethiopia	104,957,438	139,620,000	Philippines	125,372,000
Philippines	104,918,090	125,372,000	Congo	120,443,000
Egypt	97,553,151	119,746,000	Japan	120,238,000
Vietnam	95,540,800	106,284,000	Egypt	119,746,000
Germany	82,695,000	81,418,000	Vietnam	106,284,000
Congo	81,339,988	120,443,000	Iran	88,863,000
Iran	81,162,788	88,863,000	Turkey	88,417,000
Turkey	80,745,020	88,417,000	Tanzania	83,702,000
Thailand	69,037,513	69,626,000	Germany	81,418,000

**Table 4:** The Most Populous Countries in the World

It is the changes in demographic balance that need to be stressed as a key element of global transformation. While some of the most populous countries are economically well off, such as the U.S. and Germany, most of the populous countries are emerging powers and a substantial group are relatively poor, among them Bangladesh. As seen in Table 4, among the European powers, only Germany remains in the top 20 of the most populous countries. By 2030, Germany is expected to move out of this ranking. The bottom line is that emerging powers and developing countries will have a much higher share of the global population. Another significant finding here involves the proportional representation of African countries in global demographic dy-



namics. African countries, with the possible exception of Nigeria, are not expected to become global economic players; the fact that their populations are predicted to grow significantly, but without corresponding economic growth, carries potential risks for both regional and global instability. This prediction means that there is a need to develop new policies for the African continent. It might be precisely why Turkey's grand strategy is taking these changing dynamics into account; Turkey is investing in Africa both economically and diplomatically, and is much more involved there compared to the European powers or the U.S.

In short, these changing global dynamics-military, economic and demographic-provide new challenges for Turkey's foreign policy, and its grand strategy seems to be emerging in response to these challenges of global transformation. This is precisely why Turkish grand strategy focuses on increased demand for changes in global governance, in particular changes to the voting patterns and the exclusivity of permanent membership in the UN for only five great powers, and changes to the voting weights in the IMF. Turkey's recent call for abandoning overreliance on the American dollar as the main currency for international trade and its questioning of the objectivity of international economic institutions all fit into a larger pattern of challenging the rules of the game as dictated by the U.S. and the European countries. Turkish demands for altering the governance procedures in the UN with a reform on the voting system in the Security Council, the central role played by the U.S. dollar in international trade as well as a greater voice in all international matters are clearly part of the Turkish grand strategy. These demands also provide empirical support for the paper's second hypothesis about Turkey moving away from its traditional partners. Given the stall in the Turkish accession negotiations with the EU,<sup>56</sup> Turkey's growing distance from its traditional allies in the West is to be understood as a strategy to develop new ties and cooperation arrangements. The post-2016 developments in Turkish-EU relations have already demonstrated how and to what extent Turkey's future with the European countries will be shaped by the frozen accession process. As the EU is not prioritizing future enlargement at the moment, its relations with Turkey have suffered significantly. The 2015 refugee deal and the increasingly transactional relationship between Turkey and the EU indicate that a future scenario of Turkish membership in the EU is unlikely. Given the central role that Turkey's possible accession to the EU had played in shaping its alliance with the European countries, the deteriorating relationship between Turkey and the EU points to a possible falsification of Hypothesis 1. However, the litmus test for Turkish grand strategy, as well as its relations with the great powers, may be the challenges it faced in Syria.

The changes in Turkey's foreign policy demonstrate that its role in the Middle East region has evolved from a soft power that utilized mostly economic and diplomatic tools into a more belligerent, hard power ready to use its military capabilities. Such changes have brought into the forefront that Turkish grand strategy is creating visible divergences with the European states and the EU. Yet, despite such divergences, a cooperation between these parties is essential for stability in the Middle East and the protection of their mutual security interests. The crisis over Syria demonstrated the divergences in threat perceptions between Turkey and the EU, as well as the potential responses on how to deal with these threats for the promotion of regional stability. An analysis of global balances also include a comparison of Turkey's capabilities with those of the countries in its immediate vicinity. A possible conclusion here is that, with the exception of Iran and Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent Egypt, regional dynamics indicate that Turkey's relative standing in the region accords it a great power status. Turkey's military capabilities, field tested in Syria, play an important role in underlining its regional power status. On October 9, 2019, Turkey launched a military operation in Northern Syria that led to new question marks over Turkey's role in the Middle East, as well as its role in the region as a major power. With the stated aim of stabilizing Turkey's borders with Syria, the military operation had the potential to upset Turkey's relations with its European allies, the U.S., Russia and Iran. Nonetheless, given the perceived threats to Turkish border security coming from Syria, and the pressing need to enable the Syrian refugees in Turkey to safely return to their homes, the Turkish government endorsed the military action. Turkey's actions had a significant impact on its relations, especially with the EU; its reaction was swift, with the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini summarizing the EU's position on the Turkish operation:

Turkey has always been in this a key partner for the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and in the region. But Turkey's legitimate security concerns should be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not military action, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We urge all to always ensure the protection of civilians and unhindered, safe and sustainable humanitarian access throughout Syria.<sup>57</sup>

**The changes in Turkey's foreign policy demonstrate that its role in the Middle East region has evolved from a soft power that utilized mostly economic and diplomatic tools into a more belligerent, hard power ready to use its military capabilities.**

President Erdoğan responded, declaring: “If the EU labels this operation as an invasion, we will open the Turkish borders and allow the Syrian refugees to flood into the European territories.”<sup>58</sup> These statements from various Turkish and EU officials demonstrate the critical importance of border security, failed states, Kurdish autonomy, terrorism and Syrian refugees as the main issues that shape Turkey’s policy in the Middle East, its relations with the EU as well as the future of regional order/dynamics. At the same time, both the military operation and the subsequent European reactions provide an empirical verification for the paper’s second hypothesis that Turkey’s foreign policy choices have led to its further divergence from the traditional powers, its allies under the umbrella of the Western alliance.

The following questions are critical in finding a rationale for maintaining co-operation while enabling Turkey to play a larger role in regional stability: 1) What are the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East? 2) How does the Turkish role in the region bring the country into possible conflict with both global and regional players? 3) Is it feasible for the EU to bypass Turkey in advancing its interests in the Middle East? All of these questions could be assessed via an in-depth analysis of a Turkish grand strategy that revolves around Turkey’s possible role as a military actor, but also as an economic and humanitarian player, that takes into account the growing tensions in the region. Therefore, while on the one hand, Turkey aimed to stabilize its southern borders with Syria with its military endeavors, on the other hand, it relied on use of force as a deterrent for the future, signaling its intention to use force if threatened. The Turkish use of force in Northern Syria, therefore, is a robust illustration of Turkey’s grand strategy of using its capabilities in spite of opposition from its allies and the major powers. It provides significant empirical support for Hypothesis 3, that Turkish grand strategy involves risking global alienation when its own security interests require immediate action, which might involve military responses in some cases.

## Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated the power shifts at the global level that have had a significant impact on the basic premises of the liberal international order as established in the post-WWII order. As the traditional powers find themselves challenged by emerging players such as Turkey, one could argue that emerging multipolarity in global security governance constellations has created new opportunities for powers such as China and Russia, enabling them to expand their foreign policy influence over developing states and present

them with an alternative model. Among other emerging players, Turkey has enjoyed increased global visibility due to its geographical location, military and economic capabilities and its pronounced cultural ties with its former territories under the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's present capabilities indicate that it is among the key global players with robust sources of power. Most notably, as most of the major conflicts are emerging in Turkey's immediate vicinity, Turkish foreign policy is adjusting to these challenges by following a more assertive, independent line, one that is also based on the tools that its enhanced capabilities bring.

This paper assessed the formulation of a grand strategy in Turkey in response to these global challenges, and its foreign policy in terms of the changing global landscape and its own global aspirations. In particular, Turkey's global aspirations are tied to its capabilities; both militarily and economically, Turkey occupies a central place in global dynamics. In terms of its global aspirations, Turkey increasingly relies on tools of economic interdependence, trade and foreign direct investment. Among these tools, humanitarian aid has put Turkey on the global map as an aspirant player with a different role to play compared to traditional powers and donors. While the paper did not focus on these tools and Turkey's humanitarian aid, it needs to be noted that these are part and parcel of the Turkish grand strategy. Turkey's grand strategy is partly based on building a basis for further strengthening its power and concrete capabilities. The global transformation has changed the Turkish role from a reliable ally of the Western powers into a more assertive, visible global player, precisely due to its enhanced presence in global power constellations. Yet different trajectories for Turkey's role in global governance are possible, and it is still not fully clear where Turkey's grand strategy will lead. However, what is relatively clear is that the Cold War and post-Cold War dynamics based on a convergence of security interests between the U.S., Europe and Turkey no longer hold true in the same magnitude. Similarly, the global order is going through a transformation that requires greater cooperation among the great powers in dealing with the new challenges of nuclear proliferation, migration, environmental degradation and-unexpectedly-a new public health crisis with the coronavirus pandemic. There is, however, a lack of political will and action among the great powers-traditional and emerging-in formulating clear responses to deal

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with these challenges. Turkey's grand strategy sets it apart from other similar players in terms of its readiness to deal with the migration crisis and in addressing communication challenges between the Western world and the Middle Eastern countries. However, Turkey needs to be better integrated into the global governance structures to have its voice heard. This seems to be the key challenge facing Turkey; in an increasingly complex, uncertain and anarchic international order, its place in the world, the powers with which it allies and the threats it faces are highly ambiguous. In an increasingly complex global order, Turkey's grand strategy might involve the design of a strategic vision that builds on establishing multiple new partnerships with major powers, as well as middle players, on the basis of common material interests.

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