



Brief n. 51/November 2022

**Turkish-Indian relations:
from the Pakistan factor to the G20**

Selçuk Çolakoğlu

*Founding Director of the Turkish Center for Asia Pacific Studies
Faculty member of the Globalisation and Development Programme,
BNU-HKBU United International College*

Con il sostegno di



Fondazione
Compagnia
di San Paolo

Strained Relations during the Cold War (1947-1984)

Turkey recognized India right after its declaration of independence in 1947 and ambassadors were exchanged in 1948. The First Turkish-Indian Cultural Agreement was signed on June 29, 1951, in Ankara by Turkish Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü and Indian Education Minister Mevlana Ebulkelam Azad¹. The First Turkish-Indian Trade Agreement was signed on June 5, 1953, in New Delhi to promote bilateral commercial relations².

Nevertheless, Turkey and India could not develop a close relationship because of two main reasons. First, Turkey had usually sided with Pakistan supporting United Nations (UN) supervision on the Kashmir issue against India³. In return, Pakistan delivered full support to the Turkish position on the Cyprus issue.

Ankara expressed its view on the Kashmir issue in December 1955 and urged a peaceful solution under the framework of the UN Security Council's resolutions & decisions. During its view, Ankara described Pakistan as a "close friend" and "ally" and India as the "country with the cordial relationship"⁴. This statement revealed that Ankara has had a more Pakistan-leaning policy on the Kashmir issue without sacrificing its relations with India.

Secondly, Turkey and India were in different ideological camps during the Cold War. While Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, India had become a leading country in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India had also friendly relations with the Soviet Union, which was the main threat perception for Turkey. Indian support for the Greek position on the Cyprus issue under the solidarity of NAM was disturbing Ankara too⁵.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu called the participant states of the first Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955 to resist Soviet & communist aggression, while Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru underlined a more anti-West stance⁶. Nehru also strongly condemned in July 1955 the formation of the Baghdad Pact consisting of Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and the United Kingdom (UK)⁷.

The first high-level exchanges did not change the status of the relationship between the two countries significantly. The then Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes paid the first highest visit from Turkey to India in May 1958 and met with his Indian counterpart, Nehru⁸. Indian Prime Minister Nehru made a return visit to his Turkish counterpart in May 1960⁹. However, Nehru's visit to Turkey had bad timing, since it was paid just one week before the May 26th military coup against the Democrat Party government led by Prime Minister Menderes who was jailed and then executed one year later by the military junta. Nehru shared his Turkey visit impressions in Syria where his second stop was on June 1, 1960, after Turkey. Nehru said that India would not intervene in Turkey's domestic politics and that he would not expect any change in Turkish foreign policy¹⁰.

¹ "Türkiye-Hindistan Kültür Anlaşması (Turkey-India Cultural Agreement)", *Milliyet*, June 30, 1950.

² "Türkiye-Hindistan ticareti (Turkey-India trade)", *Milliyet*, June 6, 1953.

³ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Turkey-Pakistan Security Relations since the 1950s", *Middle East Institute*, November 25, 2013.

⁴ "Keşmir ihtilafına dair görüşümüz (Turkey's view on the Kashmir dispute)", *Milliyet*, December 20, 1955.

⁵ Tefik Rüştü Aras, "Türk-Hint bildirisi ve dış işleri bakanlarının rolü (Turkish-Indian foreign ministers' declaration)", *Milliyet*, January 19, 1968.

⁶ "Fatin R. Zorlu, Türk görüşünü açıkladı (Zorlu shared Turkish view)", *Milliyet*, April 22, 1955.

⁷ "Nehru, Bağdat Paktına şiddetle hücum etti (Nehru strongly condemned the formation of the Baghdad Pact)", *Milliyet*, July 12, 1955.

⁸ "Menderes, Nehru ile dün görüştü (Menderes met with Nehru yesterday)", *Milliyet*, May 2, 1958.

⁹ Mete Akyol, "Hariciye köşkündeki ziyafet (Official dinner at the foreign ministry)", *Milliyet*, May 24, 1960.

¹⁰ "Nehru, Türkiye'deki hadiseleri tahmin ettiğini söyledi (Nehru said he predicted the coup in Turkey)", *Milliyet*, June 2, 1960.

As a cooperative step, Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü decided to send 100 mountain artilleries to India in October 1962 during the Sino-Indian border clashes as solidarity against the People's Republic of China (PRC) but canceled his decision later because of Pakistan's objection. The Pak government claimed that India might use these weapons against Pakistan and Turkey's military aid to India would harm the Pak-Turkish friendly relations and violate common principles of CENTO, a military alliance formed after Iraq's leave from the Bagdad Pact¹¹. Turkey was then supporting the Republic of China in Taiwan from 1949 to 1971 as many Western countries did.

On the other hand, Turkey's 100 U.S.-made Patton tanks sold to Pakistan in November 1968 angered India with the allegation of changing the Pak-Indian military balance in South Asia. In July 1968 Indian Foreign Minister Dines Singh requested the United States to prevent Turkey to sell 100 U.S.-made tanks to Pakistan. However, the U.S. declined this Indian request¹².

Turkish Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil met with Indian Prime Minister Indra Gandhi in January 1968 and talked about the Cyprus issue to get Indian support¹³. In the joint declaration of the visit, both sides underlined parliamentary democracy as a common value and agreed to develop bilateral cooperation¹⁴.

Tevfik Rüştü Aras who was Turkish Foreign Minister during the government of the founding president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, from March 4, 1925, to November 11, 1938, wrote an op-ed on Çağlayangil's India visit. Aras claimed that Turkey could not develop a partnership at the expense of Pakistan which delivered unconditional support to Turkey including sending weapons, ammunition, and even forces if there was a breakout of the Turkish-Greek war on Cyprus¹⁵.

At the same time, Indian support for Cypriot President Makarios III under the solidarity of NAM was disturbing Ankara. As of 1968, Turkish-Indian relations were depending on adversities rather than cooperation mainly on Kashmir and Cyprus issues¹⁶.

Turkey also supported the Pakistani position at the First Islamic Summit Conference in Rabat in September 1968 to expel the Indian delegation from the meetings¹⁷. As a protest, the Indian government decided not to send a new ambassador to Ankara after the outgoing Indian top envoy left¹⁸. Nevertheless, then New Delhi revised this decision and appointed a new ambassador to Ankara in October 1969¹⁹.

Indian Foreign Minister Sawaran Singh made a visit to Turkey in November 1970 to talk with Turkish counterpart İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil to diminish the difference in the issues of Cyprus and Kashmir. Economic and trade relations were also on the table to deepen bilateral cooperation²⁰.

¹¹ "Pakistan yardıma itiraz etti (Pakistan objects Turkey's military aid to India)", *Milliyet*, November 4, 1962.

¹² "Türkiye'nin Pakistan'a tank satması Hindistan'ı kızdırdı (Turkey's tanks sale to Pakistan angered India)", *Milliyet*, November 22, 1968.

¹³ "Çağlayangil, İndra Gandhi ile görüştü (Turkish FM met with Indra Gandhi)", *Milliyet*, January 6, 1968.

¹⁴ "Türkiye-Hindistan görüşmeleri bitti (Turkey-India talks over)", *Milliyet*, January 10, 1968.

¹⁵ Tevfik Rüştü Aras, "Türk-Hint bildirisi ve dış işleri bakanlarının rolü (The role of foreign ministers in the Turkish-Indian declaration)", *Milliyet*, January 19, 1968.

¹⁶ Abdi İpekçi, "Türk-Hint ilişkileri (Turkish-Indian relations)", *Milliyet*, January 7, 1968.

¹⁷ Mehmet Ali Birand, "Hindistan ile ilişkiler (Turkey's relations with India)", *Milliyet*, October 1, 1969.

¹⁸ "Hindistan Ankara'ya şimdilik yeni elçi göndermiyor (As of now, India didnot send a new ambassador to Ankara)", *Milliyet*, October 17, 1969.

¹⁹ "Hint büyükleşisi: Türkiye'ye kırgın değiliz (Indian ambassador: We are not upset against Turkey)", *Milliyet*, October 23, 1969.

²⁰ "Hindistan dış bakanı geldi (Indian foreign minister came to Turkey)", *Milliyet*, November 3, 1970.

During Bangladesh's independence war in 1971, Turkish Prime Minister Nihat Erim called India to declare a truce with Pakistan and withdraw its troops from East Pakistan²¹. At the end of the independence war, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an initiation in India to release the captured Pakistani soldiers in Bangladesh²².

There were also efforts to improve bilateral ties during the 1970s. Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh said in December 1972 that India wanted to develop its relations with Turkey despite setbacks in the past²³. The Turkish-Indian trade agreement was signed in New Delhi in September 1973 by Turkish Trade Minister Ahmet Türköl and Indian counterpart D.P. Chattopadhyaya²⁴.

Indian Foreign Minister Y.B. Chavan made a visit to Turkey on 31 March-4 April 1976 to increase bilateral cooperation in the age of détente between Eastern and Western blocs²⁵. Indian Foreign Minister Y.B. Chavan met with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, President Fahri Korutürk, and the main opposition the Republican People's Party, or CHP leader Bülent Ecevit in April 1976. Turkish authorities claimed that Pakistan would not be disturbed by increasing Turkish-Indian cooperation and Turkey might play a facilitator in solving the problems between India and Pakistan²⁶.

Ankara made diplomatic initiations to participate in the NAM Colombo Summit in August 1976 as a guest country to make counterarguments against the Republic of Cyprus. In this regard, Ankara considered New Delhi an important capital to get access to the NAM²⁷.

Turkish Foreign Minister Gündüz Ökçün made a visit to India in July 1978 to share Turkey's views on the Cyprus issue with the Indian counterpart Atal Bihari Vajpayee and to seek Indian support for Turkey's observer status in the NAM²⁸. Ökçün's India visit was a reflection of the Turkish balancing strategy of other NATO members' pro-Greek Cyprus policy with the NAM and The Warsaw Pact. Leftist Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit from the CHP accelerated Ankara's anti-West balancing in its foreign policy strategy during his term from 1977 to 1979²⁹. Nevertheless, India continued to support the Republic of Cyprus's proposition in the NAM condemning Turkey's military involvement in the island³⁰. Turkey and India did not ignore their special relations with Pakistan and Cyprus to develop bilateral cooperation further.

Restoration of Turkish-Indian Relations (1985-2002)

The decline and then end of the Cold War after 1985 diminished the importance of the ideological difference between Turkey and India and urged them to increase exchanges for

²¹ "Erim: Hindistan derhal çekilmelidir (Erim: India must withdraw from East Pakistan immediately)", *Milliyet*, December 8, 1971.

²² "Pakistanlı esirlerin derhal iadesini istedik (Turkey call India to release captured Pakistani soldiers)", *Milliyet*, December 25, 1971.

²³ Sami Kohen, "Türkiye, barış için Asya'da faal olmalı (Turkey should be active for peace in Asia)", *Milliyet*, December 27, 1972.

²⁴ Ali Gevgilili, "Türk-Hint iktisadi yakınlaşması", *Milliyet*, September 29, 1973.

²⁵ Ali Gevgilili, "Hint'den Türkiye'ye (From India to Turkey)", *Milliyet*, April 1, 1976.

²⁶ "Ankara, Türk-Hint Teknolojik Anlaşması'na önem veriyor (Ankara give importance to the Turkish-Indian Technological Agreement)", *Milliyet*, April 4, 1976.

²⁷ Nilüfer Yalçın, "Türkiye'nin misafir olarak kabul edileceği umuluyor (Turkey hoped to be accepted as a guest to the NAM)", *Milliyet*, June 5, 1976.

²⁸ Somnath Dhar, "Dışişleri Bakanı Ökçün, 9 Temmuzda Hindistan'a gidiyor (Turkish FM Ökçün goes to India)", *Milliyet*, July 1, 1978.

²⁹ "Le Nouveau Journal: Türkiye yavaş yavaş Batı'dan kopuyor (Turkey is heading away from the West)", *Milliyet*, July 17, 1978.

³⁰ Mehmet Ali Birand, "Türkiye, Bağlantısızlar'ın Rum yanlısı kararını BM'de engellemek için çaba harcıyor (Turkey tries to prevent the NAM resolution on Cyprus in the UN)", *Milliyet*, November 14, 1979.

further economic cooperation despite remaining differences towards Pakistan. India had also gradually developed its relations with the United States³¹. While only two visits were paid between the leaders from 1947 to 1985, seven presidential & prime ministerial visits took place from 1986 to 2000 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Visits by Heads of State and Government between Turkey and India

Date	From Turkey to India	Date	From India to Turkey
May 1958	Prime Minister Adnan Menderes	May 1960	Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru
April 1986	Prime Minister Turgut Özal	July 1988	Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi
February 1989	President Kenan Evren	July 1993	President Shamker Dayal Sharma
March 1995	President Süleyman Demirel	September 1998	President Kocheril Raman Narayanan
April 2000	Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit	September 2003	Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee
November 2008	Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	October 2013	President Pranab Mukherjee
February 2010	President Abdullah Gül	November 2015	Prime Minister Narendra Modi
April-May 2017	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	October 2019 - Cancelled	Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Source: Made by the Author

Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi met in October 1985 in New York on the sidelines of the 40th-anniversary celebration of the UN³². Several months later, Prime Minister Özal had become the second Turkish leader to visit India in April 1986 with a very large delegation. Turgut Özal and Rajiv Gandhi agreed to develop bilateral political and economic relations despite the difference in Cyprus and Kashmir issues³³. India adopted a less critical stance against Turkey on Cyprus and urged support for a federal solution that Turkey desired to achieve on the island. In response, Özal showed Turkey's willingness to play a facilitator role between India and Pakistan. Indian Prime Minister Gandhi called for cooperation in the defense industry between the two countries. Özal also delivered a peace message from Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo to Gandhi during his visit to New Delhi. This showed how Ankara was careful to keep the balance between New Delhi and Islamabad³⁴.

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi paid a return visit to Turkey in July 1988 and talked with his counterpart Özal to intensify bilateral cooperation in economic fields. Gandhi also met former Prime Minister Ecevit³⁵.

³¹ James Chiriyankandath, "Realigning India: Indian Foreign Policy after the Cold War", *The Round Table*, Vol.93, No.374, April, 2004, p.208.

³² Turan Yavuz, "Türk-Hint ilişkilerinde sıcak rüzgâr (Warm wind in the Turkish-Indian relations)", *Milliyet*, October 25, 1985.

³³ İbrahim E. Tiryakioğlu, "Türkiye-Hindistan ilişkileri ve kopukluğun nedenleri (Turkey-India relations)", *Milliyet*, April 9, 1986.

³⁴ Nur Batur, "Hindistan'da 2 önemli sorun (Two significant issues between Turkey and India)", *Milliyet*, April 10, 1986.

³⁵ Nur Batur, "Gandhi Ankara'da (Gandhi arrives to Ankara)", *Milliyet*, July 18, 1988.

Turkish President Kenan Evren made the first presidential visit between the two countries in February 1989 and met with his Indian counterpart Ramaswamy Venkataraman and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The future of Afghanistan after the end of the Soviet invasion, Turkish-Greek relations, the Cyprus issue, and assimilation policies for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria were on the agenda of the Turkish president³⁶. Comparatives of assessment and shortcomings between Indian and Turkish democracies and developmental models were also popular debates in the late 1980s by the Turkish public³⁷.

The Turkish-Indian exchanges had intensified during the 1990s with some differences over the Kashmir issue and the Muslim minority in India in general. During the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers Meeting in August 1991, Ankara condemned India's use of force in Kashmir³⁸. Turkey also shared its sadness in December 1992 to the Hindu-Muslim intercommunal clashes and demolition of Babri Masjid³⁹.

Turkish State Minister Ekrem Ceyhun chaired the First Turkish-Indian Joint Economic Committee in Ankara in January 1992 with a special focus on cooperation in transportation, telecommunication, and agriculture⁴⁰.

Indian President Shamker Dayal Sharma made the first presidential visit to Turkey in July 1993 and talked with his Turkish counterpart Süleyman Demirel to cooperate in Central Asia and science & technology⁴¹.

Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem said in September 1997 that Turkey wanted to develop its economic relations with China, India, Russia, Japan, and the United States for diversification of foreign economic relations apart from the European Union (EU)⁴².

Speaker of Indian Lower House (Lok Sabha) Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi made a visit to Turkey in June 1998 and met with Turkish counterpart Hikmet Çetin. Balayogi said that Indian recent nuclear tests were not for aggression to anybody and that India always wanted to keep a good relationship with Turkey⁴³. Just three months later, Indian President Kocheril Raman Narayanan made a visit to Turkey in September 1998 and met his Turkish counterpart Demirel⁴⁴. Turkey, as the chair of the UN conference on disarmament, expressed concerns about nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in 1998⁴⁵.

Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, who is an admirer of Indian philosophy and translator of Tagore's Gitanjali from English into Turkish, made a visit to India in April 2000. Ironically, Ecevit was also the Turkish Prime Minister who delivered military intervention order to Cyprus in 1974⁴⁶.

Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer made bilateral talks in June 2002 with both Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayii on the sidelines

³⁶ "Evren Hindistan'da (Evren arrives in India)", *Milliyet*, February 23, 1989.

³⁷ Mümtaz Soysal, "En zor demokrasi (the democracy faced with the challenges)", *Milliyet*, April 15, 1986.

³⁸ Zafar Imam, "OIC and the Kashmir issue: Options for India," *International Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2002.

³⁹ Sema Emiroğlu and İskender Songur, "Türkiye'den Bosna ve Hindistan atağı (Turkey's initiations on Bosnia and India)", *Milliyet*, December 10, 1992

⁴⁰ "Türkiye'yi 2000'li yıllara yeni sanayileşme stratejisi taşıyabilir", *Milliyet*, January 7, 1992.

⁴¹ "Türkiye'ye ilk ziyaret (The First Presidential visit to from India)", *Milliyet*, July 17, 1993.

⁴² "Hedefimiz Çin ve Hindistan (China and India are Turkey's target countries)", *Hürriyet*, September 4, 1997.

⁴³ "Hintli konuk (Indian guest)", *Hürriyet*, June 30, 1998.

⁴⁴ "Atatürkten çok etkilendik (We are impressed a lot from Atatürk)", *Hürriyet*, September 18, 1998.

⁴⁵ "Conference on Disarmament Hears Calls for India and Pakistan to Stop Their Nuclear Tests and to Accede to Non-Proliferation Treaties", United Nations, Department of Public Information, DCF/336, 3 June 1998.

⁴⁶ Muharrem Sarıkaya, "Ecevit'in rüyası Hindistan Delhi (Ecevit's dream country India)", *Hürriyet*, April 2, 2000.

of the CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia) of the Almaty Summit in Kazakhstan⁴⁷.

Despite some differences, the Turkish-Indian cooperation mood had become stronger from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. Ankara also made a critical revision to its traditional stance on Kashmir—which advocates a solution to the conflict based on UN supervision—and began to call for a bilateral settlement of the dispute in 2000⁴⁸. This change caused an upswing in Turkish-Indian relations during Prime Minister Ecevit's visit to India in 2000⁴⁹.

Developing relations between India, Turkey, and Israel paved the way to form a Triple Entente, which would be a “secular democratic camp” from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean in the aftermath of 9/11.⁵⁰ It was expected that the United States would deploy an anti-ballistic missile system in the Triple Entente⁵¹. However, the rapidly changing regional and international environment after 2003 kept this initiation immature.

Multidimensional Turkish-Indian Relations (2003-2019)

Deepening globalization and the rise of international trade & business have provided new global engagements for both India and Turkey as “emerging economies” in the 2000s⁵². India and Turkey joined the newly formed Group of Twenty (G20), which has envisaged another international forum for Ankara and New Delhi to interact with each other more often. India and Turkey had also enjoyed their increasing international roles in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, which delivered more importance to “emerging powers”. India joined another grouping in 2009 namely BRICS together with Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa as “emerging non-Western economies”, while Turkey participated in MIKTA in 2013 consisting of “rising middle powers” including Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, and Australia⁵³.

India has also had remarkable success in economic growth in the last two decades. While India was the 13th largest economy with \$477 billion in GDP in 2000, it gradually increased to the 6th largest economy with a \$2.9 trillion GDP in 2021. Turkey, on the other, was 20th largest economy with \$273 billion GDP in 2000, reached 17th rank with \$950 billion GDP in 2013, but then declined to 21st rank with \$796 billion GDP in 2021⁵⁴.

Table 2. Turkey's trade with South Asian countries since 2000

Countries / Years	1970 \$ millions	1980 \$ millions	1990 \$ millions	2000 \$ millions	2010 \$ millions	2021 \$ millions
India	2	8	140	505	4016	9241
Pakistan	5	22	132	135	998	1088
Bangladesh	East Pak.	5	23	52	1015	1055

Source: TurkStat

⁴⁷ “Sezer Müşerref ve Vajpayii ile görüştü (Sezer met with Musharraf and Vajpayii)”, *Milliyet*, June 4, 2002.

⁴⁸ Ishtiaq Ahmad, "Turkey and Pakistan: Bridging the Growing Divergence," *Perceptions*, September-November 2000.

⁴⁹ Jyotsna Singh, “Ecevit in landmark India trip”, *BBC News*, March 30, 2000.

⁵⁰ P. R. Kumaraswamy, “Israel-India Relations: Seeking Balance and Realism”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol.10, No.1-2, October-December 2004, p.267.

⁵¹ Ilan Berman, “Israel, India, and Turkey: Triple Entente?”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.9, No.4, Fall 2002.

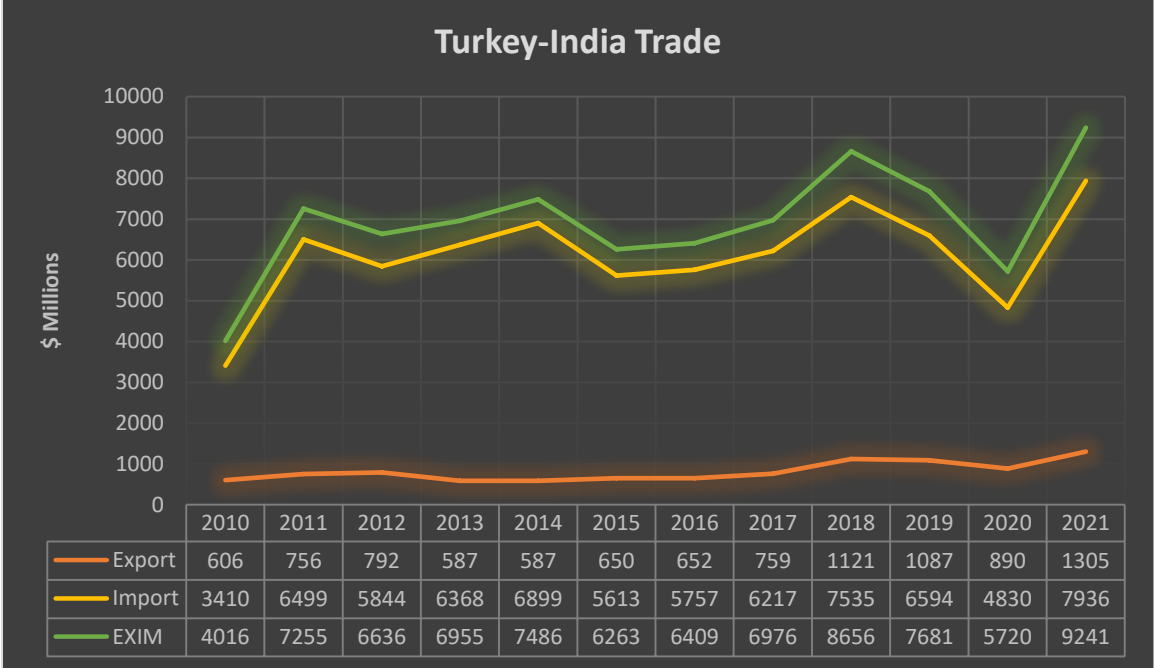
⁵² Daniel M. Kliman, “The West and Global Swing States”, *The International Spectator*, 2012, pp. 53-64.

⁵³ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "MIKTA in Global Governance as a Middle Power Grouping: A Turkish Perspective", in *MIKTA: Current Situation and The Way Forward*, Retno Marsudi (ed.), Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp.51-72.

⁵⁴ IMF World Economic Outlook, 2022.

The Turkish-Indian trade also flourished in the 2000s. The bilateral trade volume soared from \$505 million in 2000 up to \$9.2 billion in 2021 and India has become Turkey’s second largest trade partner in East Asia after China. India’s trade volume has become much higher than Turkey’s two other traditional regional partners - Pakistan and Bangladesh (see Table 2). In addition, Turkey had a huge trade deficit with India around \$6.6 billion in 2021 (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Turkey’s Trade with India (2011-2021)



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Preparations for a foreign trade agreement (FTA) have been in progress since 2008, but negotiations are yet to be commenced. 150 companies with Indian capital have invested in Turkey around \$125 million while Turkish investments in India stand nowadays at \$223 million.

Turkey's first nanosatellite "ITUpSAT1" was sent to space on a PSLV C-14 rocket by the Indian Space Research Organization in September 2009⁵⁵. Turkey is keen to expand further cooperation in space technology with India. Despite increasing people-to-people exchanges in recent years, the number of Indian tourists to Turkey was around 200,000, while Turkish visitors to India remained at around 40,000 in 2019⁵⁶. The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed further deepening tourism cooperation for several years. The Indian government also put an ambitious plan in 2017 for a Dhaka – Kolkata – Delhi – Islamabad – Tehran - Istanbul trans-continental container train to ease the connectivity between India and Turkey for further trade, but it has not been realized because of the sporadic tensions between India and Pakistan⁵⁷.

Depending on the flourishing partnership, Ankara preferred to compartmentalize its economic relations with New Delhi and its political alliance with Islamabad. Although Ankara has reiterated support for a solution for the Kashmir issue within the framework of the UN Security Council’s (UNSC) resolutions, which was a favorable stance for Islamabad, Ankara

⁵⁵ “India-Turkey Relations”, Embassy of India in Ankara. www.indembassyankara.gov.in/page/relation

⁵⁶ Sorwar Alam, “Indian, Turkish partnership can evolve new global order”, Anadolu Agency, January 16, 2020.

⁵⁷ Avishek G Dastidar, “India takes lead to run freight train from Dhaka to Istanbul”, The Indian Express, March 3, 2017.

began to tone down its approach not to bother New Delhi. As New Delhi was also eager to open a new page for India's relations with Turkey, a road map between Indian and Turkish foreign ministries was finalized in August 2016 to strengthen the bilateral dialogue⁵⁸.

Ankara and New Delhi had tried to find leverage for international cooperation too. Turkey advocates for a mechanism that would allow Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) non-signatories to become Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) members like India and Pakistan⁵⁹. Turkey supports India to become a permanent member of the UNSC and proposes 20 UNSC members, 10 of whom can become members by rotation for a period of two years⁶⁰. Turkey and India have also shared a set of common policies aimed at the stabilization and state-building process of Afghanistan, following the NATO intervention in 2001⁶¹. However, the Taliban's takeover of the Afghan government in August 2021 has dramatically diminished possible Turkish - Indian cooperation areas in Afghanistan.

The 2019 Kashmir Crisis and Afterwards

Since India abrogated Article 370 of its constitution, which gave Jammu and Kashmir a special status, in August 2019, Ankara has been raising the Kashmir issue at different platforms. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan first raised the issue at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2019. As a counter step, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded by holding meetings with the president of the Republic of Cyprus and prime ministers of Armenia and Greece on the sidelines of the UNGA. Then, New Delhi canceled Modi's planned visit to Turkey in October 2019 and a lucrative \$2.3 billion naval deal with a Turkish defense company. In view of growing defense ties between Turkey and Pakistan, India cut its defense exports to Turkey and made a \$40 million defense deal with Armenia⁶². India also condemned Turkey's military operation in Northern Syria in October 2019⁶³.

When Erdoğan spoke about Kashmir again at his address to the Pakistani parliament in February 2020, New Delhi responded by issuing a strong demarche to Turkey's envoy to India, stating that Ankara should not interfere in India's internal matters⁶⁴. Erdoğan again raised the Kashmir issue at the UNGA during his speeches in 2020, 2021, and 2022⁶⁵.

There are also two other ongoing divergences between Ankara and New Delhi in recent years. First, after declaring the Gülen Movement as a terrorist organization in Turkey in May 2016⁶⁶, the Turkish government put pressure on the Indian government to close the Gülen schools in Delhi, South Delhi, Hyderabad, and Kolkata. However, Indian authorities have demurred, demanding evidence from Ankara that would hold up in court⁶⁷. Second, New Delhi has an increasing concern that the Turkish government intends to infiltrate the populous

⁵⁸ Rahul Kulshreshth, "Turkey-India cooperation significant for further relations", *Daily Sabah*, April 28, 2017.

⁵⁹ Rakesh Sood, "India-Turkey relations: Turkish delight turned sour", *The Hindu*, May 8, 2017.

⁶⁰ Ramesh Ramachandran, "India, Pak both have right to aspire to NSG: Erdogan", *Wion*, April 29, 2017.

⁶¹ Selçuk Çolakoğlu and Mehmet Yegin, "Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's Contribution", *USAK-NATO Report*, September 2014.

⁶² Niranjana Marjani, "India's Quiet Responses Against Turkey's Diplomatic Offensive", *The Diplomat*, March 7, 2020.

⁶³ Pushkar Banakar, "India - Turkey relations: Ties strained over Kashmir issue but not sour", *The New Indian Express*, February 16, 2020.

⁶⁴ Shishir Upadhyaya, "India Wins Defense Deal with Armenia in Bid to Chasten Turkey", *The Diplomat*, March 18, 2020.

⁶⁵ Niranjana Marjani, "India and Türkiye Still Searching for a Breakthrough", *The Diplomat*, September 24, 2022.

⁶⁶ "Turkey officially designates Gülen religious group as terrorists," *Reuters*, May 31, 2016.

⁶⁷ Ketan Mehta, "Turkey's India Outreach: Possibilities and Challenges", *ORF Issue Brief*, No. 276, January 2019.

Muslim minority in India and use the Indian Muslim network in Pakistan's favor⁶⁸. New Delhi also claims Turkey has become the launch pad for Pakistani propaganda over Kashmir⁶⁹.

The Modi- Erdoğan bilateral meeting on September 16, 2022, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Samarkand Summit, was a great step toward warming up bilateral relations again. The two countries' Foreign Ministers, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, met on September 21, 2022, at the margins of the UNGA in New York despite Erdoğan's remarks on Kashmir at the UNGA. Nevertheless, this time Erdoğan did not condemn India for violence and said something that Saudi Arabia and Iran also did. Depending on the Turkish tone down on the Kashmiri issue, New Delhi has maintained complete silence this time⁷⁰.

Currently, Ankara and New Delhi are eager to reset their relations at least at the economic level. The bilateral trade volume hit a historical high of \$9.2 billion in 2021. There are mega tenders pending normalization of relations like the contract of naval shipbuilding in India worth \$2.3 billion and a project to build a tunnel in India's Leh-Manali highway⁷¹. Indian businesses and tourists have been gradually expanding their presence in Turkey. The recent economic bottleneck and strategic isolation in the Middle East have pushed the Turkish government to normalize its turbulent relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a year's time. Ankara and New Delhi are also on the same page in the Russia-Ukraine War, despite Turkey's NATO membership and India's strategic partnership in the Quad with Australia, Japan, and the United States. While both countries pay respect to the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Turkey and India have so far refrained to join the Western sanctions against Russia and continued to buy Russian oil and gas.

India has assumed the Chairmanship of the SCO and the Presidency of the G20 from December 2022. Particularly, the Indian G20 presidency will likely intensify government-to-government contacts between New Delhi and Ankara. Maximizing their economic benefits and minimizing the global challenges because of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war are likely new reasons that have pushed Ankara and New Delhi to a fresh realistic start for their relationship.

Concluding Remarks

The Pakistan factor has always been dominant in Turkish-Indian relations. Continuous Pak-Indian tension for decades has curtailed a consistent relationship between Ankara and New Delhi⁷². The ideological difference (pro-West vs Non-Allied) between Turkey and India in the Cold War is over. India and the United States have developed a strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.

The G20 and international trends push Turkey and India to make more cooperation as emerging economies in the post-2008 global financial crisis. However, the lack of a functional strategic road map for Turkish-Indian relations has been preventing them to go further for bilateral & global cooperation.

⁶⁸ Abhinandan Mishra, "Questions arise about Turkey's role in backing anti-India activities", *Sunday Guardian Live*, January 8, 2022.

⁶⁹ Sheela Bhatt, "Pakistani propaganda on Kashmir has a new launchpad — Erdogan's Turkey", *The Print*, June 20, 2022.

⁷⁰ Nayanima Basu, "After ice-breaking meet with Modi, Erdogan takes mellower tone on Kashmir at UN", *The Print*, September 21, 2022.

⁷¹ Prakash Nanda, "3 Key Reasons Why Turkey Is Keen To Reset Its Ties With India & Keep Its Pro-Pakistan, Pro-Kashmir Sentiments On Backburner", *The EurAsian Times*, September 25, 2022.

⁷² Selçuk Çolakoglu, "Turkey and India: Natural Allies?", *Middle East Institute*, August 11, 2020.

The deepening groupings between Pakistan-China and India-U.S. may pose more risk for Turkey's policies towards South Asia. So far, Turkey can hardly keep a balance between Pakistan and India without harming its bilateral relations with both. Furthermore, the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 and more importantly the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022 have created new strategic ambiguities in Eurasia. Turkey and India likely prefer to keep dialogue channels open during this turbulent time and try to increase economic partnership as much as possible.