Exploring the Roles of Türkiye and Spain in Shaping Global Governance in the United Nations Throughout the 2000s

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative examination of Türkiye and Spain as middle powers within the context of global governance, focusing on their role in the United Nations (UN) in the 2000s through their normative initiatives and behavioral contributions in an era characterized by the crisis of liberal international order and its norms and institutions While previous studies have predominantly centered on their roles in the UN via the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, a significant gap exists in the literature regarding a conceptual and empirical assessment of Türkiye and Spain's contributions to global governance, especially their policies within the UN framework. This study will explore their participation in the UN as middle powers, critically examining their initiatives and statements. By doing that, we aim to decipher their common definitions and approaches to international issues, including their perspectives on UN reform as reflected in their speeches at the UN General Assembly. This paper aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of their role as middle powers in advancing global governance initiatives and thereby identify common ground for collaboration in various other global governance institutions.

Keywords: Türkiye, Spain, Middle Powers, United Nations, Global Governance.

Introduction

Middle powers have become pivotal actors in global governance, mainly through their engagement with multilateral institutions like the United Nations (UN). Defined not solely by material capacity but also by behavioral and normative contributions, middle powers uniquely foster collective solutions to global challenges. This study examines the roles of Türkiye and Spain as middle powers within the UN framework, focusing on their normative and behavioral contributions to issues such as security, economic development, climate change, migration, gender equality, and UN reform. By situating their actions within the broader discourse on middle power diplomacy, this paper aims to understand better the behavioral and institutional contributions to global governance as well as possible areas of collaboration.

While contested, the concept of middle power is often understood through a combination of positional, behavioral, and identity-based approaches (Cooper & Parlar Dal, 2016). Traditionally seen as a Western middle power, Spain has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to multilateralism, drawing on its European Union (EU) membership and NATO affiliation to advance stability, human rights, and sustainable development (Soler & Barbé, 2021). However, Spain's initiatives like the Alliance of Civilizations and active engagement during the UNSC non-permanent membership demonstrate the nuances of Spain's middle power role. Türkiye represents a more complex and evolving case, blending normative leadership with critiques of the existing international order. Türkiye's material, behavioral, and normative initiatives highlight its role as an "awkward power" challenging conventional middle power categorization (Abbondanza & Wilkins, 2022).

The paper is organized into four sections. First, the theoretical framework of the middle power role is discussed, outlining the defining characteristics and behaviors of middle powers in global governance. The second section examines Spain's contributions to the UN by analyzing both its discourse and initiatives in climate action, sustainable development, gender equality, peacebuilding, and UN reform efforts. The third section explores Türkiye's role, emphasizing its dual identity as a participant in and critic of the international system, as seen in its mediation initiatives and reformist rhetoric in the UN platform. Finally, the paper considers the potential for collaboration between Türkiye and Spain, particularly in areas of shared interest like preventive measures, mediation, migration, and UN reform, considering the limitations of their middle power role. This study enhances our understanding of their contributions to global governance as well as to the broader literature on the diversity, adaptability, and nuances of middle-power diplomacy. By comparing Türkiye and Spain, we aim to contribute to the ongoing debate concerning the variability within middle power behaviors and identities. In doing so, methodologically, the paper first reviews the literature on Turkish and Spanish middle power roles and then comparatively analyses the Spanish and Turkish leaders' UNGA opening speech-

es throughout the 2000s. The findings highlight how these two nations, despite their differing geopolitical contexts, leverage their middle power status to navigate and influence the shifting dynamics of the international order. Through this analysis, the study reveals once again that the middle power role is not given, but changes based on the state's specific preferences on foreign policy. It attempts to decipher Türkiye and Spain's contributions to global governance and the broader implications for middle-power diplomacy.

Middle Powers in Global Governance

The concept of the middle power remains contested, with scholars traditionally exploring it through three primary lenses: position, identity, and behavior. (Carr 2014) Most scholars have accepted a definition of emerging middle powers based not only on their material (positional) power but also on behavioral and ideational aspects (Chapnick 1999; Robertson 2017; Cooper and Dal 2016; Dal and Kurşun 2016; Oğuz Gök and Karadeniz, 2020). Middle powers are often identified and categorized based on status, actions, and self-perception. As a result, many researchers emphasize the importance of examining middle powers' conceptual and behavioral traits when determining what defines them. A key characteristic of a "genuine" middle power lies in its ability to independently catalyze creative diplomacy, acting as a "broker" of innovative ideas and policy solutions advanced through multilateral approaches initiative that might otherwise remain absent from the international agenda without the advocacy of middle powers. Middle powers are recognized not only by their position in the global power hierarchy but also by their conduct, values, and the tangible influence of their diplomatic efforts. (Beeson et al.,2020) Therefore, a cornerstone of middle power theory is the concept of "good international citizenship" (Cooper 2011, 319). The concept of "good international citizenship" refers to the behavior of states that prioritize multilateral cooperation, respect for international norms, and active contributions to global problem-solving. (Evans, 2013). The characteristic method of middle power diplomacy is "niche diplomacy", which means concentrating state capacities

in specific areas. By doing that, these countries may 'punch above their weight' within international organizations like the UN (Freedman, 2022).

The concept of middle power as a potentially significant actor in international affairs emerged in political discourse and academic literature after World War I. Still, it gained greater prominence following Canada's and Australia's actions in the post-1945 period. During the Cold War, middle powers primarily aligned themselves with the "rules-based" international order, functioning as catalysts within the UN-led multilateral system (Cooper & Dal, 2016). Cooper and Dal (2017) examine middle-power diplomacy across three distinct phases. The first phase in the post-1945 era involved middle powers engaging in global governance through multilateral initiatives within the UN framework. The second phase was marked by the ad hoc activism of countries like Canada and Australia, particularly in specialized areas such as disarmament and peacekeeping. The third phase emerged with the rise of informal institutional diplomacy, exemplified by the formation and activities of the G20 (Cooper and Dal, 2017).

Recently, Abbondanza and Wilkins (2022) introduced the concept of "Awkward Powers" to capture better the material, behavioral, and identity-based nuances and differences in middle powers. According to the authors, awkward power is "a state with either a contested or a neglected international status, matched by substantial capabilities and influence, therefore defying neat categorizations onto the conventional power hierarchies" (Abbondanza and Wilkins, 2022, p:280). Based on the various case studies in their edited volume, Abbondanza and Wilkins (2022) demonstrate that from a liberal perspective, awkward powers frequently exhibit unconventional or non-conformist behaviors that set them apart from traditional great and middle power frameworks. In other words, their actions on the international stage do not always align with established expectations. Furthermore, from a social constructivist perspective, awkward powers experience a noticeable disconnect between how they view their status, identity, and role in the global system and how others perceive them. (Abbondanza and Wilkins, 2022)

A Traditional Western Middle Power? Spain at the UN

Scholarly analyses of contemporary Spain broadly concur that the nation's transformation, including its foreign policy evolution, has been shaped by three key processes: democratization, European Union membership, and the modernization of Spanish society (See. Mesa, 1988; Barbé, 1999; Powell, 2000; Torreblanca, 2001; Pereira, 2010 cited in Soler E., & Barbé, E. (2021).

Former great power (Abbondanza,2020), now conceptualized as a middle power, Spain has adopted a proactive multilateralism strategy, significantly bolstered by its post-1975 democratic transition and membership in both the European Union (EU) and NATO (Moreno, 2014, p.58). One of the first decisions made by Spain's democratic government after the Franco era was to apply for membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in July 1977 and join the Council of Europe in November of the same year. Spain's dedication to multilateralism stems from two main factors. First, Spain identifies itself as a middle power with global interests, leveraging soft power by promoting international norms and institutions, with the EU serving as a key platform to advance its interests and values. Second, Spain's historical context, particularly the influence of 19th and 20th-century governments, has played a pivotal role in its identity. The loss of its final colonies in the Americas and the Pacific in 1898 sparked a profound intellectual debate on overcoming the ensuing national crisis (Soler and Barbé, 2021, p.16).

Spanish foreign policy highly relied on coalition building in both its region and beyond in the post-Cold War era. Spanish governments have consistently defined the country as a "middle power anchored in Europe" and have successfully integrated their foreign policy priorities into European frameworks. One of the prominent examples of this process is the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known as the "Barcelona Process", which Spain launched in 1995. Indeed, this process aimed to ensure peace, stability, and economic cooperation among the countries around the Mediterranean (Lecha and Morillas 2020, p.6).3 In the Union for the Mediterranean initiative launched in 2008, Spain played an active role and functioned as a bridge between European countries and the southern neighbors of the Mediterranean (Moreno 2014, p.6). Spain has also actively used diplomatic and economic instruments to increase its influence in the Maghreb region, especially by strengthening its relations with Morocco and Algeria. Therefore, with the end of the Cold War, Spain has increasingly focused on the Southern flank of Europe and Latin America. It has positioned itself as a driving force for interregional cooperation, advancing effective multilateralism policies and leveraging its role as a middle power (Lecha and Morillas 2020, pp. 15–16). A key component of Spain's multilateral diplomacy is its active engagement with international organizations like the EU, UN, and NATO. Spanish diplomats strive to enhance the country's influence by securing prominent roles within these institutions. Javier Solana's tenure as NATO Secretary General and later as the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy exemplifies Spain's significant contribution to shaping international security policies (Moreno, 2014, p.56).

As a middle power, Spain has become increasingly active in its foreign policy, adopting niche diplomacy strategies. The country has cultivated a profile as a solidaristic actor that prioritizes human rights area within the United Nations. Domestic transformations have significantly influenced Spanish diplomacy in women's and LGBT rights under Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2011). Spain has actively engaged with the Human Rights Council on issues related to gender equality, including Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. In a 2019 address to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (in office since 2018) underscored Spain's commitment to multilateralism and a "feminist approach to foreign policy". Additionally, he highlighted Spain's efforts to advance the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and its ambition to join the group of leading nations in combating climate change (Soler and Barbé 2021, pp. 15–16).

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative, jointly developed by Spain and Türkiye, highlights Spain's middle power role in multilateral diplomacy through coalition building. By fostering intercultural dialogue, the initiative aligns closely with Spain's aspiration to promote global peace through multilateralism and a foreign policy approach to peaceful interactions among diverse cultures (Moreno, 2014, p.59). Spain's commitment to multilateralism is further evident in its active participation in UN institutions, having served five terms as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and twice on the Human Rights Council. Additionally, Spain ranks as the 10th most significant contributor to the UN budget and the 11th largest to the Peace Operations budget (Soler and Barbé, 2021, p.15-16).

Spain's middle power role was also visible in its regional coalition-building efforts and strong support for multilateral initiatives for peace. The Maghreb region has concentrated on fostering opportunities for cooperation, particularly in addressing shared challenges such as migrant flows and drug trafficking. (Moreno 2014, p. 53). Not only in Latin America but also in Africa, there are many references to coalition-building and partnership for peace: "Spain has launched a strategic partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and continues to strengthen its ties with other regional organizations in Africa (A/68/PV.10,2013).[1] Spain has also sought to project an image of peaceful foreign policy by promoting dialogue and cooperation with the Middle East. Diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives have primarily shaped its contributions to the Middle East peace process. Notably, Spain hosted the Madrid Conference in 1991, a significant milestone in advancing the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conference served as a critical starting point for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and laid the groundwork for the Oslo Process. Although Spain was not directly involved in the Oslo Process, its active role within the European Union and its contributions to the Madrid Conference indirectly yet significantly influenced the peace process (Lecha and Morillas 2020, pp. 4–5). Regarding the Middle East, Spain highlighted on every possible occasion the need for resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict through peaceful means and dialogue. (A/61/PV.15,2006) [2]

An Analyses of UN General Assembly speeches demonstrate that, since 2000, Spanish policymakers have consistently underscored their commitment to multilateralism in their speeches at the United Nations (UN):

> *"Effective multilateralism is the method that will enable us to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century" (A/65/PV.17,2010).[3]*

The main themes Spain addresses in its UN General Assembly General Debate Statements from 2000 to 2023 are various, focusing on key issues such as security, economic development, climate change, migration, gender equality, and global health crises. An analysis of Spain's speeches at the UN from 2000 to 2005 reveals a predominant focus on international terrorism and economic development. These priorities were significantly shaped by the global repercussions of the 9/11 attacks and the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. Additionally, the global economic crisis of 2001 heightened the salience of financial issues in international discourse. As a middle power, Spain emphasized the critical role of humanitarian assistance and the necessity of robust peacebuilding efforts during this period.

Moreover, its speeches frequently advocated for UN reform, underscoring the need to adapt the Organization to address contemporary global challenges more effectively. Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, Spain's UN speeches were centered on global terrorism and economic development, underscoring the need for enhanced international security and collaboration in combating terrorism. Spain supported international interventions in conflict zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq, advocating for a security-driven multilateral approach. In the post-2003 period, the focus shifted to the need for financial aid in underdeveloped countries, highlighting economic development

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1 Statement by Mr. Rajoy Brey at the UN General Assembly 10th plenary meeting September 2013

2 Statement by Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) at the UN General Assembly 15th plenary meeting September 2006
3 Statement by Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé at the UN General Assembly 17th plenary meeting September 2010

as a key driver of global prosperity. Spain stressed that the UN should be central in coordinating such efforts. In the last two decades, Spanish policymakers focused on the transition to renewable energy, combating poverty, climate action, and promoting gender equality and human rights in its terms, among others. Spain also emphasized that empowering women is a matter of rights and a strategic priority for development.

Climate change was among the key agendas, niche areas, in Spain's speeches at the United Nations, emphasizing the importance of achieving sustainable development goals; Spanish policymakers placed significant emphasis on climate change and sustainable development by actively supporting the UN's efforts to address climate change, paving the way for the Paris Agreement arguing that "We do not need any more words; it is time for action" (A/64/PV.5,2009).[4] In line with this discourse, during 2000's, Spain promoted renewable energy projects and reductions in carbon emissions, referring to "The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a point of reference to provide a regime that defines realistic solutions and responds to our concerns and priorities. "(A/65/PV.17, 2010)[5]

Spain emphasized its position as a multilateral actor within the international system on every occasion.

> *"As multilateral actors, we know that many of our difficulties and problems will not be resolved through voluntarism or national action. Our action must be on a global scale if we are to effectively address them in all their complexity — particularly the new challenges facing the international community that hinder the promotion of a more just and equitable globalization. "(A/61/PV.15,2006)[6]*

One should underline here that Spain refers to its historical heritage of a great power identity. Thus, it justifies its quest for a more active role in global governance in general and the UN, specifically "as a country that has left its mark in world history". Therefore, according to Spanish rulers, "the expectations and demands on our external action must be high."[7]

In line with that, Spanish Non-permanent membership in the UNSC during the 2015-2016 term was very fruitful in producing concrete outcomes. Adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 marked a turning point in Spain's concrete achievement during the Spanish presidency in the UNSC. The most significant concrete outcomes of Spain's non-permanent membership in the UNSC during the 2015-2016 term were the agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.[8] Spain also made clear that it will continue to follow and support norms such as R2P and will continue its efforts to strengthen the norm through preventive measures:

> *"We will continue to strengthen the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle and actively participate in the Group of Friends and the Global Network of R2P Focal Points." [9]*

Regarding the UN Security Council, Spain suggested something unique called the "Toledo Format," which emphasizes the importance of the contribution of Security Council non-members to its work:

"We will limit ourselves to talking about just one theme: working as a team in the Security Council. It is a matter of promoting the approach that has come to be known as the Toledo format, about the Spanish city in which, during the Middle Ages, there flourished

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4 Statement by Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero at the UN General Assembly 5th plenary meeting September 2009
5 Statement by Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé at the UN General Assembly 17th plenary meeting September 2010
6 Statement by Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) at the UN General Assembly 15th plenary meeting September 2006

7 Spain in the United Nations Security Council: A Comprehensive Review 2015-2016
https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/PublicacionesOficiales/2017_BALANCE%20CSNNUU%20ENG.pdf
8 Spain in the United Nations Security Council: A Comprehensive Review 2015-2016
https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/PublicacionesOficiales/2017_BALANCE%20CSNNUU%20ENG.pdf
9 Spain in the United Nations Security Council: A Comprehensive Review 2015-2016
https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/PublicacionesOficiales/2017_BALANCE%20CSNNUU%20ENG.pdf

a spirit of collaboration and exchange among the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim cultures... The Security Council should not be the sum of 15 individual Member States, and much less one of 5+10.... Spain believes that the initiatives various Member States have led from different regions, cultures and political perspectives bring important added value."[10] (S/PV.7740)

In brief, Spanish policymakers have consistently used its UN platform to advocate for multilateralism and its role as a middle power in addressing global challenges. Themes such as security, climate change, migration, gender equality, terrorism, and economic development have been central to Spain's international agenda. Spain has aimed to reinforce its position as an active middle power within the UN system by championing international cooperation and fostering collective solutions to crises. This analysis demonstrates Spain's commitment to addressing global issues through collaboration and its efforts to shape effective responses as part of a multilateral framework.

An Awkward Middle Power? Türkiye at the UN

A set of core values and principles has consistently underpinned Türkiye's foreign policy. However, it has also been shaped by the country's responses to structural transformations within the global order. Among various guiding principles, Türkiye's foreign policy has been anchored in a normative commitment to the enduring ideal of "peace at home, peace in the world," pursued primarily through multilateral cooperation. (Oğuz Gök, 2014) Following the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Türkiye mainly pursued a cautious foreign policy characterized by limited regional involvement, a Western-oriented outlook, and a risk-averse stance during the Cold War period (Satana 2016, 128). Türkiye's middle power role was visible as early as the pre-WWII era. Ankara historically acted as a mediator among significant powers, exempli-

fied by its role in forming alliances such as the Balkan Entente in the 1930s. (Barlas,2005) However, during the Cold War, Türkiye's middle power role in coalition-building was less prominent due to the systemic constraints imposed by superpower rivalry. Ankara actively participated in the UN Security Council, serving as a non-permanent member on three occasions (1951–1952, 1954–1955, 1961). During the Cold War years, its multilateral efforts predominantly aligned with the United States and Western allies, as evident in its election and voting patterns in the UNGA and UNSC during the Cold War period (Aral 2004; Balcı & Hazar 2020).

Türkiye's growing interest in mediation efforts and coalition-building in various international organizations increased in multiple cases after the Cold War. In the 1990s, Turkish policymakers engaged in active diplomacy and mediation efforts both at the UN and ICO to bring international attention to conflicts in the Balkans, mainly aiming to formulate a resolution to the 1992–1995 Bosnian War, among others. Ankara's diplomacy within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was instrumental in reflecting Türkiye's perspective on the role of the United Nations. Ankara urged OIC leaders to engage with the UN platform to ensure a credible and effective response to the war, underscoring its commitment to multilateralism and the UN's centrality in conflict resolution. (Oğuz Gök, 2014) "

Starting in the 2000s, Türkiye experienced significant economic and foreign policy changes. Robins (2014, 192) notes that Türkiye began to emphasize norms more, particularly within the context of its relations with the EU from 2001 to 2005. The new leadership not only built upon the "active diplomatic initiatives of the 1990s" but also exhibited an increasing "willingness" to embrace a new "order-building role," particularly in the past decade, with a focus on leveraging the United Nations as a central platform (Oğuz Gök, 2014).

During the early years of the JDP (Justice and Development Party) government, the focus on the middle power role was evident in the continuity of Türkiye's role as a norm-implementing actor as relations with the EU were strengthened through institutional re-

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10 Statement by Spanish UN Representative Mr. Gasso Matoses during UN Security Council 7740th meeting 2016.

forms, primarily driven by the accession process. (Tüzgen and Gök,2024) Following the Arab uprisings, especially in the Post-2015 period, Ankara adopted a more assertive stance in its regional foreign policy, with its calls for "justice" and "reform" in the international order becoming increasingly pronounced (Yeşiltaş 2014). Turkish policymakers have articulated "a new role" for the country, emphasizing its aim to "elevate the moral standards of global governance and politics" while striving to achieve a balance between realpolitik and a norms-based approach to foreign policy (Oğuz Gök, 2014).

In doing so, Turkish rulers have frequently emphasized a "historical responsibility" that extends beyond the country's physical borders, underscoring Ankara's dedication to active involvement in areas with deep-rooted historical and cultural bonds. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan articulated this sentiment, stating:

"We cannot afford to remain indifferent to events in regions with which we share emotional and historical connections. For instance, we cannot disregard developments in the Balkans or distance ourselves from what happens in the Middle East, North Africa, or the Caucasus. Likewise, we must not abandon our brothers and sisters in Central Asia, Africa—where hearts resonate with ours—or South Asia to their struggles. Together, we must shoulder the responsibilities that history has entrusted us." (Erdoğan 2016)

President Erdoğan also refers to Türkiye's assuming responsibility for finding solutions to conflicts by referring to its unique identity as encompassing the cultural heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations, as follows:

"Türkiye is a rightful successor to the collective heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations, owing to its geographical location at the center of the ancient world. Therefore, we are obliged to take the necessary steps, assume responsibility, and rise to the occasion. We will continue to fulfill our responsibilities to human-

kind because we are deeply affected, directly and indirectly, by the crises that besiege our region...... I believe that it is within our reach to find fair, equitable, and conscientious solutions to all the global challenges we face" (A/74/PV.3)[11]

An analysis of speeches by Turkish leaders at the UNGA during the 2000s reveals that the "middle power role" was not a term used to characterize Türkiye's identity. Instead, Ankara chose to portray itself to the international community as a "donor state" (A/61/PV.17)[12] "humanitarian actor" (A/69/PV.6) [13], "bridge" (A/64/PV.5)[14], "promoter of harmony among civilizations" (A/58/PV.14) [15] and "mediator" (A/69/PV.6)[16]. Thomas Wright observes that Türkiye envisioned its role more as an "autonomous power" than a middle power, describing it as a nation with the capability and determination to act independently within its region and on the global stage. (Wright,2015)

In the 2000s, Ankara explicitly expressed its ambition to assume leadership in addressing global issues, aligning with aspects of "middle power behavior." The United Nations emerged as a key platform for Türkiye's pursuit of a more prominent role in regional and global governance. In line with this approach, Ankara undertook numerous initiatives to integrate into international institutions and enhance Türkiye's presence on the global stage, with the United Nations being a primary focus during the 2000s.

Ankara actively organized UN summits and conferences on various issues. One significant event was the Istanbul Somalia Conference held under the UN framework from May 21–23, 2010. UN Secretary-Gen-

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11 Statement by Recep Tayyip Erdogan on General Assembly Seventy-Fourth Session 3rd Plenary Meeting," United Nations General Assembly Records, September 24, 2019.
12 Statement by Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gul, UNGA 17th plenary meeting, September 22, 2006,
13 Statement by President Erdogan, UN General Assembly, 6th plenary meeting, September 24, 2014
14 Statement by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, UN General Assembly 5th plenary meeting Thursday, September 24, 2009
15 Statement by Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Gul, 17th plenary meeting UN General Assembly 2003, 14th plenary meeting, September 26
16 Statement by President Erdogan, UN General Assembly, 6th plenary meeting, September 24, 2014

eral Ban Ki-moon commended Ankara's leadership on global issues within the UN platform.

> *Türkiye's leadership in world affairs ranges from UN peacekeeping missions to diplomacy, and Türkiye has earned the right to speak out, forcefully, on issues of global importance".* [17]

An examination of Türkiye's initiatives in organizing these UN summits reveals the specific niche areas it has prioritized to operationalize its middle-power foreign policy. Notably, Ankara's efforts have been primarily focused on mediation, humanitarian assistance, and development cooperation. Its emphasis on creating unique diplomatic niches, particularly in humanitarian aid and development cooperation, can be seen as practical expressions of its middle-power identity and strategies to bolster its foreign policy influence.

Notably, the Alliance of Civilizations was launched in 2005 by the Prime Ministers of Türkiye and Spain and adopted by the UN Secretary-General as a UN initiative. Ankara emphasized the significance of the Alliance of Civilizations as a contribution to a "global civilization" founded on universally shared norms:

> *"I have no doubt that the Alliance will make a significant contribution. We should ensure that it has a meaningful place in the Organization, as it can make important contributions to shaping a global civilization based on universal values centered on democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, gender equality, young people, and media." (A/64/PV.5)* [18]

This approach reflects key aspects of middle power behavior, including the pursuit of innovative solutions to global challenges and efforts to bolster international institutions in maintaining order. Ankara consistently emphasized its newly adopted role of "promoting harmony among nations" within the UN framework. Notable actions included hosting a meet-

ing in Istanbul in 2002 between the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and holding both the NATO Summit and the OIC Ministerial Meeting in Istanbul in 2003.

During its presidency of the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member, Ankara actively led efforts to organize high-level meetings on the theme of "Ensuring the Security Council's effective role in maintaining international peace and security" in September 2010. Throughout its tenure on the Security Council from 2009 to 2010, Türkiye sought to position itself as an "agenda setter" within the UN, organizing numerous sessions. In 2010, the UNSC adopted all 59 resolutions, with the majority passed unanimously. (Aral,2009)

In 2010, Türkiye, in collaboration with Finland, initiated the "Friends of Mediation" group at the UN, highlighting mediation as a central focus of its evolving foreign policy. Before launching the Mediation for Peace Initiative, Ankara engaged in numerous mediation initiatives, though these efforts often fell short of achieving concrete outcomes. Examples include reconciliation attempts in Iraq, Lebanon, and Kyrgyzstan, trilateral cooperation processes in the Balkans, efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and conflict resolution projects in Somalia, among others. Türkiye became the sole country to co-chair three distinct Friends of Mediation (FoM) groups across three major international organizations. In 2018, Ankara launched the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation. Following this, Türkiye, in collaboration with Finland and Switzerland, spearheaded the creation of a similar group within the OSCE.

Additionally, Türkiye and Finland played a leading role in adopting the first UN General Assembly resolution on mediation in 2011. The UN's "Guidance for Effective Mediation" was translated into Turkish, which marks the first time it has been translated into a language outside the UN's official languages. Furthermore, Ankara's wide-ranging dissemination of the document across the academic and civil society circles illustrates Türkiye's commitment to the field. The UN General Assembly resolution on July 28, 2011, was a landmark document, as it was the first UN Resolution on mediation. (Karadeniz and Gök, 2024)

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17 http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34767&Kw1=turkey&Kw2=iran&Kw3= nuclear›, (accessed July 8, 2014)
18 Statement by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, UN General Assembly 5th plenary meeting Thursday, September 24, 2009

Consistent with their middle-power role, Turkish leaders seized every opportunity to underscore the vital importance of an "effective" UN in maintaining international order and reiterated Türkiye's "commitment" to enhancing the UN system within the framework of its foreign policy.

As Wright suggests, Türkiye's approach stands apart from other middle powers, focusing more on building the capabilities to pursue an independent foreign policy rather than simply reinforcing the rules of the Western order itself. (Wright,2015) Turkish rulers have consistently criticized the international order and the UN, focusing on representativeness, justice, and equality concerns. Ankara's "normative criticism" of the current UN system is most notably encapsulated in the recurring phrase used by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "the world is bigger than five." 19 In this context, an analysis of Türkiye's statements at the UN General Assembly during the 2000s reveals that Turkish leaders frequently addressed the issue of "UN Reform" whenever the opportunity arose. On the other hand, as Aral (2023) demonstrates, Ankara's voting behavior in the UNGA in the 2000s reveals a significant divergence from its professed objective of challenging the hegemonic framework of the current international order. In contrast, Ankara consistently aligned with the Western bloc on key issues, including human rights, as evidenced by its regular rejection or abstention from proposals to effectuate substantial reforms to the existing international structure.

Türkiye has typically exhibited many characteristics associated with middle powers: coalition formation, policy entrepreneurship, and support of multilateral solutions to problems. Ankara's voting orientation also demonstrates its being in the solidarity camp, aligning mostly with Western states regarding human rights norms. However, there has been a growing use of pluralist elements and order criticism reflected in post-2015 speeches on the UN platform. This fact was also visible in Ankara's most recent interest in BRICS membership. A comparison of Ankara's globality through the institutional web and diplomatic missions

in the world demonstrates that Türkiye resembles more BRICS countries than MIKTA. Therefore, Ankara could also be conceptualized as an "awkward power" (Abbondanza & Wilkins, 2022) between great power and middle power role/identity/behavior. While it shares significant commonalities with Western middle powers, such as commitments to liberal democracy, free trade, and human rights, it also exhibits notable alignment with other "emerging middle powers," including South Africa and Brazil.

In conclusion, scholars often classify Türkiye as an emerging middle power, noting that its rhetorical claims to great power status contrast with its lack of specific critical attributes, such as nuclear weapons or substantial force projection. Furthermore, its preference for multilateralism over the unilateralism typical of great powers reinforces this categorization. Although there are strong behavioral elements of the traditional middle power role, Türkiye's material denominators, as well as identity definitions, put Türkiye into the position of an "awkward power" in between a middle power role and prominent power identity as well as comparatively global reach among its MIKTA counterparts.

Conclusion: Possibilities of Future Middle Power Collaboration in Global Governance?

The comparative analysis of Türkiye and Spain underscores the middle powers' significant and multifaceted roles in global governance. As a traditionally Western middle power, Spain exemplifies the stabilizing and cooperative behaviors associated with this category. Its consistent commitment to multilateralism, particularly in addressing climate change, promoting gender equality, and advocating for sustainable development, aligns with established middle power norms (Lecha & Morillas, 2020). Türkiye, on the other

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19 President Erdogan's Speech before the UN Security Council, at: http://www.un.org/apps/ news/story.asp?NewsID=48825#.VNCVcZX9k5s (last visited November 15, 2024).

hand, represents a more dynamic and evolving case, blending elements of traditional middle power diplomacy with critiques of the international system as well as norm shaper-role reflected in its mediation initiatives. Türkiye's initiatives, such as the Alliance of Civilizations and the Mediation for Peace, demonstrate its capacity for normative leadership. At the same time, its calls for reform of the UN Security Council highlight its dissatisfaction with existing power structures (Aral, 2023).

The concept of "awkward middle power," as applied to Türkiye, provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of middle-power behavior. Türkiye's unique blend of normative ambition and systemic critique challenges traditional categorizations and underscores the diversity within the middle-power category. This duality is particularly evident in its efforts to balance Western-aligned policies with an independent, often reformist approach to global governance (Abbondanza & Wilkins, 2022). Such behavior illustrates the potential for middle powers to act as stabilizers and reformists within the international system.

Spain's leadership in climate action, as seen in its contributions to the Paris Agreement, complements Türkiye's growing focus on renewable energy and sustainable practices, such as its most recent initiative of "zero waste."   Collaborative projects might enhance their shared influence in global climate governance. Türkiye's extensive experience in mediation, including its leadership in the Friends of Mediation Group, aligns with Spain's emphasis on multilateral peacebuilding, mediation, and preventive measures. Joint initiatives in conflict-prone regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa, could enhance their normative and operational role, for instance, in Responsibility to Protect. Türkiye and Spain face significant migration challenges due to their geographic positions as gateways to Europe. Coordinated policies on migration could strengthen their roles as middle powers addressing and "framing" migration as a global "human security" issue in global governance. Spain's feminist foreign policy and Türkiye's involvement in initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations in the UN and the W20 initiative in G20 provide a platform for collaboration on

advancing gender equality and human rights globally. Considering Spain's "Toledo Format" and Türkiye's "World is bigger than five" premise, there is enough room for a coordinated effort to advocate for a more inclusive and equitable international order reflected in the UN Security Council reform.

This analysis showcases the variability within the group of actors identified as middle powers as reflected in Türkiye and Spain's ideational and behavioral contributions to the UN. The findings suggest that middle powers are not a homogenous group but rather a diverse set of actors capable of influencing global governance in unique and multifaceted ways based on their historical, geopolitical, and institutional contexts. While their strategies differ, both nations demonstrate the capacity of middle powers to act as mediators, innovators, and norm shapers in a complex and fragmented international system. Their engagement with the UN highlights the potential for middle powers to bridge regional and global priorities, contributing to a more inclusive and effective global governance system.

This study undertook a literature review of Türkiye and Spain's middle power role and then attempted to analyze their middle power actorness in the UN, based on their self-identification of roles in global governance and their behavioral preferences in certain niche areas. The study has its own limitations. It only analyzed UNGA opening speeches through the 2000s, and Spain and Türkiye's non-permanent membership periods in the UNSC were scrutinized. However, there are many other formal and informal IOs, such as NATO, G20, etc., in which their comparative middle power role could also be explored.

Future research might focus on comparative studies involving other middle powers, such as South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa, to further refine our understanding of the spectrum of middle power behavior. Additionally, exploring Türkiye and Spain's roles in emerging areas such as gender equality, digitalization and statecraft, artificial intelligence, and climate change might provide deeper insights into their evolving contributions to global governance and possible areas of collaboration.

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