

Türkiye and BRICS: Realities and Perspectives on Future Integration

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Abstract

Global politics and international relations today are experiencing the most turbulent period in recent history. Amidst the whirlwind of divergent global development trends, the independent interests of the so-called "Global South" countries, advocating for the development of multipolarity and multi-format approaches in international relations and the world economy, are becoming increasingly distinct. BRICS is emerging as one of such key institutions of the developing multipolarity.

Türkiye, a country situated at the geopolitical crossroads of Europe and Asia, being one of the leaders of the Turkic world, seeks to enhance its influence in international affairs through participation in new formats offered by non-Western countries. Türkiye's interest in cooperating within the BRICS framework is rapidly becoming more evident. While the temptation to unite all those opposed to Western hegemony under "the same roof" remains strong, both for BRICS member-states and for Türkiye itself, full membership of the latter in the union would bring both benefits and costs, which necessitates distinguishing between the desired and the real.

Keywords: BRICS, Multipolarity, Türkiye, Integration, Geopolitics, International Economy.

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1. Introduction

The BRICS Summit, which took place from October 22-24 in Kazan, Russia, became a significant event of 2024, marking key trends in global development and the emerging multipolarity. One of the major news highlights was that Türkiye officially applied for BRICS membership, as announced by Russian Presidential Assistant Yuri Ushakov in early September (RIA,2024). Albeit this statement wasn't backed by any official reaction from Türkiye's part, Bloomberg had announced the same referring to its sources (Bloomberg,2024).

In any case, this news reflects a lengthy history of interaction between Türkiye and BRICS. After the crisis in Russo-Turkish relations in 2015, the two countries began to rebuild their ties dynamically, with Türkiye becoming increasingly interested in various integration formats involving Russia and other major Asian players such as China and India. For the first time, Türkiye's intention to join BRICS was expressed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 2018 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (TASS,2018), noting that all members of the bloc, especially China, supported Türkiye's intention. However, after that, this issue seems to have disappeared from the global information field, being overshadowed by the global health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as by the confrontation between Russia and Western countries over Ukraine, which began in 2022.

A new phase of Türkiye's interest in BRICS started after the high-profile expansion of the bloc in 2024, when Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Saudi Arabia joined the format. Though, the latter hasn't ratified necessary documentation and remains an invitee, not a member-state. The organization, which until 2022 had been treated by many as a club of five major but geographically distant and fragmented countries, acquired new dimensions and now is viewed by many as an alternative to formats like the G20, reflecting the demand of the Global South for recognition and equal participation in international affairs. This led to a genuine "explosion" of the bloc's popularity among countries that are traditionally underrepresented in international discussions—particularly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. By the time of the latest BRICS Summit in Kazan, more than 30 countries had expressed their interest in joining BRICS as full members or obtaining partner status (Rossiyskaya Gazeta,2024), including Azerbaijan, a close partner of Türkiye. Therefore, Türkiye's desire

to join the bloc became a logical trend in the new global development (Shokoohi et. Al,2022).

Furthermore, it is important to understand that today's Türkiye aspires to play the role of a major regional power what reflects in international terminology the characteristics of a "middle power." Under President Erdoğan, ideas of pan-Turkism and neo-Ottomanism have developed and spread in Türkiye, emphasizing the leading role of Türkiye among Turkic states, which would allow it to act in international affairs as the voice of an entire community of states, while also raising Türkiye's prestige in the context of global politics (Nadein-Raevskiy,2024:17-24). Joining BRICS as a full member is essential for Erdoğan to strengthen his country's international prestige.

2. Methodology

This research adopts political constructivism as its methodological basis. Classical works within this theoretical framework assume that the structure of international relations is determined by ideational factors (Vendt,1992; Finnemore and Sikkink,2001). In this regard, the system of international relations does not act as an objective reality, but as a constructed space, whose functioning is determined by ideas shared by communities. Thus, BRICS does not act solely as an economic bloc, but as a "community of like-minded countries" who are trying to redefine their place in the world, challenging the liberal order (Stuenkel,2015). The identity of the state is not static and cannot be explained solely by the influence of the external environment – it is formed by the social reflection within the country. (Ruggie,2005). This assumption was used to prove that by exploiting the ideology of "neo-Ottomanism," R. Erdogan seeks to strengthen Turkey's status as a regional power, whose strategic function is to bridge up between the West and the East.

3. Economy Matters

Today, BRICS displays a serious economic force. The combined GDP of the bloc's countries already exceeded the combined figure for the G7 in 2018, reaching 35.4% against 29.6% (Statista,2024). The combined population of the bloc's countries equals 3.6 billion people or 45% of the world's population - that is, four times more than the G7. The countries of the grouping occupy 36% of the world's territory, they account for about half of the world's wheat production, more than a third of the production of rare

metals (for example, palladium), 44% of proven oil reserves (TASS,2023). All this makes BRICS an extremely attractive grouping with a large market and extensive development potential.

An important aspect of the growing attractiveness of BRICS is the New Development Bank, established by the BRICS countries in 2014 and with a capital of 100 billion US dollars. Given the Bank's focus on financing infrastructure projects for sustainable development, this instrument may become important for Türkiye, with the Turkish economy being dependent on foreign investment. The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (otherwise called the Middle Corridor) development project, which is intended to connect Europe and China through the territories of Türkiye, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, remains extremely important for the country. In the context of Russia's political and economic isolation, this alternative is becoming extremely attractive for Europe and, in the long term, extremely profitable for Türkiye.

Yet, Türkiye has neither the necessary technologies nor sufficient financial resources to implement its part of this mega-project. According to EBRD estimates, the Middle Corridor project requires 18.5 billion dollars (Intellinews,2024). In addition, the fiscal policy of President Erdogan, which the country followed till May 2023, coupled with the refusal to join the anti-Russian sanctions, led to a decline in the investment attractiveness of Türkiye, whose main investors have traditionally been Europeans. Although in the last year the trend of foreign direct investment in the country has shown growth, their volume remains insufficient for the implementation of large investment projects (Vernigora,2024). China, despite the recent high-profile deal to build an electric car plant in Türkiye worth US\$ 1 billion (BBC,2024), remains a very modest investor in the Turkish economy, the FDI figure from 2022 being 1.7 billion, a peak of Chinese FDI in Türkiye, according to the Turkish Central Bank. However, China is not one of Türkiye's top sources of inward FDI, in which the EU continues to occupy a dominant role, with 29.13 billion USD FDI from the Netherlands alone in 2022. Japan and Singapore's FDI in Türkiye is far more significant than China's, with 4.7 billion USD and 11.39 billion USD in 2022, respectively (Uluyol,2024). In this regard, the New Development Bank represents a promising solution to the problem, especially considering that initiatives such as the Middle Corridor are actively discussed within BRICS and the SCO.

Another important economic aspect is the development by BRICS of the BRICS Bridge mechanism, which is being created as an alternative to the SWIFT system for exchanging banking information between countries, bypassing US financial institutions. If the countries manage to agree on the main issues in this area, this will be a huge innovative stimulus for the economies of the grouping countries.

Firstly, it will significantly reduce the dependence on the dollar exchange rate, as well as various restrictions from the US Federal Reserve System and other regulatory bodies. Secondly, it will reduce the overall level of influence of third countries on the national economies of the BRICS member states. Thirdly, it will significantly increase the speed of transactions, reduce costs and lower the number of intermediaries in conducting operations (Golmohammadi,2022).

Finally, the introduction of an innovative form of economic and financial cooperation will greatly increase the prestige and investment attractiveness of BRICS as a format. Hence, more countries will strive to switch to modern means of payment, which will increase the competitive attractiveness of non-Western integration groupings.

However, this solution is not a panacea for moving away from the dollar. First of all, it is important to understand that BRICS Bridge is an electronic mechanism that creates a DLT-based transfer infrastructure. However, the participants in the project are the same commercial banks that have residency in a certain country. This means that participants in such a project can still be subjected to sanctions by the United States. Moreover, the newly elected US President Donald Trump vowed to “force states to settle in dollars” through the use of sanctions mechanisms. (Business Insider,2024).

Secondly, the system may become less profitable for the same reasons as bilateral payments now. The currencies of the participating countries are so-called "soft currencies". This means that not all market participants in a foreign country are ready to use this currency in their settlements. Roughly speaking, an importer of Russian oil in China may not find a buyer of rubles on the domestic market among those who do not participate in trade with Russia. Also, the currencies of the participating countries themselves are not always freely convertible.

Another nuance is how foreign exchange liquidity is attracted on the domestic market. In order to make a payment through the platform, a commercial bank must already have the appropriate amount of foreign

currency on its account. However, if the foreign currency received during the day has already been exhausted, the commercial bank must attract it on the foreign exchange market, which is difficult due to the low liquidity of the currency sections (with the possible exception of the yuan). Within the BRICS Bridge platform, the mechanism for attracting foreign exchange liquidity on the market is not yet provided. In some countries, the Central Bank also sets a requirement for the complete liquidation of the foreign exchange position at the end of the day, which will limit commercial banks in the volume of cross-border payments.

The BRICS Bridge initiative is supposed to also operate with central bank digital currencies, which will allow participating countries to freely make payments without fear of the risk of US sanctions. However, this assumption is only partly true. The US Federal Reserve is already developing methods of control over cryptocurrencies that will also be applicable to central bank digital currencies. In addition, the independence of payments from external influences will be ensured in this case by the opacity of the transactions carried out, as well as using a significant number of commissions for conversions, which will make the payment process more expensive. In addition, the implementation of BRICS Bridge itself still seems remote. Coupled with the development of central bank digital currencies, the real use of BRICS Bridge may be delayed. Thus, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation plans to begin testing the digital ruble only in 2025 (Moscow Times,2024). So far, only China has been actively implementing the digital yuan. In Iran, testing of the rial began only in 2024 (Tehran Times,2024).

For Türkiye, such mechanisms are necessary, first of all, for trade with Russia, the volume of which has almost doubled by 2023 since the beginning of the special military operation due to the implementation of parallel imports through Türkiye (Le Monde,2022). In addition, Türkiye's current energy security relies heavily on cooperation with Russia - and this is not only about gas supplies and transit, although the latter is becoming more relevant. In conditions where the Nord Streams are not functioning due to sabotage, and Ukraine refuses to extend the expiring contract for gas transit from Russia to Eastern Europe through its infrastructure (Interfax, 2024), the Turkish Stream remains the only transit line for Russian gas to Europe. Nuclear energy also plays a major role – Russia is currently building the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in Türkiye, the construction of

which is complicated by blocking financial transactions by the United States (Izvestia,2024). In addition, the Turkish side gives priority to the construction of the nuclear power plant planned in Sinop by the Russian state corporation Rosatom (ANS News,2024), deepening energy cooperation with Russia.

However, BRICS still remains an insufficiently economically integrated space. Both BRICS Bridge and other initiatives have not yet been implemented, and their implementation depends, among other things, on the creation of a single currency, for which, as the Russian President noted, BRICS is not yet ready due to the insufficient degree of economic integration (Lenta.ru,2024).

In addition, the BRICS countries, including its "core" – Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa - occupy an ambiguous place in Turkish foreign trade.

Thus, Russia remains one of the most important partners in the structure of Turkish imports, having only slightly less volume of trade than China in 2024 (See Table 1). Collectively, these two countries currently represent just over a quarter of Turkey's total imports. At the same time, India represents only a modest 2%, while South Africa and Brazil are not among the top 15 importers at all. Of the new BRICS members, only the UAE is on this list, with an import figure to Turkey of 7,363,388 thousand US dollars. Additionally, the volume of imports from China, Russia and the UAE grew significantly higher in percentage terms than imports from most Western countries. However, as it can be seen from the data presented, Brazil and South Africa are the only ones among the BRICS old member not to be listed as top Turkish suppliers – the other BRICS countries provide less than 1% of the import share per country, while the EU and the USA together remain Turkey's main suppliers.

Table (1): Türkiye's Import's Structure 2013 to 2024 by Country
(BRICS Countries in Bold)

Position	Country	2013 (Thousand US \$)	Share of Total (%)	Position	2024 (Thousand US \$)	Share of Total (%)	Change (in Volume; %)
1	Russia	26 046 541	10,0	2	44 018 553	12,8	69,0%
2	Germany	25 598 452	9,8	3	27 084 471	7,9	5,8%
3	China	25 260 751	9,7	1	44 927 735	13,1	77,9%
4	Italy	13 530 848	5,2	4	19 310 697	5,6	42,7%
5	USA	13 350 433	5,1	5	16 227 369	4,7	21,5%

6	Switzerland	9 797 013	3,8	7	11 173 800	3,2	14,1%
7	France	8 650 205	3,3	6	12 499 807	3,6	44,5%
8	India	6 739 652	2,6	11	7 021 121	2,0	4,2%
9	Spain	6 624 006	2,5	8	9 362 741	2,7	41,3%
10	United Kingdom	6 582 729	2,5	12	6 845 518	2,0	4,0%
11	South Korea	6 357 876	2,4	9	9 245 622	2,7	45,4%
12	UAE	5 437 605	2,1	10	7 363 388	2,1	35,4%
13	Belgium	3 983 785	1,5	19	3 874 260	1,1	-2,7%
14	Japan	3 753 678	1,4	15	4 737 259	1,4	26,2%
15	Romania	3 716 898	1,4	18	3 984 748	1,2	7,2%

(Note. Data for 2013 and 2024 are from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat; <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Kategori/GetKategori?p=dis-ticaret-104&dil=2>). Some calculations are performed by the author based on these data)

The structure of Turkish exports shows (see Table 2) that the total volume of goods and services sent to the BRICS countries, including new members, represents only about 1/8 of the total exports (taking into account the BRICS countries not shown in the table). At the same time, the exports to BRICS (except the UAE) are showing weak growth or slight decline (China), with steadily growing to the EU, the USA, and the UK.

Given that Turkey has had a permanent negative balance of payments - USD 56 billion in 2024 (World Bank,2024) – BRICS can be relevant in terms of imports, but not so important for exports. Moreover, given the depreciation of the lira in recent years, settlement in national currencies, which BRICS is striving for, is also not a significant incentive for Turkey, since imports from Russia and China are several times higher than exports to these countries, and trade with other participants is either insignificant or does not require moving away from the dollar in international settlements (for example, the UAE).

Table (2): Türkiye's Export's Structure 2013 to 2024 by Country
(BRICS Countries in Bold)

Position	Country	2013 (Thousand US \$)	Share of Total (%)	Position	2024 (Thousand US \$)	Share of Total (%)	Change (in Volume; %)
1	Germany	14 832 546	9,2	1	20 431 813	7,8	37,7%
2	Iraq	12 949 891	8,0	4	13 005 919	5,0	0,4%
3	United Kingdom	9 126 733	5,7	3	15 291 161	5,8	67,5%
4	Italy	7 474 295	4,6	5	12 950 998	4,9	73,3%
5	Russia	7 213 894	4,5	9	8 562 122	3,3	18,7%
6	France	6 654 651	4,1	6	10 043 748	3,8	50,9%

7	USA	6 646 601	4,1	2	16 351 760	6,2	146,0%
8	UAE	5 243 566	3,2	10	8 295 326	3,2	58,2%
9	Spain	4 554 381	2,8	7	9 781 758	3,7	114,8%
10	Netherlands	3 783 681	2,3	8	8 568 228	3,3	126,5%
11	China	3 755 649	2,3	20	3 388 418	1,3	-9,8%
12	Egypt	3 336 392	2,1	16	4 175 975	1,6	25,2%
13	Saudi Arabia	3 262 257	2,0	17	3 985 362	1,5	22,2%
14	Belgium	2 835 446	1,8	15	4 362 545	1,7	53,9%
15	Romania	2 783 798	1,7	11	7 781 823	3,0	179,5%

(Note. Data for 2013 and 2024 are from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat; <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Kategori/GetKategori?p=dis-ticaret-104&dil=2>). Some calculations are performed by the author based on these data).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, despite all their potential, the markets of all BRICS countries are deeply tied to Western technology and equipment. Türkiye's export potential in key areas - automobile manufacturing and agriculture - largely overlaps with the capabilities of China and India. In this regard, it is not yet entirely clear what Türkiye can really offer BRICS in the economic sphere. However, the capabilities of BRICS are also limited for now.

4. Erdogan's Political Gamble

Today, it is difficult to say whether BRICS, despite the existing financial institutions, will be able to become a full-fledged economic actor in world trade, such as, for example, the European Union or ASEAN. For now, the bloc looks more like a grouping of like-minded people who are trying to rethink both the international agenda and the existing system of international relations. Moving away from monocentrism based upon the political, economic and technological hegemony of the United States with the mediation of its allies, apparently, remains the main leitmotif for BRICS. However, we are not talking about a bloc confrontation with the United States according to the bipolar world model of the Cold War, but about the gradual development of more equal relations between all states with an increasing role for the countries of the Global South (Mousavi et al.,2021).

Based upon this, we can say that the development of BRICS is determined more by the political factor than by the economic one. For Türkiye, the bloc is interesting precisely for this reason. Nevertheless, joining the grouping will not give either BRICS or Türkiye itself a powerful economic boost. The benefits from this remain, even in the wildest dreams, very modest (Vernigora,2024).

For Erdogan, who is well aware of the benefits of Türkiye's intermediate position between East and West – both geographically and geopolitically – BRICS is not only an opportunity to unite with like-minded people who actively support and encourage the development of regionalism as opposed to a unified global world, but also a populist narrative aimed at the Western establishment. Simply put, Erdogan, who is certainly interested in Türkiye's greater representation in international affairs in the coming world order, is trying not to miss the time and opportunity to join one of the elements that potentially construct a new system of international relations, but also to use this drift in the east to influence American and European politicians.

Türkiye, which has long been a NATO member and a candidate for EU membership, currently has less than trusting relations with the West. In general, since 2016, after the attempted coup, Ankara has somewhat changed its approach to cooperation with the EU and the US. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, after normalising relations with Russia, Ankara decided to change its approach to ensuring its own security by purchasing the S-400 air defence system from Moscow, which caused a storm of indignation in the West, primarily in the United States. The United States even invoked the so-called CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) and excluded Türkiye from the F-35 programme. The condition for upgrading Türkiye's military aviation was the refusal to use Russian anti-aircraft systems (U.S. Department of State,2020). Under these circumstances, Ankara decided to develop its own fifth-generation fighter, which was successfully tested in early 2024 (Nikkei,2024).

Secondly, the Kurdish issue has been playing a major role in Turkish foreign policy – in particular, the issue of recognition of the PKK as a terrorist organization by partners in the West. The problem remains so acute for Türkiye that it was able to actively use it as a bargaining chip – in fact, blackmail – when the question of Sweden and Finland's membership in NATO arose in 2022. Ankara, having initially blocked Sweden's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance, demanded that the Scandinavian country expel Kurdish activists who had received political asylum in Sweden to Türkiye, combat the activities of the PKK, freeze the PKK's bank accounts, and lift the embargo on arms supplies to Türkiye (The Economist,2023). Although the country eventually lifted its restriction on Sweden's NATO membership when its demands were met, the Kurdish issue until now has

remained an important foreign policy trump card for Türkiye, allowing it to justify the use of military forces on the territory of neighboring states (Ragimova,2023:149), which, however, couldn't but cause increased tension in relations with Western partners.

On 12 May 2025 at the Party's convention the PKK announced its own dissolution, which was welcomed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who lauded the announcement as important, stating that Türkiye had crossed another critical threshold toward the goal of a terror-free Turkey. Nonetheless, the dissolution itself, while representing an important step towards peaceful political settlement, doesn't solve the very issue. Further steps may be aimed at incorporating the Kurdish minority into the political process – in particular, using consociational democracy principles (Lijphart, 1969). Whatever be the political destiny of Kurds, this issue can still be exploited for years ahead in Erdogan's political bargaining with the West. He may capitalize on that both internationally and domestically.

Thirdly, the issue of relations with the EU is also acute for Türkiye – the country has been trying to join the union since 1999, but has remained a candidate for a quarter of a century, despite being a member of the Customs Union with the EU, formed in 1995. Despite some periods of revival, negotiations on Türkiye's entry into the Eurozone are in a stalemate most of the time. The European Commission notes in its annual report that the unresolved issue of Northern Cyprus and threats to democracy in Türkiye lead to the fact that the negotiation process has been in a complete deadlock since 2018 (European Commission,2024).

While the issues of "democracy" can be smoothed over with sufficient political will and mutual desire, the problem of the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus remains a real barrier, closing any prospect of Türkiye's integration in the foreseeable future. The Cyprus issue has remained unresolved for decades – and neither Türkiye nor the EU, of which the Republic of Cyprus is a member, seem to have any real desire to resolve the ossified conflict. Türkiye hopes to further strengthen its suzerainty over Northern Cyprus, while Greece and Cyprus hope to torpedo any prospect of Türkiye's accession by using this issue (Suleymanov,2019:82).

However, recent trends suggest that the European Union is overheated. The potential for conflict within the union has increased significantly since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, indicating a high degree of polarization and a growing rift between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe. In

addition, political instability is growing both at the supranational level and within the states themselves, as evidenced by the wave of popularity of right-wing parties in the elections to the European Parliament and national legislative bodies. For example, the growth of support for right-wing parties has effectively paralyzed the political process in two major EU countries - Germany and France, creating a situation of minority government in both countries. Despite the loud statements of the President of the European Commission about the necessary expansion of the EU and overcoming the threshold of 30 states (Politico,2024), the real prospects for EU enlargement are vague due to the deepening political and economic crisis. Thus, even if the EU is to expand, Türkiye will not become a member in the near future.

Albeit, the extent of Türkiye's "leaning" from the West should not be overestimated. Not long ago, Erdogan confirmed that joining the EU remains a strategic priority for the country (Anadolu,2024). After all, it is worth understanding that this is a show for both domestic and foreign audiences. Domestically, Erdogan has to deal with the catastrophic results of his monetary policy - in November 2024, inflation in the country reached 47% in annual terms (Reuters,2024). In this regard, the use of narratives about further European integration should provide the Turkish President with additional support, agitating the country's population in his favor. On the other hand, this represents a call for the European establishment to take a more substantial approach to Türkiye's membership in the EU - otherwise, the doors to other integration formats are open for Türkiye. In September, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan openly stated the following: "If our economic integration with the European Union had been crowned with membership, which is now at the level of the Customs Union, maybe we would not be on such a search" (Euronews,2024). This statement clearly demonstrates Ankara's pragmatic approach to participation in integration formats, but at the same time it should not be interpreted as an unconditional drift towards BRICS. It would be more correct to say that this is a clear message to Europe to start making substantive decisions while there is still such an opportunity. If Turkish membership goes ahead, this will be a major coup for Russia and China – but it is not necessarily a loss for the West, assuming it can reconfigure its relationship with Türkiye. This is the gamble on which Erdogan is counting (Aydıntaşbaş,2024).

In general, joining BRICS, NATO membership, and closer grouping with the EU are not mutually exclusive. Although this carries certain risks for the

North Atlantic Alliance and some uncertainty for the EU, the United States has, at least for now, remained neutral on this issue. For example, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said that Türkiye would remain an important ally of the United States, and the American ambassador to Ankara noted that the country's accession to BRICS "will not change its belonging to the Western world" (Daily Sabah,2024). The European Parliament issued a policy paper in March 2024, according to which BRICS is of significant interest to the EU, and therefore it is necessary to further develop the political dialogue with the bloc while strengthening bilateral relations with its members (Jütten,2024). All this suggests that BRICS is not yet perceived in the West as an alternative to the institutions proposed there, which means that integration with BRICS does not create significant costs for Türkiye.

5. BRICS's Expansion Issue

Despite Türkiye's desire, as well as that of several other countries, to join BRICS, the decision to temporarily suspend the admission of new members was supported at the meeting of BRICS foreign ministers in Nizhny Novgorod in June and subsequently at the October summit in Kazan (Türkiye Today,2024). It is vital to understand that incorporating all aspiring countries into the bloc at once is impossible for several reasons.

First, the consensus-based decision-making principle adopted by BRICS is incompatible with a large number of members, as it may create irreconcilable contradictions and paralyze the bloc, similar to the challenges faced by Western institutions—for example, the EU or the United Nations Security Council, which often proves completely incapable of addressing issues of international security and peace under the conditions of bloc confrontation among its veto-wielding permanent members (Khadem, 2012).

Decision-making by consensus has both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the decisions made unequivocally reflect the mutual interests of all members, helping to avoid accumulated disagreements and grievances. On the other hand, this inherently requires minimizing the number of veto players and introducing strict membership procedures, as such implemented in the EU or NATO.

In 2024, BRICS nearly doubled in size—from 5 members to 9. Such quantitative growth demands qualitative transformation of interstate interactions as well. Member countries must determine how to structure cooperation in the new composition to avoid undermining the prestige of the

platform itself, which could face deadlock with rapid expansion—even if foreign policy rhetoric among members largely aligns. In other words, the bloc needs to adapt to its already-admitted members before accommodating another wave of candidates.

Secondly, the admission of new members should not contradict the interests of the countries already in BRICS. It should be noted that Türkiye only recently managed to normalize relations with Egypt, which is already a full member. Additionally, many contradictions remain unresolved among BRICS members (such as the border conflict between China and India, and the dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Nile Basin), which means rapid expansion could overheat the bloc. Besides, Türkiye itself has strained relations with China over notorious Uyghur question.

Aside that, key BRICS members regard differently the necessary pace of expansion. While China is interested in a relatively fast expansion by adding rapidly growing economies like Indonesia, India and Brazil take more cautious positions, fearing a loss of effectiveness and increased tension in the West regarding BRICS (Leonova,2024:58-59).

Thirdly, the accession of new members should be reasonable: the admitted country should have sufficient potential for the development of the grouping, and not increase the burden on the BRICS institutions that are still being shaped. This means that the very fact of providing support to the “global south” is not enough for the countries to enter the bloc – the acceptance of a new member should be beneficial to the grouping as a whole and its members should be interested in that. Potential candidates for membership should be able to provide regional representation of BRICS, develop network relations with neighboring states, possess large economy and political recognition both at the regional level and in the world arena.

Nevertheless, the bloc is gradually building up a new institutional environment. At the Kazan Summit, a decision was made to grant countries the status of a “partner state” to BRICS – the first stage of integration into the grouping. Although the list of nations invited to become a “partner state” will only be published at the beginning of 2025, there is information in the media that Türkiye has become one of the invited states (Şafak, 2024). Given the country’s desire for full membership in BRICS, this step seems absolutely logical, though this does not fully meet Turkish interests (Mirfakhraee,2016).

Such new institutionalized formats as “BRICS+” and “BRICS Outreach” are also of interest to BRICS candidates, allowing for cooperation to be built beyond the grouping itself, developing network cooperation with non-BRICS member states, as well as other international groupings, such as the CIS, the EAEU, and the UN. These formats allow BRICS participants, all of whom are important regional players, to improve regional cooperation by attracting the bloc’s resources and tools. The “outreach” format permits them to expand and develop new external ties, thereby strengthening their positions. (Glebov,2023). For Türkiye, which is claiming regional leadership, this factor being certainly attractive.

A distinctive feature of BRICS as a grouping is that at the moment the status of a "full member" influences the definition of the main vectors of the format's development, the adoption of strategic decisions, but is not, in essence, the only necessary one for participation in various aspects of the bloc's activities, including its financial institutions. For instance, even before its accession as a full member, Egypt received access to the resources of the New Development Bank, which for the first time in modern history provides an opportunity for BRICS participants to receive financing for institutional development not from Western financial mechanisms such as the EBRD, IBRD or IMF. The "BRICS+" and "BRICS Outreach" formats, though providing only limited access to the mechanisms for developing joint policies of the BRICS countries, allow both countries at the initial stage of integration with the bloc (partner states) and states invited to cooperation, as well as partner regional organizations such as ASEAN or the CIS, to gain access to the bloc's infrastructure. Thus, BRICS is not a closed club of several countries, but a multi-format cooperation platform.

Türkiye, even without joining BRICS as a member state, has, due to this, various opportunities for building multilateral cooperation with the bloc in the areas of economics, energy, regional and international security, sustainable development and others.

6. Conclusion

Currently, Türkiye is actively trying to determine its place in the emerging world order. Trying to increase its influence as a leading regional power and one of the significant world powers, Ankara is turning to the search for new promising integration formats. Against the background of a significant increase in contradictions with Europe and the United States, Türkiye is trying not to miss its role in the rising Global South.

Nonetheless, this should not be seen as an “Eastern turn” in Turkish policy. Türkiye has traditionally maintained fruitful and diverse relations with most BRICS member countries, such as Russia, China, India and Brazil. In fact, Ankara, actively exploiting its transborder positioning, is seeking to “kill two birds with one stone” by strengthening cooperation with BRICS, the SCO and other blocs, while preserving the traditional pro-Western vectors of its foreign policy and international trade. President Erdogan skillfully plays on the contradictions between the key powers of the West and the Global South, while promoting the Turkish vision of the world based on neo-Ottomanism and pan-Turkism.

BRICS possesses a considerable appeal for Türkiye, but despite the bloc’s impressive economic potential, Ankara views it more in an ideological and political vein, without seeking to draw a dividing line between BRICS on the one hand and NATO and the EU on the other. Türkiye, like many other regional powers, does not regard membership in one or the other format as a zero-sum game. In fact, this vision is shared by the BRICS countries themselves, as well as by Europe and the United States.

We think that three scenarios are possible:

1. Full membership. Turkey will join BRICS as a full-fledged member. This may be within the framework of the next stage of the bloc's expansion, which, however, will come only after the current BRICS members have learnt to cooperate and developed feasible criteria for membership and entry procedures. Since, as stated earlier, not all countries support China's optimism about the bloc's rapid growth, the process may take years. Turkey will not join individually, as Indonesia has done, as this may unnecessarily accentuate problematic points in relations with the EU and the United States. However, joining in the context of the next round of expansion can smooth out undesirable effects due to the scattering effect.

2. Joining as a partner country. This scenario seems the most likely for two reasons. First, it will allow access to the BRICS economic institutions without incurring unnecessary responsibility. Turkey will be able to fully participate in the work of BRICS and its financial structures, and be a major regional player in the Outreach format, but at the same time it risks less in relations with the EU and the United States. Secondly, the status of a partner state may become the first stage on the way to full-fledged membership in BRICS within the framework of the formal membership procedure being developed. This will give the bloc additional prestige and stability, but it

will also leave Turkey some "room for maneuvering." Gaining the status of a BRICS partner state does not necessarily have to lead to full membership. In addition, it may take a long time to gain it later. This will depend on which institutional formula the bloc chooses. Turkey has already received an offer to join in this status, however, it has not made a decision yet (Reuters, 2024).

3. «Eternal candidate». Turkey can spend quite a long time talking about joining either as a full member or as a partner, waiting for the right moment. This means that Turkey will move according to its grand strategy, balancing between Russia and China on the one hand and the United States and the EU on the other, while protecting and promoting exclusively its national interests. In this case, Turkey will act contextually, adapting to the changing conditions of international politics and economics. In any case, this card can be played for a long time, reinforcing this with the popular idea of multipolar world and individuality of the development path.

In conclusion, Türkiye's prospects for joining BRICS will be determined by the expansion strategy which is yet to be elaborated by the current member states. BRICS's member-states need to develop feasible criteria for membership, otherwise the bloc risks to lose its appeal and turn into an unproductive club of like-minded states. Türkiye has already entered the first phase of integration by acquiring the status of a "partner state". In general, there are no significant obstacles to further cooperation deepening. The potential risks of rising competition for markets within BRICS between Türkiye, China and India are difficult to assess at this point, since BRICS does not have a single trade and economic space. However, the bloc must see a real need to accept certain members, Türkiye included. At the moment, Ankara cannot sufficiently benefit BRICS economically. Neither can BRICS. The situation will change as the implementation of existing institutional initiatives progresses - the introduction of BRICS's own payment mechanisms, the development of a single digital currency or the use of national currencies, including digital currencies, in bilateral settlements. It is to be expected that Türkiye will take its place alongside all other candidates in the membership issue and will most likely remain a partner state for some time – at least, until BRICS builds up the necessary formal mechanisms and clearly determines the prospects for further expansion.

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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