

**Symposium Report on
“Turkey as a Rising Power: Changes in International Politics”**

Date: Thursday, May 2, 2019

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Venue: BILIA Auditorium



Introduction:

To discuss about the rise of Turkey in international politics and how it is influencing the international system, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) had organized a symposium on **“Turkey as a Rising Power: Changes in International Politics”** on May 2, 2019 at BILIA Auditorium. Two keynote papers related to the topic was presented at the symposium by Ms. Ushan Ara Badal, Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Mr. Labib Murshed, Research Assistant (International Affairs), BILIA. The event was chaired by Former Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad while Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Deputy Director (Part Time), BILIA was the designated discussant.

The event was commenced with the welcome address provided by Professor Yasmin on behalf of Dr. Shahdeen Malik, Honorary Director, BILIA. Then the chair invited the presenters to present their respective papers.

Presentation of Mr. Labib Murshed:

Mr. Labib Murshed presented his keynote paper on **“Turkey under Erdoğan: A New Front in the Greater Middle East?”** In this paper, Mr. Murshed gave an overall overview how Turkey has been trying to make its own position in the international system under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He started his presentation with the brief history of Turkey’s political history of how it was born with Secular-Nationalistic principles and then how it is now changing under the regime of Erdoğan. Later, he focused on Turkey’s present foreign policy where the key determinants are–Islam, Ottoman legacy, and Turkish Nationalism.

After discussing Turkey’s present foreign policy, he then moved on to the geographic area of the Greater Middle East which was determined by the 2nd Bush Administration. According to the 2nd Bush Administration, the Greater Middle East region comprises the entire North Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Mauritania.

Discussing how the USA is losing strategic advantages against Russia-Iran in the Greater Middle East by the means of Russia-Turkey arms trade and Turkey-Iran oil and gas trade, Mr. Murshed analysed Turkey’s soft power and hard within the framework of “The Third Front in the Greater Middle East Geopolitics”. Turkey is projecting its soft power by increasing trade and relations with the Muslim countries. The soft power projection also includes–aid, education, security, Islamic humanitarian approach, and diplomacy. Mr. Murshed provided the statistical figure on Turkish mission in other countries from 12 to 39. Turkey has been providing tremendous humanitarian aid to the Muslim countries and Muslim communities including The Rohingya muslim community, Tunisia, Yemen, and Syria. As Turkey is based on the Hanafi sectarian of Islam, it is fighting against Saudi Wahhabism by providing Islamise services.

While discussing about the hard power projection of Turkey, Mr. Labib Murshed focused strong physical strength, military deployments in Iraq and Syria, and overseas military bases. What Mr. Murshed mentioned in his speech is that Turkey is influencing the real world and making practical changes with its hard power projection. Turkey’s military is one of the strongest military in the world which holds the 9th position worldwide. By the means of military deployment in Iraq and Syria, Turkey has been able to deter Iran in that region.

As Pakistan is a part of the Greater Middle East, Turkey is also increasing its relation with Pakistan, In fact, the new government of Imran Khan in Pakistan is also prioritizing its bilateral relation with Turkey.

Finally, Mr. Murshed concludes by saying that due to high polarization in the domestic politics, any political change in Turkey's power may cease Erdoğan's soft power influence in the Greater Middle East, but it may not affect Turkey's military bases in the foreign soil. Future revolutionary events like the 2011 Arab Spring in the region may further boost Erdoğan's soft power in the region. Again, with growing defense capabilities under Erdoğan, in future Turkey may play more assertive role in the regional power politics, making further changes in the geopolitical power game.

Presentation of Ms. Ushan Ara Badal:

With the paper on **“Turkey as a Rising Power: A New Frontier in the International Politics”**, Ms. Badal commenced her presentation describing the geographic area of Turkey as a nation. Ms. Badal described the rise of Turkey under the framework provided by Professor Pinar Tank and Amrita Narlikar which includes– changing dynamics of international system, recognition as a rising power, soft power projection, challenging status quo, economic might, significant military, leading positions, belief in their entitlement to a more influential role in world affairs, dogged multilateral negotiations in several forums, and being included in several alliances. To depict the rise of Turkey, President Erdoğan said in the UN General Assembly that *“The world is bigger than the five”*. Thus, Turkey meant that there are other countries except the P5 members (permanent members) of the UN Security Council who can more or less equally reshape the world politics and the hierarchy of the P5 is no longer accepted in the present world order.

Later, Ms. Badal described how Turkey is challenging the existing order of global justice by the means of internal changes, transforming the centre-periphery relations, a more democratic and fair international system and so on.

In the mid part of her presentation, Ms. Badal analysed how after the end of the cold war era, Turkey became the centre of its own region. After becoming the centre of the region, Turkey started to depict itself as the natural leader of the particular region by playing the role of mediator or facilitator and independent security actor.

The other parts of Ms. Badal's presentation includes– Turkey-EU relations, upgrading position, effective multilateral cooperation etc.

In the later part of her presentation, Ms. Ushan Ara Badal narrated Turkey's role as the contributor to global peace and security through maintaining peace by NATO framework, taking regional responsibility and so forth. Turkey also plays the leading role in the field of humanitarian diplomacy. Turkey is the largest donor country in the world. It is also hosting the biggest refugee population in the world.

Ms. Badal mentioned that Turkey has been able to play such roles because of the growth of its economy. At present, Turkey is the 17th largest economy in terms of Nominal GDP and 13th largest in terms of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity). Turkey has a developed infrastructure and an institutionalized economy.

Finally, Ms. Badal concluded that Turkey is challenging the world politics with the two factors of active foreign policy and large economy.

Comments by the Discussant:

After the keynote paper presentation, Dr. Lailufar Yasmin commented on the papers. She narrated that the papers have portrayed what is happening right now in world politics. She reiterates, "*We are talking about academic IR*". In the field of IR, what important is only national interest and power. There is no place of morality in international politics. Power is both the means and ends in world politics. Turkey is also focusing on its national interest. While discussing about the concept of rising power, Professor Yasmin depicts that during the cold war era, there were only two blocs–the USA bloc and the USSR bloc. However, after the end of the cold war, there was an emergence of alliances and formation of different blocs. It was understood that in international politics, it is quite difficult to survive alone. Whether with morality or not, any state can abdicate to the throne. For instance, America's abdication to throne is always preferred without morality. However, what Turkey is trying now is to depict its position regionally rather than globally.

Open Discussion:

After the comments by the designated discussant, the chair opened the floor for open discussion. The question and answer session was a fruitful one with the participation of academicians, former ambassadors, lawyers, researchers, distinguished fellows, students and others.

Concluding Remarks:

After the open discussion session, the chair of the event Former Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad gave a concluding remarks appreciating both the papers. He made some comments on the papers that both the papers did not mention Turkey's relation with Israel. Turkey's pursuit to join the OIC was also missing. Later, on the matter of Turkey-Bangladesh bilateral relations, Mr. Ahmad reiterates that the current relation between Bangladesh and Turkey is quite good. However, Bangladesh is yet to sign any FTA with Turkey. Finally, the chair ended the session by thanking all.
