Political Entrepreneurship in International Peace Mediation
A study of Turkey’s role at the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... i.

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

I. Policy entrepreneurship as an analytical framework ..................................................... 4

II. Turkey’s mediation portfolio: three pillars.................................................................. 5

  1. Turkey’s field experiences ...................................................................................... 5
  2. Turkey’s promotion of mediation in international organizations ....................... 6
  3. Outcomes of Turkey’s policy entrepreneurship .................................................... 11

III. Promoting the progressive development of mediation ............................................... 12

  1. UN General Assembly resolutions ....................................................................... 12
  2. Thematic guidelines .............................................................................................. 16

IV. Promoting awareness .............................................................................................. 17

V. Promoting institutional capacity ............................................................................... 17

Conclusion: continuing policy entrepreneurship in a crowded field ............................... 19
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Abstract

Since the launch of the Mediation for Peace initiative by Turkey and Finland in 2010, there has been an upsurge of activity at the United Nations (UN) and several regional organizations to promote mediation as a conflict resolution method. The UN General Assembly, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have set out to develop mediation norms, procedures, and capacities. The assets and motivations of international actors, including foremost nation states, to provide mediation services as part of their foreign policy have been widely studied. However, the actual role played by specific leading nations in the promotion of mediation at international forums lacks a framework of analysis. This essay aims to fill this gap by employing the concept of “policy entrepreneurship” to explain the role of individual actors in transforming the politics, norms, and capacities that pertain to mediation. In this regard, the article discusses Turkey’s activities in the field of mediation and their transformative outcomes in a bid to test the proposed framework. It concludes that as the only country that co-chairs the friends of mediation groups simultaneously in the UN, the OSCE and the OIC, the distinguishing contribution of Turkey as a policy entrepreneur lies in its efforts to feed and shape the normative basis and capacities of international peace mediation efforts.
Since the launch of the Mediation for Peace initiative in 2010, the United Nations (UN) and regional organizations have put in significant efforts to promote the mediation of conflicts around the world. The UN Group of Friends of Mediation (FoM), co-chaired by Turkey and Finland, includes 58 members. The UN General Assembly, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and recently the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have set out to develop norms, procedures, and capacities in a bid to promote the use of mediation for resolving increasingly complex conflicts. However, the pace at which these activities of international organizations have developed has left a gap in scholarship. The assets and motivations of international actors, primarily nation states, to engage in mediation have been the subject of several studies but the actual role they play in the promotion of mediation at international forums lacks a framework of analysis. This article aims to fill this gap by proposing the concept of policy entrepreneurship as an analytical tool to explain the role of individual actors in transforming the politics, norms, and capacities related to conflict resolution. The article focuses on Turkey’s activities in the field of mediation and the outcomes of these activities in order to test the proposed framework.

Nations engage in mediation activities for many reasons. The scholarship on mediation focuses particularly on forms of mediation, methods and approaches of mediators, as well as the conditions for success and when mediation is most likely to be requested and offered. Although notably understudied, existing scholarship on Turkey’s mediation activities has similarly posited specific objectives underlying Turkey’s engagement in certain mediation contexts. Zenelaj, Beriker, and Hatipoğlu noted, for instance, that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey was committed to defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that “the final encompassing goal of Turkey has been to secure permanent peace and stability among these three countries [Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia] under the umbrella of NATO and the EU.” As such, Turkey could be seen as a principal mediator in this context, given that it has identified a direct interest in maintaining Bosnia’s territorial integrity and the integration of Balkan countries into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. In the African context, Akpınar located Turkey’s mediation activities in the framework of its humanitarian foreign policy, while noting that “the role of peacemaker offers Turkey a safe entry into a region where politics is often defined by volatility.” She also explained that mediation activities help build...
visibility and increase leverage in addition to helping rally the support of the domestic audience for Turkey’s engagement abroad. Therefore, in the African context, Turkey could be considered to be occupying a position between principal and neutral as mediator, demonstrating that the dichotomy between principal and neutral mediation does not fully account for the definition and redefinition of national interests to include diversity of interests.

There have also been studies that located Turkey’s mediation offerings in the context of broader policy objectives, including achieving global recognition as a country with developing soft power. Such studies argued that Turkey’s foreign policy practice conformed to the “middle power” paradigm.\(^7\) Tank,\(^8\) Beriker,\(^9\) and others located mediation in Turkey’s middle power diplomacy and explained the motivation of its mediation activities in the context of the quest for soft power. A middle power is defined as “a state actor which has limited influence on deciding the distribution of power in a given regional system, but is capable of deploying a variety of sources of power to change the position of great powers and defend its own position on matters related to national or regional security that directly affect it.”\(^10\) Middle powers theory suggests that approximately twenty countries, which rank between 10th and 30th in a range of capability indices, such as GDP, form a distinct category of primary states in the world system. They are separated from the top eight or ten economies and the bottom 160. These so-called middle powers show a willingness to increase their influence in the world, and to that effect, find niches within which they can make their influence noticeable. These niches “serve as a catalyst on a particular international issue or to build international coalitions for a particular issue.”\(^11\) Humanitarian assistance and, separately, mediation provide opportunities for such niche diplomacy. As an example, Kamrava argued that Qatar employed mediation as a diplomatic niche.\(^12\) In 2013, Turkey’s foreign minister explained that mediation was an integral part of a reoriented foreign policy framework that became active, multidimensional, and visionary. This framework was made possible by “Turkey’s unique access to both the global north and south [which] makes it a suitable mediator over a wide geographical range. Turkey’s cultural-civilizational background and long experience with Western political and security structures creates an advantage in the field.”\(^13\) Aras also referred to “Turkey’s ambitious goal to acquire a new status within its new foreign policy framework – one that gives Turkey a role as an international mediator.”\(^14\)

As such, Turkey’s use of mediation as a foreign policy instrument, in the sense defined by Touval\(^15\) alongside other diplomatic, military, and economic policy instruments is well established in the scholarship. This is notwithstanding the fact that the outcomes of Turkey’s use of mediation as a foreign policy instrument are not well studied or articulated. In fact, there is scant analysis of whether the considerations that motivated Turkey to interject as a mediator were met by the actual mediation exercises.

\(^7\) Bruce Gilley, “Turkey, Middle Powers, and the New Humanitarianism,” *Perceptions* 20 (Spring 2015), 37-58.
\(^8\) Pinar Tank, *Turkey as an International Mediator: Opportunities and Pitfalls, with Special Reference to Norway*, NOREF, July 2011.
\(^12\) Mehran Kamrava, “Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy,” *The Middle East Journal* 65 (Autumn 2011), 539-556.
\(^14\) Aras, *Turkey’s Mediation and Friends of Mediation Initiative*, p. 3.
In the practice of Turkish foreign relations, the emphasis on mediation was maintained even after Turkey adopted a new foreign policy concept in 2017 to encapsulate Turkey’s recourse to realpolitik in 2016 with Operation Euphrates Shield in Syria and continuing through to 2018 with Operation Olive Branch. With these two operations, Turkey has given a clear indication that it would take action in order to safeguard interests and employ both hard and soft power assets in a bid to stabilize its neighborhood. This new framework, hailed as “enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy” was conceptualized and announced at the 9th Annual Ambassadors Conference in Ankara in January 2017 and elaborated further in the 10th Annual Ambassadors Conference in August 2018. The new Turkish concept of enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy had two essential components: the use of both hard and soft instruments of power, and humanitarian-based postures in international issues. The doctrine maintained space for the promotion of mediation at international forums and capacity building to that effect. Thus, as Foreign Minister, Çavuşoğlu wrote “prevention and peaceful resolution of conflict is a central feature of Turkey’s enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy,” and called on “the international community to take action in mediation.”

Turkey not only maintained the emphasis on mediation under the new framework, but also stepped up its activities in this regard. This shows that the country has internalized mediation as foreign policy and found room for emphasizing both hard and soft instruments of power under its new foreign policy concept.

However, while increasing soft power, access, leverage, visibility, and greater recognition at the global level may all help explain Turkey’s motivations to use mediation as a foreign policy instrument, these do not sufficiently explain the actual role that Turkey has been fulfilling in the mediation world. This is particularly true with regard to Turkey’s role in promoting the method, capacities, and norms of mediation at international organizations. In other words, whereas the reason why Turkey promotes mediation is explained in the literature, what it actually does at international organizations regarding mediation and what impact these efforts have on the development of mediation as a conflict prevention and resolution method have not been well studied.

Turkey’s mediation portfolio is comprised of three pillars of activity: providing mediation and facilitation in the field; supporting the mediation activities of other actors; and building awareness, norms, and capacities at international organizations. This article argues that within these three strands of activity, policy entrepreneurship helps explain Turkey’s role in international organizations. Political science scholarship defines political entrepreneurs as “individuals whose creative acts have formative effects on politics, policies, or institutions.” The term is occasionally used pejoratively, but in this article I will remain faithful to the original conceptualization, which recognizes policy entrepreneurs as essential agents for policy development and innovation. Thus, Turkey’s role as the co-chair of both the FoM groups at the UN (alongside Finland) and the OSCE (with both Finland and Switzerland) as the convener of the Istanbul Conferences on Mediation and as the convener of the OIC Member States Conferences on Mediation can be explained by referring to scholarship on policy entrepreneurship.

I. Policy entrepreneurship as an analytical framework

The concept of policy entrepreneurship has been the subject of significant scrutiny, particularly in the political science literature.\(^1\)\(^6\) The field of international relations, however, has paid significantly less attention to political entrepreneurship as an analytical tool for studying the causal mechanism of agenda setting\(^7\) at the international level and the role of nation states that act as agents of change. The role of non-governmental organizations\(^2\)\(^0\) or the bureaucracies of international organizations, has been studied from the angle of norm entrepreneurship.\(^2\)\(^1\) Despite several examples to the contrary, the discipline has instead chosen to classify the degrees and forms of international influence from the perspective of size and power. The middle powers framework, which is one such perspective, does not fully account for the role played by Turkey in the field of mediation, as it focuses on the motivations, assets, and shortcomings of Turkey as a so-called middle power. In this way, it adopts a stationary optic, presuming that states at a given size or with a given amount of power routinely act in a certain fashion. It provides no criterion with which to gauge a state’s role in making an actual difference within the niches it finds for itself. A more dynamic framework is thus needed to address such shortcomings and to help explain the occasional irrelevance of size or power.

The impact that political entrepreneurs have had on policy design\(^2\)\(^2\) and their strategies and actions to effect formal institutional change, has been subject to thorough analysis in academic literature.\(^2\)\(^3\) Policy entrepreneurs are instrumental in shaping the terms of political debate, framing or reframing issues, identifying and defining specific problems, and influencing policy agendas. They innovate new policies or policy directions and consolidate change.\(^2\)\(^4\) While the majority of studies on political entrepreneurship since Schumpeter\(^2\)\(^5\) and Dahl\(^2\)\(^6\) have focused on domestic politics, policies, and institutions, there has been some recognition of similar actors in international politics.

Blavoukos and Bourantonis examined the role of chairs as policy entrepreneurs in multilateral negotiations, particularly at the United Nations. They showed that in multilateral negotiations, chairs are needed to manage these complex bargaining processes, either as third parties with no direct stake in the negotiations or as a negotiating party designated as chair. They concluded that four attributes create an ideal space for an entrepreneurial chair. These are: “A broad and vague mandate with monopolistic intervention repertoire at the chair’s disposal, high levels of informational asymmetries and political capital, less constraining decision-

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\(^7\) Sheingate, “Political Entrepreneurship, Institutional Change, and American Political Development,” 185-203.

\(^8\) Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*.

\(^9\) Dahl, *Who Governs?*
making rules, and loose control mechanisms.”27 As explained previously, these parameters characterize the UN FoM and other multilateral forums in which Turkey has taken a special role to promote mediation.

This article will therefore first explain the three pillars of Turkish mediation-related activities (namely, engaging in Track I and II mediation and facilitation in the field; supporting the mediation activities of other players; and building awareness, norms, and capacities at international organizations). It will then argue that Turkey’s activities at the UN, OSCE, and, recently, the OIC amount to a role as a political entrepreneur in the field of mediation.

II. Turkey’s mediation portfolio: three pillars

1. Turkey’s field experiences

Turkey has amassed a portfolio of Track I and II mediation efforts between various disputing parties. Using Beardsley, Quinn, Biswas, and Wilkenfeld’s model28 Turkey’s publicly known mediation portfolio includes:29

- Facilitation in the dialogue between Sudan and South Sudan on economic cooperation; Track II diplomacy between Somali and Somaliland (2013 onwards); and also between Syria and Israel (2008). Other examples include facilitation to achieve domestic reconciliation in Iraq (2005, 2010, and 2018), Lebanon (2008), Kyrgyzstan (2010) and Palestine (2011 onwards); and hosting P5+1 meetings with Iran in Istanbul (2010).
- Formulation to establish the regional Istanbul Process on Afghanistan (2010 onwards), the Turkey-Brazil initiative on Iran’s nuclear program (2010), as well as in the trilateral processes involving Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (2009), Croatia (2010), and Afghanistan and Pakistan (2007 onwards).

Given that, to date, the literature does not aim to categorize Turkey’s mediation activities in this way, the categorization above should be seen as tentative. However, these examples of Turkey’s field experiences in mediation should suffice to demonstrate Turkey’s active engagement in mediation fieldwork. An active mediation profile, however, does not necessarily translate into a political entrepreneurship role.

An exception may be found in Turkey’s cooperation with Brazil to convince Iran to sign on to a written agreement that brought restrictions to its nuclear program. In the end, the document was not accepted by the United States, although it had met most of the parameters set out in a letter written by the US President at the time.30 However, the 2010 Tehran Agreement between Turkey, Brazil, and Iran contributed to the successful outcome of the P5+1 talks in 2015, demonstrating that a deal would be possible.31 Thus, Turkey’s cooperation with Brazil could be regarded as policy entrepreneurship in favor of a peaceful resolution of the disagreement over Iran’s nuclear program.

30 Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett, “President Obama Should Be Honest About the Iran-Turkey-Brazil Nuclear Deal,” Huffington Post, May 25, 2011.
31 Das and Wanis-St. John, 2016.
Supporting mediation activities in a way that is aligned with the goals of the mediation effort should be recognized as a separate pillar of activity. Such support is provided through participation in contact groups and extending political support in other ways, as well as providing resources, including experts, for lead mediators. Even though Turkish mediators do not always take the lead in mediation efforts, Turkey has supported mediation activities on numerous occasions. One such example is Turkey’s leadership of the Independent Decommissioning Body, within the overall effort of normalization, to implement the 2012 agreement between the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. A similar role has been fulfilled in Ukraine with the leadership of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. Other examples include financial contributions to the UN’s Standby Team of Mediation Experts, the UN Department of Political Affairs, as well as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and International Peace Institute training course in Oslo. This pillar of activity does seem to lend itself to policy entrepreneurship.

2. Turkey’s promotion of mediation in international organizations

Turkey’s efforts to promote mediation within international organizations form the core of its role as policy entrepreneur in the field of international peace mediation. One possible criterion for judging the success of Turkey’s efforts can be the degree to which international attention has been mobilized towards mediation. To that end, the role Turkey has played is the culmination of the following main streams of activity.

a. Mediation for Peace/UN FoM

Following consultations between Turkey and Finland in 2010, the two countries agreed to lead efforts to establish the UN FoM. The proposal to partner with Turkey, which was an act of policy entrepreneurship from Finland, invoked the active diplomatic engagement and influence of Turkey in a multitude of geographic areas. Upon further consultation, the two co-sponsors of the initiative agreed that the aims of the FoM would be two-fold: to promote the use of mediation in conflict prevention and resolution and to generate support for the development of mediation. Under these aims, the FoM would pursue a number of tasks and objectives. These included raising awareness of the need for and utility of mediation at all stages of the conflict continuum, especially with a view to preventing conflict; encouraging relevant actors, including regional and sub-regional organizations, to undertake mediation activities, with a particular emphasis on engaging more women in mediation; and highlighting the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all stages and at all levels of peace processes, as well as the crucial role of gender expertise in mediation. Other tasks and objectives included providing a forum to bring together expertise, experience, and lessons learned by the different actors in mediation; creating, fostering, and expanding the network of mediators; improving cooperation and coordination among different actors in order to increase complementarity and the coherence of efforts; increasing the capabilities for mediation, especially within the UN framework; promoting mediation-related capacity building, including through regional arrangements and networks; developing guidelines or codes of conduct for mediation, taking into account the specific nature of each conflict; mobilizing more resources in order to secure sustained funding for mediation activities; and, last but not least, developing early-warning response capabilities of the UN and member states.

The FoM, co-chaired by Turkey and Finland, started in September 2010 with 20 member states, the UN and 7 regional organizations, all of which were engaged in mediation activities. The membership subsequently rose to 58 (50 states and 8 international organizations). The FoM operates on three levels. One level is consultations between co-chairs and the UN Secretariat, especially the Mediation Support Unit. The second level involves FoM’s expert meetings, including groups that negotiate early drafts of resolutions before a text is
submitted to the General Assembly. The third level is the ministerial meetings of the FoM members. Co-chairs Turkey and Finland take turns hosting annual high-level ministerial meetings in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly. These ministerial sessions help boost the FoM’s work in the remainder of the year and synergize with the other two layers of FoM activity.

At a meeting of the FoM in 2017, the incoming UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced his plans to upgrade UN efforts in mediation at the level of permanent representatives or ambassadors to the UN. This thereby confirmed the useful role that this informal grouping has played in the mediation field since the tabling of the first UN General Assembly resolution on mediation in 2011.

b. OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation

Following the establishment of the UN FoM, Turkey, together with Finland and Switzerland, took the lead in forming another such group at the OSCE. These three countries have since become co-chairs of the group, and several thematic meetings have been held since the first meeting on March 6, 2014. It is important to note that the OSCE benefits from the Conflict Prevention Center as part of its Secretariat, and the organization has significant expertise in conflict prevention and resolution as part of its mandate. However, the Friends of Mediation group helps provide a focused forum to discuss mediation-related activities among member states. Overall, however, this particular group might be underperforming in shaping the agenda and content in the mediation world.

c. OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation

Following the establishment of the UN FoM and OSCE FoM, Turkey took the lead to establish the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation in 2018. The group held its inaugural meeting at the level of foreign ministers in New York on September 24, 2018, on the margins of the 73rd UN General Assembly. Following the inaugural meeting, Turkey was joined by Saudi Arabia, Gambia, and the OIC General Secretariat as the co-chairs of the contact group. Thus, Turkey became the only country that co-chairs three distinct Friends of Mediation groups at three major international institutions.

Shortly after its establishment, the group became the second largest contact group at the OIC. While its activities are yet to be seen, the strong interest demonstrates the potential of the group and constitutes a milestone in efforts towards strengthening the mediation capacity of the OIC.

d. Istanbul Conferences on Mediation

Advancing new ideas to catalyze policy change is part and parcel of policy entrepreneurship. The annual Istanbul Conferences on Mediation fulfill multiple functions, including raising awareness and ideas; creating epistemic communities of experts; setting the stage for advanced cognition conducive to innovation; and catalyzing social construction of common cognition and beliefs among the actors. Since “policy entrepreneurship relies on the social construction of issues, opportunities and challenges,” the functions noted above are components of Turkey’s policy entrepreneurship.


The Istanbul Conferences on Mediation bring together governmental and civil society actors engaged in mediation to discuss how to improve the effectiveness of mediation efforts. The first Istanbul Conference on Mediation, which was held in 2012, analyzed the issues that would later be addressed in the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation. The subsequent Istanbul Conferences on Mediation have fulfilled similar roles in discussing issues and ideas that were not only already on the agenda, but also on the horizon. For example, the theme of the 2017 conference was synchronized with the UN secretary-general’s emerging surge in diplomacy for peace initiatives and the emphasis put on prevention. The conference also seeded the agenda of building international capacity for the horizontal and vertical expansion of mediation activities beyond those conducted by a small group of distinguished individuals. Participants debated challenges and opportunities for building action and capacity in every phase of the conflict cycle and at every level of engagement, from civil society to regional and global organizations. Two issues stand out in the chairman’s Summary Report of the Conference: the domination of post-conflict peacebuilding activities by military and intelligence agencies and a decrease in the involvement of international organizations in post-conflict reconstruction. The report also asserted that post-conflict peacebuilding, which constitutes the last phase of the peace continuum, has become a predominantly military-driven practice in the last decade.

The 2017 Istanbul Conference on Mediation also highlighted another emerging emphasis in the conflict prevention and resolution field, namely tensions based on various forms of political, social, and religious animosities, such as xenophobia and racism, which are in ascendancy around the world. Participants noted that discrimination-based tensions and conflicts endanger healthy national and international order. In such an environment, minority groups and immigrants are often treated as security issues. Even though identity does not drive conflicts by itself, securitizing and criminalizing identity and culture issues complicate efforts to build resilience and peace. The conference recommended that the UN draft a guidance on culturally sensitive mediation to help train mediators to better operate in specific cultural contexts. Turkey disseminated the results of the debates in Istanbul in different forums, including the OSCE and the OIC, in a bid to increase awareness and promote action.

The theme of the 2018 Istanbul Conference on Mediation was likewise innovative. The conference focused on the theme of “Enhancing the Practice of Mediation for Sustaining Peace” looking in particular at the connection between sustainable development and mediation, strengthening the role of women and youth in mediation efforts, and the impact of technology on mediation. The first session explored the complementarity of development and mediation efforts, looking in particular at how steps towards sustainable development can play a role in the prevention of conflicts and the sustainability of peace agreements. Participants highlighted that a large number of conflicts involve disputes over resources, which may suggest that sustainable development can indeed bring in a new perspective to mediation efforts. The second session on gender and youth inclusion recalled that while there is consensus among the international community for greater gender inclusivity in mediation efforts, practice often falls short of reflecting this norm. Discussions also underscored the need to incorporate the views and contributions of youth in all stages of the conflict cycle. Concluding remarks from the organizers stated that youth inclusion required greater attention, including at the level of the Group of Friends of Mediation and the UN General Assembly.

The third session looked at the implications of technology and digital transformation on prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, including through mediation. This future-oriented session looked at how big data has the potential to transform understanding of local and global conflict trends and reshape how the international community thinks about and applies conflict prevention and resolution. Presenters showed how
global conflict trends can be mapped and analyzed through open data resources, then translated into a common language through machine translation – allowing for cross-linguistic analysis. The session underscored the tremendous potential of big data and artificial intelligence in the field of conflict analysis and mediation.

The Istanbul Conferences on Mediation are supplemented by another conference series in Istanbul, addressing the OIC specifically.

e. OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in Istanbul

Conflict is ubiquitous and pervasive. It is a global phenomenon not specific to any geography, culture, or creed. Nonetheless, presently, there is a visible concentration of conflict and human misery among the members of the OIC. The data presented by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries at the OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in Istanbul in February 2017 painted a gruesome picture. According to this data 30 out of the 50 conflicts recorded worldwide in 2015 occurred in OIC countries. No less than 12 of those were internal conflicts, while 17 were internationalized. Such conflict has created immense human suffering. With 25 million displaced people, OIC countries accounted for 61.5 percent of the global displaced population. The conference report also noted that close to 80 percent of all new internal displacement in the world took place in OIC countries, while 89 million people in need of humanitarian assistance resided in OIC countries – 71 percent of all such people in the world. Specifically, two factors further aggravated this worrisome picture – the Syrian conflict, which has killed more than half a million Syrians and displaced 5 million refugees since 2011, and an increase in the occurrence of natural disasters in OIC member countries. Thus, the report noted, “While OIC countries had a share of 23% in total number of natural disaster incidents in the world all throughout 1980-1999, their share increased to 25% during the 2000-2016.” The OIC is the largest international political organization after the UN in geographical reach and population, covering more than 1.6 billion people in 57 countries. Its reach spans four continents, which partly explains the concentration of conflicts among its members. OIC members also suffer disproportionately from resource scarcity, which often creates conflict. In this way, OIC members recognize that the organization can and must do more to promote peace.

The OIC has an explicit mission and structure for addressing conflicts. Chapter 15 of the OIC Charter is devoted to the peaceful settlement of disputes, and decision-making forums such as the Executive Committee, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the Islamic Summit are all part of the OIC Peace Architecture. Summit decisions, such as those made at the 13th Islamic Summit Conference held in Istanbul in April 2016, ask for the development of mechanisms for effectively addressing important matters concerning peace and security, conflict prevention, mediation, and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Islamic Rapprochement Initiative, led by Turkey and Kazakhstan, and the OIC Contact Group on Peace and Conflict Resolution are part and parcel of this architecture, together with the Wise Persons Council, special envoys, and the Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution Unit at the General Secretariat.

34 All data in this paragraph regarding OIC conflict statistics are from: The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). *Humanitarian Crises in OIC Countries: Drivers, Impacts, Current Challenges and Potential Remedies*, (Istanbul, 2017), hereafter referred to as SESRIC 2017 or the Report.
35 SESRIC, 2017, 1.
36 Syria’s membership is suspended.
Against this background, Turkey launched an initiative in 2017 to flesh out and strengthen the OIC’s existing peace architecture and promote mediation in conflicts within the OIC geography, thereby capitalizing on its role as the chair of the OIC Summit and the Executive Committee and the co-chair of the UN FoM. In November 2017, Turkey and the OIC General Secretariat organized the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in Istanbul, with the theme of “Surge in Mediation: The Role of the OIC.” With a view to contributing to the capacity-building work of the OIC, the conference aimed at strengthening awareness among the OIC members of the benefits of mediation by facilitating intellectual exchanges on various normative aspects and practical issues on mediation. Turkish officials emphasized the fact that prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts require not only political will, but also capacity and a method. They avoided lengthy debates over the former in favor of focusing on the latter, arguing that political will could be built by building capacity first. They called upon the OIC and all its member states to play a more visible and active role in mediation efforts and help build awareness and capacity. OIC officials underlined that persisting conflicts among and within the member states and in countries where Muslim minorities reside are among the gravest threats to international and regional peace, security, and stability. They also highlighted the need to promote mediation methods and build capacity throughout the OIC geography and within the OIC General Secretariat.

The first conference sought ways to build on this web of extant mechanisms and identify concrete and practical steps to enhance mediation capacity. Specific recommendations included strengthening partnerships between the OIC and other international and regional organizations, establishing a network of OIC mediators, including experts, think tanks, and civil society, preparing a code of conduct and set of guidelines for mediators, building a culturally sensitive mediation approach, enhancing the offices of the secretary-general, expanding and fully activating the Wise Persons Council, and strengthening the Islamic Rapprochement Initiative and the mandate of Contact Groups.37

The Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation was held in 2018, with the theme focusing on the challenges and opportunities ahead to enhance the mediation capacity of the OIC. Indeed, much had been achieved regarding the mediation capacity of the OIC since the first conference, such as the adoption of Resolution No. 53/45-POL, “Strengthening the Mediation Capacity of the OIC” at the 45th Council of Foreign Ministers held in Dhaka in May 5-6, 2018, the formation of the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation, and the establishment of the Mediation for Peace Certificate Program. Thus, there was already momentum within the OIC for discussing concrete ways forward in the implementation of the resolution.

The second conference was attended by permanent representatives to the OIC in addition to experts in the field. The conference had a transformative effect as it not only raised awareness to the current state of conflict across the OIC geography but also provided a significant platform for the ambassadors to evaluate how they could better make use of the toolbox for mediation within the OIC, that has been enhanced under the summit chairmanship of Turkey.

Experts stressed that the gap in conflict trends between OIC countries and non-OIC countries has been expanding drastically since 2015. While evaluating the root causes of the recent upsurge in conflict across the OIC geography, participants highlighted that as the OIC had a specific mandate for enhancing its mediation

37 Summarized from the Chairman’s Summary of the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation, Istanbul, November 21, 2017.
capacity, the focus should be on political will to act. The importance of unity and the necessity of finding a common vision within OIC member states to better make use of the opportunities of the resolution were widely echoed.

The second conference also provided the opportunity to explore what was needed to be supplemented within the OIC so that it could become a robust actor in the field of mediation as the UN and the OSCE. In this vein, participants argued that the OIC needed to enhance its cooperation and create synergy with the UN, OSCE, and the African Union to develop its tools for a wider range of conflicts. The conference also stressed the importance of good governance and sustainable development to enhance mediation efforts, which complemented the results of the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation. The second conference also entertained an additional optional training session for young diplomats from the OIC member states in the form of a mediation simulation exercise. Overall, young diplomats from 17 OIC member states joined to hone their skills for mediation, which signified a concrete output towards capacity building.

In line with other Istanbul Conferences on Mediation, OIC Member States Conferences on Mediation are designed to interact with policy processes in the field of mediation, help create an epistemic community, and advance cognition in the field of mediation. The purpose of the OIC Member States Conference on Mediation is to develop a mediation agenda and action plan within the OIC. The primary result of the first conference was thus witnessed at the Parliamentary Union of the Islamic Conference in January 2018, which made direct mention of the First OIC Member States Conference on Mediation in Istanbul and commended the resultant efforts to develop mediation capacity within the OIC and its member states. The repercussions of the second conference are yet to be seen. Yet both conferences attest how Turkey has ventured into the extremely challenging field of policy entrepreneurship by taking the first steps toward introducing mediation into the OIC system. The success of this enterprise will no doubt depend on the support of this agenda by other member states.

### 3. Outcomes of Turkey’s policy entrepreneurship

An analysis of Turkey’s mediation portfolio shows that among the three pillars of Turkish mediation activities, the promotion of mediation in international organizations has been particularly successful in generating concrete outcomes over and above specific conflict cases. This pillar therefore accounts for most of Turkey’s role as policy entrepreneur in the field of mediation, notwithstanding the attempt made to delineate a “Turkish way” of mediation based on actual experiences. In order for a nation-specific model of mediation to emerge further, actual experience and conceptualization need to accrue. However, various instruments deployed by Turkey at international organizations, either in liaison and direct co-sponsorship with other major actors or independently, have already transformed policies and institutions in the mediation field. Such transformative acts indicate policy entrepreneurship. In this context, the outcomes of Turkey’s transformative acts, as explained above, can be classified under the development of mediation norms and procedures, promoting awareness, and promoting capacity building.

The normative, procedural, and institutional infrastructure of mediation practice is strongly influenced by the UN General Assembly resolutions and the UN Secretariat’s thematic guidelines that are supported by FoM groups at the UN and the OSCE. The Istanbul Conferences, among other influential gatherings of scholars and

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38 The Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States, Resolution No. 20/PFR-13-CONF on Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, Tehran, (January 16-17, 2018)
practitioners, helped develop momentum and ideas that would feed debates within both the FoM groups and the UN General Assembly. The advent of similar dynamics within the OIC further underscores the transformative effects of such policy entrepreneurship. These transformative effects can be seen in the promotion of awareness and institutional capacity.

In the remainder of this paper, I will analyze the outcomes of policy entrepreneurship from the vantage point of the normative outcomes of efforts to promote progressive development of mediation. I will assume that awareness and capacity building have already been sufficiently articulated in the previous sections of this article, and thus I will include only brief reminders.

III. Promoting the progressive development of mediation

Joint efforts by Turkey and Finland to mobilize the UN through the Group of Friends of Mediation and other means have contributed to the achievement of specific outcomes in four UN General Assembly resolutions. Together, these documents provide a baseline for content-related and process-related “collective expectations of proper behavior” for mediators. The Turkish-Finnish efforts, which played a central role in producing these outcomes, are analyzed in the following discussion of the UN General Assembly resolutions and thematic guidelines.

1. UN General Assembly resolutions

a. A/RES/65/283

The first resolution adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly at its 65th session in 2011, under the lead of the FoM, was entitled: “Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution.” As the FoM co-chairs announced, “The aim of the resolution was to consolidate the normative basis, reinforce support to mediation activities and enhance Member States engagement in mediation efforts.” Resolution 65/283 is a landmark document, which elaborates the normative basis for mediation. Specifically, the resolution states that:

- Mediation is to be promoted without prejudice to other means mentioned in Chapter VI of the UN Charter.
- Peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention, and resolution “remain a primary responsibility of Member States,” regardless of the role of the UN.
- Mediation activities are important for preventing post-conflict countries from relapsing into conflict.
- Peace and development are mutually reinforcing.
- Responsible and credible mediation requires, inter alia, the consent of parties to a particular dispute or conflict, the impartiality of the mediators, their compliance with agreed mandates, respect for national sovereignty, compliance with obligations of states and other relevant actors under international law, including applicable treaties, and the operational preparedness, including process and substantive expertise, of the mediators.
- Mediation activities benefit from the contributions of a multiplicity of actors. The resolution noted the important role of regional and sub-regional organizations as mediators acting in many regions with

the consent of parties in a particular dispute or conflict. Similarly, the contributions, when appropriate, of national and civil society actors in mediation were also recognized.

- The various actors involved in a specific mediation must cooperate and coordinate.
- States and the UN need to build capacity for mediation and include the full and effective participation of women, including as chief or lead peace mediators.

The resolution invited member states to optimize the use of mediation and other tools mentioned in Chapter VI of the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention, and resolution. Member states were also encouraged to use the mediation capacities of the United Nations, as well as those of regional and sub-regional organizations, where applicable, and to promote mediation in their bilateral and multilateral relations.

The UN secretary-general was requested to continue to offer its good offices, in accordance with the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions, to continue to provide mediation support, where appropriate, to special representatives and envoys of the United Nations and to enhance partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as member states.

In addition to setting out a normative basis for mediation, Resolution 65/283 also promoted capacity building for mediation. The resolution encouraged member states to develop national mediation capacities and to provide timely, adequate resources and capacity-building activities for mediation. In this resolution, the General Assembly underlined the importance of well-trained, impartial, experienced, and geographically diverse mediation experts supporting the efforts of the secretary-general to maintain an updated roster of mediators. The resolution also invited relevant international, regional, and sub-regional organizations, as well as civil society, to develop mediation capacities and structures, as appropriate. In this regard, the efforts of the African Union in developing its mediation capacities and structures, in particular its early-warning assessment systems and prevention and response capabilities, were specifically mentioned. The resolution also praised the efforts of the UN secretary-general to assist member states and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations, upon request, in mediation capacity-building for the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention, and resolution, and called upon the secretary-general to continue these efforts, in accordance with agreed mandates. The General Assembly asked the UN to prepare guidance for more effective mediation for the benefit of various actors in the mediation field.

This first resolution on mediation was a product of intense negotiations. Some member states asserted the need to refer to territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of nations, while others thought the reference to “the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination or foreign occupation” was too narrow. One member insisted on making reference to ending foreign occupation, not acquiring territory by the use of force, and self-determination, and received the support of several Arab countries. In reference to regional and sub-regional organizations, one member state opposed references to “early-warning assessment systems, prevention and response capabilities,” but faced the opposition of African countries. These and other points were debated in several readings of the draft, which ought to be seen as natural given the importance of the resolution.41

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41 Information on negotiations over UN General Assembly resolutions presented here and below are based on personal interviews. Such information is not intended to provide an authoritative account of positions taken by member states.
Resolution A/65/283 was a ground-breaking endorsement and encouragement by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the use of mediation tools. The FoM, led by Turkey and Finland, made a distinct contribution to the field by spearheading the process towards the endorsement of this first Resolution in 2011.40 This was followed by three additional General Assembly resolutions. Readings of the draft resolution were conducted during 20 different expert level meetings co-chaired by Turkey and Finland.

b. A/RES/66/291

The draft for the second resolution, A/RES/66/291, was prepared by Turkey and Finland, and negotiations on this resolution were completed at the General Assembly, under the co-chairmanship of Turkey and Finland. On September 13, 2012, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/66/291, the focus of which was the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation (A/66/811). Some members seemed intent on re-opening the Guidance document, but could not convince the majority of the UN members. Another topic of discussion centered on how the General Assembly should encourage the use of the guidance document. Thus, the final text of paragraph 4 advised that the UN General Assembly “encourages the use, as appropriate, of the Guidance for Effective Mediation in mediation efforts, the development of mediation capacities and cooperation, in particular in specific mediation contexts, by all relevant actors involved in mediation, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter.”

The focus of this rather brief follow-up resolution, the annexed UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, has been a landmark reference document in its own right. The guidance will be discussed further below.

c. A/RES/68/303

Turkey and Finland adopted another approach in preparing a draft for the third UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/68/303). They conducted preparatory brain storming sessions with academics and representatives of regional organizations including the OSCE, the African Union, and the European Union, then summarized the findings in a report that would guide the drafting of A/RES/68/303. Once again, they co-chaired both the FoM group and the General Assembly deliberations.

This resolution was adopted by consensus on July 31, 2014. Its main purpose was to promote the development of mediation capacities of international, regional, and sub-regional organizations. The resolution acknowledged that regional and sub-regional organizations “can benefit mediation efforts with their specific approaches stemming from their geographic, cultural and historical proximity to, as well as information about, specific local conflict situations within their mandates, and contribute to the prevention and resolution of such conflicts.”

In the operative portion of the resolution, the emphasis was once again on developing the mediation capacities of regional and sub-regional organizations, encouraging them to use the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation and to promote awareness of mediation through conferences and similar activities. The resolution encouraged the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations to “improve cooperation, coordination, coherence and complementarity in specific mediation contexts.”

d. A/RES/70/304

The fourth resolution, A/RES/70/304, was adopted in September 2016. The Turkish-Finnish leadership, in cooperation with the UN Secretariat, worked effectively on this resolution as well. The focus this time was the UN’s review processes and the role of mediation. This resolution referred to the 2015 report of the secretary-general on conflict prevention (S/2015/730), and expanded upon these references by invoking the concept of sustaining peace, as defined in UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 and Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016). The General Assembly also took note of the World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul that same year, during which strengthening the prevention and mediation capabilities of the United Nations was a central theme.

As with previous resolutions, this resolution was the product of intense debate among the member states. The process started with a draft provided by Turkey and Finland as the co-chairs of the FoM, and was then taken to plenary format. During the strenuous negotiations, an interesting point was the debate around the issue of the competencies of mediators. While some states aimed to expand the competencies, others weighed in to limit them to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter. In this context, a proposal authorizing UN staff involved in peacekeeping missions to engage with or reach out to non-state armed groups was rejected. Instead, a stipulation was added to remind member states that the UN field missions had mandates which must be respected.

Similarly, the majority of nations were reluctant to give the UN free reign in drafting new guidance documents or expanding existing ones, as these are not negotiated documents but are issued under the authority of the UN secretary-general.

Another point of contention was around the invocation of the concept of “early warning.” UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2171 (2014) makes several references to early warning, which is critical for the prevention of conflicts. A widespread concern was the possible use of the concept of early warning as a pretext to intervene in the affairs of nation states. This particular concern was shared by at least two permanent members of the UN Security Council – China and Russia.

The resolutions’ reference to terrorism made clear that terrorism is to be considered a separate phenomenon from conflict. Most mediation processes today are carried out during conflicts within states between recognized governments and non-state armed actors, which states often classify as terrorists. The resolution states that mediation activities have to take into account the imperative to confront terrorism rather than to treat it as a routine part of conflict. In this way, the reference to terrorism effectively prevented mediators from routinely considering “terrorists” as parties to a conflict in a way that might confer legitimacy on them. This reference also ensured that bargaining with terrorist groups would not occur. However, the resolution recalled the commitment to implement in a balanced and integrated manner the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Resolution 60/288, including the annexed Plan of Action). These four pillars include: addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.
2. **Thematic guidelines**

In addition to the General Assembly resolutions, the UN Secretariat has issued thematic guidelines, which further elaborate both the normative and procedural content of the mediation training. These guidelines are issued under the responsibility of the UN secretary-general, and are not negotiated among the UN member states. While this structure facilitates and perhaps enables these guidelines, it also accounts for the limited number of such documents that have been issued. Although it is important to mention useful documents like the *UN Manual for Mediators* and the *Mediation Start-up Guidelines*, there are two guidance documents, covering effective mediation and gender inclusion, which merit particular mention.

- **UN Guidance for Effective Mediation**

After the fourth resolution was passed, the co-chairs of the UN FoM were a bit wary about introducing another draft. It is important to remember that most nations also displayed reluctance with regard to the production of guideline manuals by the UN Secretariat, which are not negotiated documents. This is despite the fact that the *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation* was considered a useful text, and the UN General Assembly resolutions encouraged its use.

In introducing the *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation*, the UN secretary-general reminded member nations that there have been both successful and unsuccessful attempts at mediation, and that one can learn from both types. The guidance therefore identified best practices for mediators, who inevitably confront circumstances that require tailored approaches, as all disputes and conflicts are unique. The intended audience of the guidance included mediators, states and other actors supporting mediation efforts, conflict parties, civil society, and other stakeholders who needed to understand both the potential and the limits of mediation. Therefore, in a bid to maximize the chances for success, the guidance offered advice both on the design and management processes. Eight fundamental elements were identified and explained as being key to effective mediation: preparedness, consent, impartiality, inclusivity, national ownership, international law and normative frameworks; coherence, coordination and complementarity of the mediation effort; and quality peace agreements. 43

Of these, both “impartiality” and “international law and normative frameworks” merit a closer look for the purposes of this article. The guidance defines impartiality as a cornerstone of mediation. This is because bias on the part of the conflicting parties can undermine the entire mediation exercise. It is essential for the mediator to maintain a balanced process, and the mediator should have the ability to talk to all relevant actors in order to help resolve the conflict. The guidance also states that a mediator should not have a material interest in the outcome of the mediation. However, the guidance makes it clear that impartiality does not mean neutrality. The mediator should not be neutral with regard to universal principles and values. It is crucial to note that impartiality remains a contested principle, with major mediators like Ahtisaari arguing that what should be expected of a mediator is not impartiality or neutrality but rather being seen by the parties as an honest broker. 44

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This ties in well to the fundamentals of international law and normative frameworks. The guidance asserts that conformity to international law and norms contributes to the legitimacy and longevity of the peace agreement, while facilitating mobilization of international support for its implementation. Specifically, UN mediators are be expected to work within the framework of the UN Charter, relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as the rules and regulations of the UN. All mediators must ensure that peace agreements do not provide amnesty for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or gross violations of human rights. However, the guidance’s stipulation in favor of encouraging amnesty for political offences, such as treason or rebellion, remains controversial and would not be included in a negotiated document.

b. Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies

The UN Secretariat released the Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies at an FoM meeting in March 2017. While there is a significant number of women mediation scholars and domestic mediation practitioners, there is a dearth of women mediators, especially lead mediators, in international practices. This is in spite of the fact that women can play crucial roles in conflict prevention and resolution. In light of this reality, this guidance recalled some relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, such as UNSCR 1325 (2000), linking women to peace and security and calling for greater and more effective participation of women in conflict mediation processes. In this regard, the guidance noted the enduring gap between the aspirations, commitments, and actual experience of women in conflict and peace processes. Against this background, the guidance provided advice on mediation preparation, process design, and substantive issues such as security arrangements, participation, constitutions, language, and the implementation of peace agreements in a way that would promote greater gender inclusion.

The document also explicitly built on the previous UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, thereby underlining the organic link between the two. However, Turkey still maintains the need to produce a further guidance that would support capacity building for managing culturally sensitive mediation.

IV. Promoting awareness

Since 2010, Turkey has made the promotion of awareness on mediation and the expansion of its application a distinct part of its foreign policy. This policy has been carried out through establishing and leading the FoM alongside Finland and the UN Secretariat, introducing UN General Assembly resolutions, and organizing conferences. Similarly, Turkey’s efforts have brought mediation onto the agenda of the OIC. Turkey’s leadership in promoting awareness on mediation has produced outcomes such as resolutions of the Parliamentary Union and the Council of Ministers of the OIC.

V. Promoting institutional capacity

The 2005 World Summit, organized by the United Nations, called for the expansion of the UN’s conflict prevention and resolution capacity. In 2006, the Mediation Support Unit of the UN Secretariat was established as a central repository in the field of mediation and peacemaking writ large. Although the unit’s

founding director was a former Turkish diplomat, this significant increase in institutional capacity predated the Turkish-Finnish led Mediation for Peace initiative and Turkey’s policy entrepreneurship role. In addition to providing financial assistance to the Standby Team of Mediation Experts, the strong emphasis on keeping mediation high on the agenda and encouraging its continued articulation and implementation have provided a rationale for keeping such institutional capacity strong.

Turkey’s efforts in the OIC underscore its role as policy entrepreneur in mediation. Turkey has been building on the UN General Assembly resolutions on mediation (especially A/68/303), which encourage the role of regional and sub-regional organizations. Thus, as the Summit Chair of the OIC, Turkey convened the first OIC Member States Conference on Mediation on November 21, 2017, in Istanbul and, building on its recommendations, submitted a draft resolution on “Strengthening the Mediation Capacity of the OIC” at the OIC. The purpose of this resolution was “to strengthen awareness in the OIC area on the benefits of mediation as a cost-effective tool for the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.” The resolution was adopted at the 45th Session of the Council of Ministers of the OIC in Dhaka on May 5-6, 2018.

This OIC resolution is significant not only because it is the first ever such resolution focused exclusively on mediation, but also because of its actionable substance. The Council of Ministers invited the OIC and all its member states “to play a more active role in mediation efforts and help build awareness and capacity.” This was to be done in several concrete steps, including the establishment of an OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation, the formation of a network of OIC mediators, the continuation of the OIC Member States Conferences on Mediation on an annual basis, the preparation of a draft Code of Conduct for Mediators, including culturally sensitive mediation approaches, and the provision of conflict resolution and mediation training opportunities.

Concrete outcomes had already been reported by the time this article was written. Upon Turkey’s initiative, the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation held its inaugural meeting in New York in the margins of the 73rd UN General Assembly. Following the inaugural meeting, Turkey was joined by Saudi Arabia, Gambia, and the OIC General Secretariat as co-chairs of the Contact Group. In addition, the Turkish Diplomacy Academy has launched a “Mediation for Peace Certificate Program” to provide intensive, interactive, and practice-oriented training to selected diplomats from OIC member states and the OIC General Secretariat. Furthermore, the Second OIC Member States Conference on Mediation was held in November 2018 which brought permanent representatives of the OIC member states into interaction with experts in the field to facilitate a holistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges that flow from the landmark OIC Ministerial decision number 53/45, which itself was the product of the first conference.

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48 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation’s 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Resolution No. 53/45-POL On Strengthening the Mediation Capacity of the OIC, Dhaka, (May 5-6, 2018)
Conclusion: Continuing policy entrepreneurship in a crowded field

This paper has demonstrated that Turkey’s mediation activities as the co-chair of friends of mediation groups at three major international organizations, at nationally sponsored conferences and a dedicated mediator training program signify the role of the country as a policy entrepreneur. The outcomes of these activities have been transformative in both policy and institutional terms. This transformative effect can be seen in innovations, such as the first General Assembly resolutions dedicated to mediation, the establishment of friends and contact groups, and the provision of capacity building courses for diplomats from OIC countries. Now in their eighth year, the processes established by Turkey in partnership with various actors, particularly Finland and, most recently, the OIC General Secretariat, have been influential in shaping debates and policies.

However, this does not mean that Turkey is the only policy entrepreneur in the field. Conflict prevention and resolution, and even its subset, mediation, is a crowded field both in terms of mediation efforts and associated scholarship. Yet the field benefits from the policy entrepreneurship of a small group of long-established and competent, actors including Norway, Finland, and, most recently, Turkey. Other countries have employed efforts to mediate certain conflicts and have hosted related meetings, but their endeavors, valuable as they are, have not had transformative results in the field of mediation. Thus, the existence of already established actors does not negate the thesis that Turkey’s activities, in partnership or by alone, have had transformative consequences. At the UN, this transformative effect has included defining the normative framework and providing General Assembly support. At the OIC, the effect has been seen in the creation of capacity and Ministerial-level sanctioned instruments.

The future of Turkey’s policy entrepreneurship in the field of mediation likely depends on two major factors: Turkey’s own interest and capacity in pursuing this role, and the willingness of other actors to support Turkey’s role. Turkey’s ability to mobilize large numbers of countries in a bid to engender consensus and joint action is a result of such collaboration.

Turkey’s mediation activities are transforming the field of mediation and expanding the small group of states that have traditionally dominated the field. Its inclusion as a policy entrepreneur has also diversified the composition of this elite group, which mostly includes Northern European countries and the United States. It is likely that in the future, Turkey’s track record in policy entrepreneurship will either attract or discourage other actors from entering the field, largely depending on the traction its mediation promotion activities would gather.

49 UN Department of Political Affairs, Guidance for Effective Mediation, 2012.
Cover Photo: The flag of Turkey flying at United Nations headquarters in New York.
Photo credit: UN Photo/Loey Felipe