

# Popular (Dis)content with Economic and Political Globalization in Turkey

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## Abstract

Popular backlash against globalization in recent years has eroded governments' commitment to economic openness, multilateralism and international organizations, and thus has contributed to the crisis of the United States-led Liberal International Order. Most research on such backlash has so far focused on developed countries, leaving gaps in our understanding of emerging and developing countries. This paper seeks to fill this gap by focusing on attitudes towards economic and political globalization in Turkey, an emerging middle power. We demonstrate that the Turkish public holds positive views on trade but negative views on international organizations. We also show that confidence in international organizations has declined over time, in parallel with an underlying pessimism towards the United States and the European Union, and elite messaging that has questioned the legitimacy of these organizations.

**Keywords:** backlash, globalization, international organizations, legitimacy, public opinion

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## Introduction

There has been much debate about deglobalization in recent years. While the trade war between China and the United States (US) is a current focal point in these debates, the reversal in globalization has been underway for the previous decade. The financial crisis of 2007-2008 marked a turning point from the US-driven hyper-globalization of the 1990s and the early 2000s, after which trade as a percentage of world gross domestic product (GDP) began to fall, and foreign direct investments and the expansion of global value chains slowed down (James 2018; Rodrik 2022). Most of the academic discussion about these trends has centered on the US and European countries, the drivers and the champions of open markets in the post-World War II era, and who are now facing domestic backlash. The gradual decline of the

manufacturing sector in these countries over the last decades has given rise to a vocal group of losers whose discontent has extended beyond economic openness to include issues such as immigration, multilateral cooperation and international organizations (Mansfield, Milner and Rudra 2021; Walter 2021).

Research on attitudes towards globalization in developing and emerging economies has been more limited. Existing research shows that attitudes towards economic globalization have been predominantly positive in such countries (O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001; Milner and Kubota 2005; Dolan and Milner 2023). Experts are concerned that positive attitudes towards economic globalization coexist with a growing "sovereigntist backlash" towards globalization's political and institutional aspects (Hurrell 2018: 94-96), reflecting changes in priorities for national sovereignty and autonomy over deeper global integration. These domestic political shifts have been reinforced by the rise of China and the possibilities for an alternative world order around its vision of international relations, or a "democratization of globalization" where previously excluded non-Western states play a greater role in shaping the scope and features of globalization (Öniş and Kutlay 2020). Furthermore, even positive attitudes towards economic globalization may have waned recently due to financial crises and widening inequalities brought about by hyper-globalization. Understanding these evolving attitudes can provide crucial insights into potential challenges to economic and political globalization in the coming years.

This article explores public opinion towards economic and political globalization in Turkey, an emerging middle power. Emerging middle powers possess mid-range material capabilities and foreign policies that have tended towards coalition-building, multilateralism, and niche diplomacy (Aydin 2021a). Compared to traditional middle powers (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal 1993), emerging middle powers have had a more complex relationship with the so-called Liberal International Order (LIO) established after World War II, initially remaining at its periphery, and then becoming full participants and supporters after the Cold War ended, with ongoing efforts to make the LIO more inclusive to countries like themselves (Cooper and Parlar Dal 2016; Aydin 2021b; Efstathopoulos 2021; Aydın-Düzgit 2023). In the current crisis faced by the LIO, emerging middle powers can play significant roles as potential supporters or challengers, and consequently, exploring attitudes towards key pillars of the LIO in these countries is a worthwhile endeavor. For this reason, we limit our analysis to attitudes towards certain aspects of US-driven economic and political globalization, in particular, the degree of economic openness and the delegation of authority to Western-dominated regional and international organizations, as these are the aspects under the fiercest debate and resistance in the current era.

We expect the attitudes of the Turkish public towards economic globalization to be positive, albeit tempered by recent crises that have gravely affected the country's economy. In contrast, we expect negative attitudes towards political and institutional aspects of

globalization. We track these attitudes by drawing on several studies, including the World Values Survey, Pew Global Attitudes and Trends, YouGov Globalism, German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Trends, and Turkish Perceptions Surveys. Since no single source provides these data regularly, combining these studies allows for a more comprehensive perspective. These data demonstrate that while Turkish attitudes towards economic globalization have overall been positive, attitudes towards international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) have been negative.

We argue that unfavorable attitudes towards the UN stem from underlying negative attitudes towards the US and the European Union (EU) and negative elite cueing. In Turkey, as in most other societies, political awareness of international organizations (IOs) is low, and individuals tend to form their attitudes towards them by extrapolating from domestic institutions or regional organizations such as the EU or by associating them with powerful states such as the US that hold sway over these organizations. Low political awareness of IOs also means that elite cues influence public opinion. In the case of Turkey, an increasingly nationalist-populist elite has blamed international actors for the country's problems and sought to mark a more autonomous path for the country's foreign policy in the last decade, which we argue has affected public opinion. Data limitations do not allow us to test these arguments rigorously, but this exploratory study provides tentative support from partial data and leaves the task of testing them for future research.

This article seeks to contribute to several areas of International Relations. First, it engages with the burgeoning literature on globalization backlash. As Hurrell (2018) argues, public opinion on globalization and multilateral cooperation may be more complex in emerging and developing countries than in developed ones, as these countries increasingly challenge the Western-driven order. Our study is an initial attempt to track such complexity in Turkey. A second contribution of the article is related to the current crisis of the LIO. In developed countries, declining public support for the key pillars of the LIO has empowered political movements that seek to withdraw from international commitments, thus putting pressure on the LIO. This article analyzes public attitudes towards different aspects of the LIO in developing and emerging countries, and, in this way, sheds light on how their relationship to the LIO may unfold in the near future. Third and finally, it contributes to a small but important literature that explores the trends in and determinants of public attitudes towards international affairs in Turkey (See Aydın 2014; Çarkoğlu and Kirişçi 2004; Kıratlı 2016; Cope and Crabtree 2018; 2020; 2022).<sup>1</sup> Public opinion is increasingly more relevant in foreign policymaking in the current era of globalization, where issues on which people hold strong opinions, such as trade, migration, climate change, and human rights, are regularly debated on national platforms (Zerka 2021).

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1 See also surveys conducted by Aydın et al. (2022) on Perceptions on Turkish Foreign Policy since 2013.

## Attitudes towards Globalization

In this article, we are concerned with public opinion on the economic and political dimensions of globalization, particularly its Western-driven form in the post-World War II period.<sup>2</sup> We define economic globalization as the intensification of the flow of goods, capital, and services that fosters the integration of national economies (Bhagwati 2004; Gygli et al. 2019). The political dimension of globalization involves the transfer of policy-making authority from the state to international actors and manifests itself in the form of membership in international organizations, commitment to multilateral agreements, and cooperation in general.

The extant literature pinpoints various factors that explain citizens' perceptions of different dimensions of globalization. For its economic dimension, winners and losers of globalization remain as the primary framework for explaining the variation in individuals' attitudes. This framework identifies distributional concerns based on skill levels and exposure to economic competition as primary drivers of variance in attitudes across individuals and societies (Mayda and Rodrik 2005; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). Beyond objective attributes, individuals' subjective assessment of their well-being, their perceptions of economic threat, and their evaluation of how the national economy is influenced by trade and globalization determine their attitudes towards economic globalization (Mansfield and Mutz 2009; Teney, Lacewell and De Wilde 2013). Other individual attitudes, such as national pride and patriotism, may also be associated with protectionism (Mayda and Rodrik 2005; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001).

Regarding globalization's political and institutional dimensions, existing literature highlights various factors. First, researchers expect individuals' attitudes towards international organizations to be shaped by perceptions of their legitimacy. Such legitimacy may derive from institutional procedures, known as input legitimacy, or from its performance, that is, output legitimacy (Scharpf 1997; Dellmuth, Scholte and Tallberg 2019). Those who emphasize institutional performance argue that individuals find IOs legitimate if they evaluate them as effective problem solvers and providers of collective goods (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015). Dellmuth and Tallberg (2015) support this argument concerning attitudes towards the UN in 26 developed and developing countries in the early 2000s. Others reject the dichotomy and argue that procedures and performance matter in beliefs about IOs' legitimacy (Anderson, Bernauer and Kachi 2019; Dellmuth, Scholte and Tallberg 2019; Bernauer, Mohrenberg and Koubi 2020).

However, individuals' evaluation of IOs may be constrained by how much they know about them. If their knowledge is limited, they will be prone to use shortcuts when evaluating them. Such heuristic reasoning may operate in different ways. Because citizens associate global economic forces with international organizations, their attitudes about economic globalization can translate into their perceptions of international organizations (Bearce and

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2 We are not concerned with globalization's social dimension, which refers to interpersonal, informational and cultural aspects of interconnectedness and includes phenomena such as migration, communication and diffusion of ideas, norms and values (Gygli et al. 2019).

Scott 2019). Alternatively, individuals' perceptions of IOs may be colored by their experiences with domestic political institutions or regional organizations such as the EU (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2015; Lamprianou and Charalambous 2018).

Negative perceptions of IOs may also result from "guilt by association", that is, negative opinions about a powerful state's ideational and institutional influence over IOs. Johnson (2011) explores the effects of such an association on attitudes towards the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 23 Asian countries. He finds that individuals who hold negative views about the US influence in these organizations also tend to have negative attitudes towards the organizations. Similarly, research on Jordan and Saudi Arabia shows that anti-Americanism is a powerful heuristic shaping attitudes toward the UN in these countries (Isani and Schlipphak 2023).

Finally, political elites may strategically shape attitudes toward IOs with low political awareness. As Dellmuth and Talberg (2021: 1293) argue, "citizens rarely have well-developed political attitudes and are therefore susceptible to elite messages" and more in relation to the global level since they "generally have less information about global than domestic institutions". Political entrepreneurs may strategically politicize international issues and debate them in the public sphere as issues of public contestation (De Vries, Hobolt and Walter 2021: 308). Elite communications, especially negative messaging, can have powerful effects on individuals' perceptions of IOs.

International organizations may become scapegoats, especially when citizens face economic problems at home (Copelovich and Pevehouse 2019). Dellmuth and Tallberg (2021: 1305-1306) find negative elite communications to be effective in influencing attitudes towards the WTO and the IMF, but Handlin, Kaya and Günaydin (2023) find, in contrast, that populist scapegoating has a limited impact on attitudes towards the IMF. These contradictory findings suggest that the effects of elite cueing may depend on underlying factors such as individuals' predispositions and familiarity with the particular IO, the degree of political contestation of the IO in society, and existing domestic institutions and rules.

These studies provide crucial insights into individuals' attitudes towards economic and political dimensions of globalization and the factors driving the recent backlash against them. Few of them, however, have looked beyond Western democracies, and those that do have tended to limit their analysis to larger emerging economies. This article seeks to fill this gap by focusing on the case of Turkey, a mid-range emerging power.

## **Turkey, Globalization and the Liberal International Order**

After the destruction of the two world wars and the period of instability that characterized the interwar years, the US and its allies moved towards greater economic, security, and political cooperation in the post-World War II era. In what would later be called the LIO, on the economic front, they liberalized trade under the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade, ensured financial stability and the reconstruction of war-torn economies with the help of the IMF and the World Bank, forged a security arrangement under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and bilateral alliances, and institutionalized their commitment to multilateral cooperation under the United Nations. After the Cold War ended, the LIO deepened and expanded outwards (Ikenberry 2020: 259-268).

Turkey remained on the margins of the LIO during the Cold War despite taking part in its institutional architecture. Its membership in European and multilateral organizations went together with a commitment in the domestic sphere to westernization and secularization, a project that had begun in the late Ottoman period (Arat and Pamuk 2019: 13-16). However, until the 1980s, due to its relatively closed economy and weak commitment to democracy and human rights, it remained on LIO's sidelines.

After a severe economic crisis in the late 1970s and a military coup in 1980, the country adopted a package of liberalizing economic reforms that continued under civilian governments through the rest of the decade and into the 1990s. Gradual political reforms followed and gained pace once the EU granted candidate status to Turkey in 1999. In the following years, Turkish governments took important steps in strengthening democracy, human rights and political freedoms, and establishing civilian control over the military (Müftüler-Baç 2005: 22-29). On the economic front, after the financial and banking crises in 2000-2001, the government ensured the independence of the Turkish central bank, made public procurement more transparent, restructured public banks, established independent regulatory agencies, and strengthened existing ones (Şenses 2012). After coming to power in a single-party government in the 2002 elections, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) launched further reforms that strengthened the Turkish democracy and market economy, which paved the way for the EU's decision to launch membership negotiations with Turkey in 2005. Although negotiations stalled soon afterward, Turkey's integration into the world economy and its relations with regional and international organizations continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

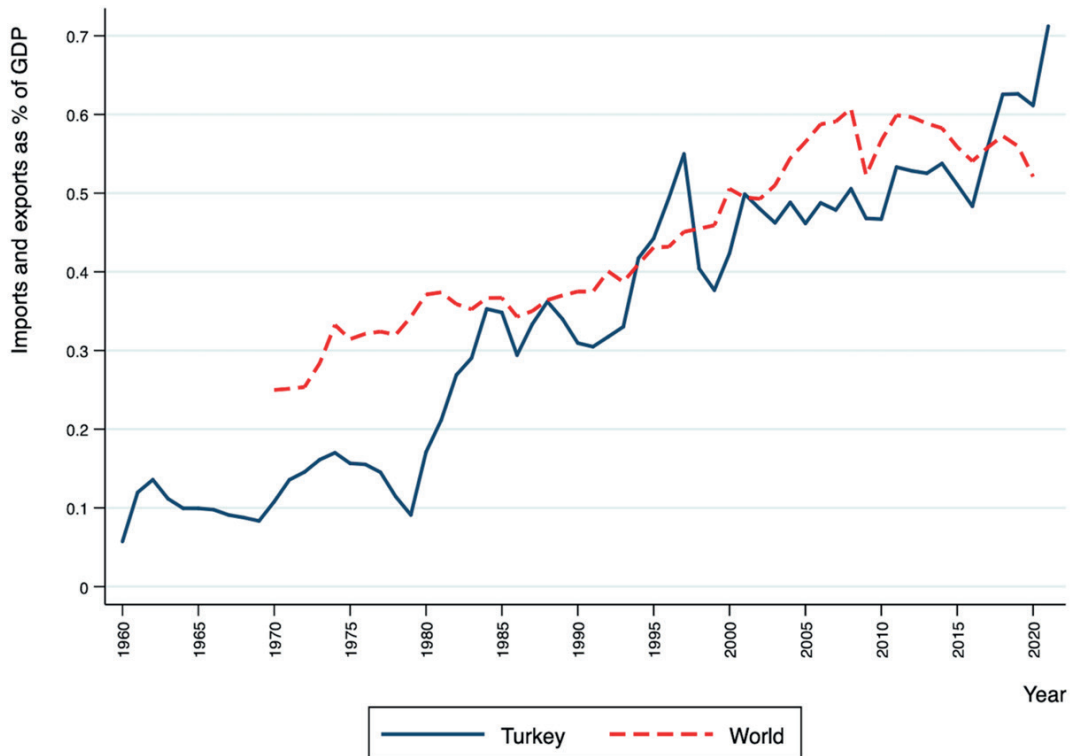
Turkish foreign policy experienced significant transformations in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the one hand, the end of the Cold War provided space for middle powers like Turkey to take on more active roles in global and regional affairs (Cooper and Parlar Dal 2016). On the other hand, closer relations with the EU, increasing economic openness and ideational change, coupled with a decade of democratization, gave the country the capabilities and self-confidence to pursue a more activist foreign policy (Dipama and Parlar Dal 2024). Turkey began to enter into more international agreements (Çakır and Akdağ 2017), take an active part in rising fora such as the G20 and traditional ones such as the UN, and assume active mediation, peacekeeping, and humanitarian roles regionally and globally. While maintaining its traditional ties to the US and the EU, Turkey began to orient its foreign policy also towards the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, the Balkans, and the Black Sea (Benli Altunışık and Martin 2011; 2023; Kirişçi 2013).



A recent shift in Turkish foreign policy in the last decade has been a search for greater autonomy from the US and the Western powers (Özdamar 2023). This newer tendency is partly driven by populism in domestic politics and foreign policy (Özpek and Tanriverdi Yaşar 2018). It manifests itself in various ways, such as President Erdoğan's criticism of the structure of the UN Security Council, Turkey's growing cooperation with fellow Turkic-speaking countries under the umbrella of the Organization of Turkic States, its stronger engagement with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its membership bid to alternative regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Council and the BRICS. So far, the country has tried to strike a pragmatic balance between its traditional alliances and its newly forged ties with rising powers. Still, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put this balancing act to the test. It remains to be seen whether the balance is sustainable.

Notwithstanding these transformations of the last two decades, we observe a continuity in Turkey's engagement with the world economy since the reforms of the early 1980s. Turkish economy's openness to trade, measured by the country's exports and imports as a percentage of GDP, went up from approximately 12% of GDP in the 1970s to 57% in the last decade (World Bank 2023). As Figure 1 demonstrates, after a significant jump following the reforms of the early 1980s, the openness of the Turkish economy remained around world averages and has surpassed it since 2018.

**Figure 1.** Openness of the Turkish Economy to Trade, Measured as the Sum of the Country's Exports and Imports as a percentage of its GDP (World Bank 2023).



Composite indicators such as the KOF Globalization Index provide additional measures of economic, political, and social globalization over time (Dreher 2006). The Index provides *de facto* and *de jure* globalization measures in these three dimensions since 1970. Economic globalization measures take into account trade, foreign direct investment, and portfolio investment. Political globalization considers the number of embassies in a country, the number of international organizations the country is a member of, and the number of UN peace missions a country participated in (Dreher 2006: 1193). Finally, the social globalization measure includes data on personal contacts such as traffic of international phone calls, international tourists, percentage of foreign population in the total population, data on information flows such as internet users, and data on cultural proximity such as the number of McDonald's restaurants.

**Figure 2.** Turkey's *de facto* Economic, Political, and Cultural Globalization Levels since 1970, Compared with World Averages (Gygli et al. 2019)

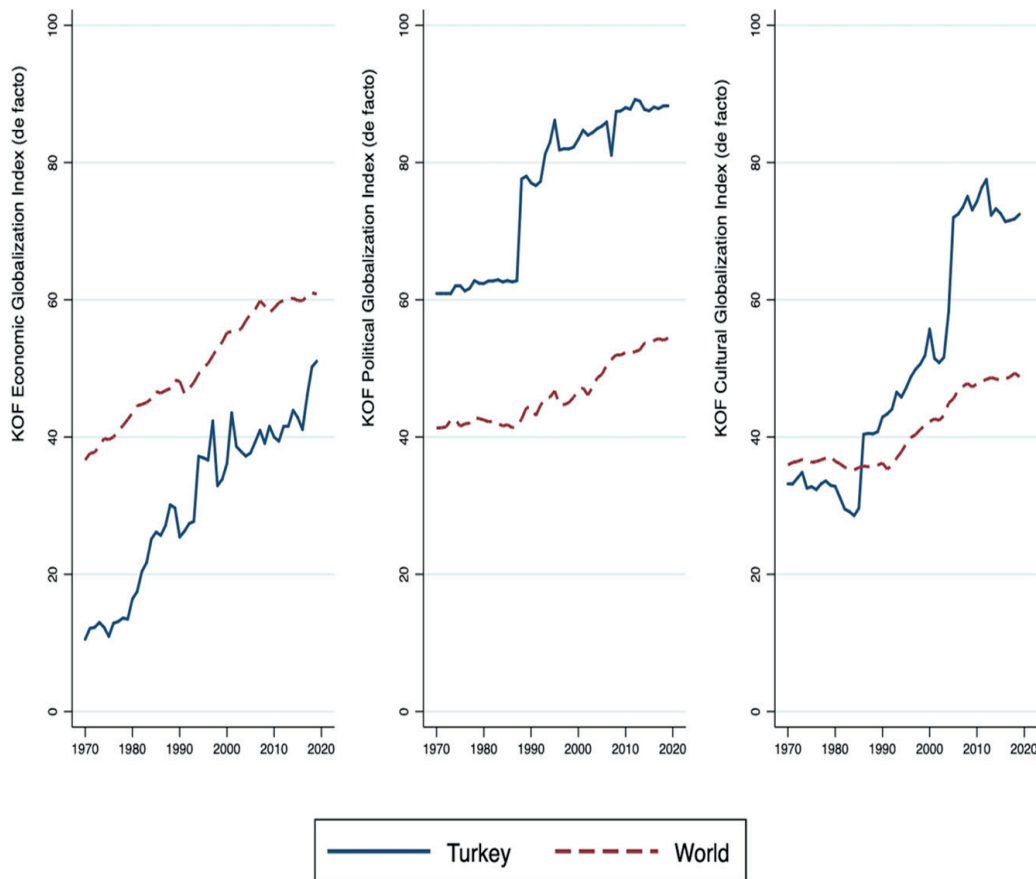


Figure 2 demonstrates *de facto* economic, political, and social globalization levels in Turkey from 1970 to 2022, compared with world averages (Gygli et al. 2019). The graph shows that while Turkey is below world averages in economic globalization, it is significantly above political globalization. Cultural globalization has been above the world average since the mid-1980s, with a significant rise in its globalization level in the early 2000s.



## Turkish Attitudes towards Economic and Political Globalization

As data presented in Table 1 shows, Turkish attitudes towards trade have been, on the whole, positive. From 2002 through 2021, despite some fluctuations, support for trade has remained above 57%. This is in line with research on trade and political cleavages, which predicts positive attitudes towards trade in developing and emerging countries, where labor, the abundant factor, benefits from trade liberalization and supports it (Milner and Kubota 2005; Rogowski 1989). Despite broad support for trade, globalization more generally does not elicit much support from respondents, especially in recent years. While 45% perceived globalization as a good or very good thing, and 55% thought it to be positive for their financial situation in 2002, according to PEW Global Attitudes and Trends survey, by 2020, YouGov Globalism survey found that only 27% saw globalization as positive for the country. A roughly similar percentage of respondents, 29%, thought it has been positive for their standard of living. These differences have to be interpreted with caution, as the results are from two different surveys, and the ordering of questions and sampling decisions in each survey could affect the results and may explain the differences. With this caveat in mind, we suggest that the more negative attitudes towards globalization compared to trade may be reflecting respondents' tendency to group different aspects of globalization—commercial, financial, political, and social—together and respond accordingly. The COVID-19 pandemic could also be a contributing factor to the more negative evaluation of globalization in 2020.

Interestingly, in 2020, 61% of respondents indicated becoming less integrated with the global economy to be a medium or high long-term priority for the country. Given relatively positive attitudes towards trade otherwise, our interpretation is that such a response reflects a desire for greater autonomy for the country rather than for protectionism per se.

**Table 1.** Attitudes towards Trade and Globalization in Turkey

	2002	2007	2009	2011	2014	2020*	2021**
Trade mainly beneficial	83%	73%	64%	82%	57%		63%
Trade mainly harmful	12%	13%	22%	10%	36%		27%
Globalization a good or a very good thing	45%						
Globalization a bad or very bad thing	23%						
Globalization will help personal financial situation	55%						
Globalization will hurt personal financial situation	26%						
Globalization fairly good or very good for country						27%	
Globalization fairly bad or very bad for country						47%	
Globalization good or very good for own standard of living						29%	
Globalization bad or very bad for own standard of living						27%	
Becoming less integrated with the world economy a medium or high long-term priority						61%	
Becoming less integrated with the world economy a low or no long-term priority						27%	

Sources: PEW Global Attitudes and Trends (Pew Research Center 2023), \* YouGov Globalism (YouGov 2020), \*\* Transatlantic Trends (German Marshall Fund and Bertelsmann Foundation 2021)

With respect to attitudes towards international organizations, we rely on data from various rounds of the World Values Survey and PEW Global Attitudes and Trends conducted from the late 1990s until 2019. In these surveys, respondents were asked about their confidence in or opinion of the UN. These data, presented in Table 2, show that Turkish respondents overall have unfavorable views of the UN. Those who indicated that they had confidence in the organization were at 40% in 1996 and 44% in 2001-2, while 45% and 47% indicated having not very much or no confidence at all. The percentage of those expressing little or no confidence grew to 61% in 2007, 55% in 2011, and 62% in 2018. Data from PEW Global Attitudes and Trends indicate that around 50% of the respondents had a favorable or very favorable opinion in 2004 towards the UN. This favorable opinion started changing in 2006 when slightly more than half of the respondents expressed an unfavorable opinion of the UN, and those expressing unfavorable opinions continued to grow until 2012, reaching a high of 61%. In the most recent wave in 2024, 60% expressed an unfavorable opinion and 33% favorable; that is, both those expressing favorable views and unfavorable views have increased slightly from the last wave of the PEW survey in 2019, indicating more polarization in attitudes, but remained in line with the results of other surveys (Fagan 2024). Data from German Marshall Fund surveys show similarly unfavorable opinions towards the UN, with only 32.8% expressing that they trust the organization in 2015 and 35.4% expressing trust in 2022. Thus, overall attitudes towards the UN are negative in Turkey, with a more negative turn recently, though the yearly fluctuations should be interpreted with caution in the absence of regression analyses with pooled data from various survey rounds.

**Table 2.** Attitudes towards the United Nations in Turkey

Confidence in the United Nations:*	1996	2001			2007			2011			2018
A great deal or quite a lot	40%	44%			28%			38%			31%
Not very much or none at all	45%	47%			61%			55%			62%
Opinion of the UN:**			2004	2006	2007	2009	2011	2012	2013		
Favorable or very favorable			51%	29%	23%	18%	23%	17%	24%	28%	33%
Unfavorable or very unfavorable			35%	51%	57%	57%	61%	61%	56%	54%	60%
Trust the UN:***									2015	2022	
Somewhat or totally									32.8%	35.4%	

Sources: \*World Values Survey Wave 7 (Inglehart et al. 2022), \*\*Pew Global Attitudes and Trends (Fagan 2024, Pew Research Center 2023), \*\*\*German Marshall Fund (2015, 2022)

When asked about other international organizations, Turkish respondents generally expressed low levels of confidence. Table 3 gives an overview of respondents' views towards the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Criminal Court, the EU, and NATO. The data are taken from the World Values Survey Wave 7, administered in Turkey in 2018. Among these organizations, respondents have the lowest level of confidence towards NATO and the IMF, with only 26% and 27% of respondents expressing confidence in these organizations, though a recent survey from a different source shows much more favorable views towards NATO since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with 42% holding favorable views towards the organization

(Pew Research Center 2024). Likewise, when asked about the country's membership to NATO in 2022, 44,2% of Turkish respondents expressed that they find it to be important or very important (Aydın et al., 2022 p. 96). Those expressing confidence in the World Bank and the EU are at 32% and 31%, at a level like the UN, while the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court elicit confidence from a slightly higher percentage of respondents, 35% and 37%, respectively. Finally, the only organization that elicited more confidence than non-confidence in the respondents was the World Health Organization (WHO), with 49% expressing confidence in the organization while 42% expressing they had little or no confidence at all. This finding is in line with Schlipphak et. al. (2022), who found in survey experiments conducted at the height of the COVID-19 crisis that Turkish respondents, like those in Austria and Germany, had overall favorable attitudes towards the WHO.

**Table 3.** Attitudes towards International Organizations in Turkey (2018)

	IMF	World Bank	World Trade Organization	World Health Organization	International Criminal Court	European Union	NATO
Confidence in the organization: a great deal or quite a lot	27%	32%	35%	49%	37%	31%	26%
Confidence in the organization: not very much or none at all	64%	58%	54%	42%	55%	63%	64%

Source: World Values Survey Wave 7 (Inglehart et al. 2022),

Two conclusions can be drawn from the data discussed in this section. First, the Turkish public's attitudes towards trade continue to be on the whole positive, though these positive attitudes are more muted compared to the early 2000s, suggesting that the Turkish public may be cooling off towards trade. Second, Turkish respondents, on the whole, hold negative views towards international organizations. More specifically, with respect to the UN, we observe that their attitudes have grown more negative over time. While in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was more balance between those who held more positive and negative views of the UN, and even higher favorable opinions than unfavorable ones in 2004, since then, positive attitudes and confidence towards the UN have declined. Thus, survey data suggest that Turkish respondents are more positive about the economic aspects of globalization compared to its political aspects and that over time, their attitudes towards the political aspects of globalization have gotten more negative.

## Explaining Turkish Attitudes towards Economic and Political Globalization

We draw on the existing literature to provide explanations for individuals' attitudes towards economic and political aspects of globalization in Turkey. The lack of systematic and comparable survey data over time prevents us from rigorously testing our arguments, but we provide tentative support for them based on partial data and literature and leave more rigorous testing for future research.

Previous research on Turkey shows that individuals' attitudes towards trade are shaped by their opinions on whether trade and globalization benefit them individually and their evaluations of the state of the national economy (Aydin 2014). In terms of individual attributes, previous research has found that those who are younger and less nationalist is more supportive of trade liberalization, but factors such as gender, ideological orientation, and education level seem not to determine individuals' attitudes towards free trade (Kıratlı 2016). We posit that these variables continue to explain the generally positive attitudes towards trade, while recent economic crises could explain the decline in support for trade more recently. Unfortunately, we are not able to test these arguments, as PEW Global Attitudes and Trends stopped asking this question in Turkey after 2014, and the other surveys we cite in the table for the years 2020 and 2021, YouGov Globalism and Transatlantic Trends, only make aggregated results publicly available, not the dataset itself.

With respect to attitudes towards international organizations, we offer two arguments to explain the broad trends evidenced in Table 2, both based on the assumption that there is a low level of political awareness around international cooperation and IOs in Turkish society. First, we maintain that individuals in Turkish society tend to have low political awareness of the UN, given the scarcity of public debate on international organizations. Thus, we expect individuals to form their opinions on the UN based on proxies or on elite cues. By the former, we refer to individuals forming an opinion about the UN based on their assessment of a proximate yardstick, for instance, another international organization (Lamprianou and Charalambous 2018, 468-471). The latter concerns forming an opinion based on elites' opinions or cues about that same organization. We argue that individuals in Turkey extrapolate their views on the UN from their perceptions of the EU, a regional organization of which they have a higher political awareness due to the Turkey-EU Customs Union and Turkey's longstanding membership bid to the organization. As a second proxy, we argue that individuals base their evaluations of the UN on their views of the US, a powerful state that holds significant sway over the organization. We think that such "guilt by association" also explains Turkish respondents' attitudes towards the IMF, the WTO, and NATO, organizations that they view as closely associated with the United States (Johnson 2011).

A second explanation for Turkish attitudes towards international organizations focuses on the impact of elite cueing on public opinion. We argue that negative elite messaging towards international organizations and multilateralism has increased in Turkey over time with rising nationalism and populism in foreign policy and that such an increase in negative messaging can partly explain growing negative attitudes towards international organizations and multilateral cooperation.

A common foreign policy stance of populist parties is their skepticism towards multilateral organizations and alliances (Carpenter 2017). Such skepticism follows from populist leaders' perspective that international organizations are products of transnational elites that impose policies that go against the popular will of the people (Plagemann and Destradi 2019). Various authors argue that populism has become the dominant element in

Turkish foreign policy since 2013 (Özpek and Tanriverdi Yaşar 2018; Kaliber and Kaliber 2019). This era of predominantly populist foreign policy is marked by a distrust of international organizations and the portrayal of these as a threat to national sovereignty.

Elite messaging on international organizations in this period has been directed to several IOs and has taken various forms. First, President Erdoğan and the AKP have distanced themselves from the IMF and have argued that the Fund's repeated involvement has damaged the Turkish economy and has constrained Turkish economic sovereignty. After turning down an IMF loan in 2009 at the last minute, Turkey celebrated finishing the repayment of previous loans to the IMF in 2013. In recent economic crises, President Erdogan has made a point of not asking for IMF loans, insisting that "Turkey will never again submit its political and economic future to the prescriptions of global economic tutelage institutions, such as the IMF and similar institutions" and likened his preferred economic policy of cutting interest rates—which goes against conventional economic wisdom and the recommendations of international financial institutions—to "a war of economic liberation" for the country (Avudukluoglu 2021).

A second line of negative messaging on international organizations involves the UN and targets primarily the representativeness and, secondarily, the performance of the organization. Arguing that LIO is essentially a recognition order, Adler-Nissen and Zarakol (2021: 612-613) contend that those "frustrated with their perceived positions in the recognition hierarchy created by the LIO" perceive the current order as a Western-centric hierarchy and seek a non-Western alternative. Thus, it is not surprising that populist leaders outside of the core delegitimize IOs primarily based on their representative qualities rather than referring to their procedures or performance. In line with the populist approach, such leaders apply "people vs elite" antagonism and emphasize the legitimacy standards of popular sovereignty and popular identity and question "on whose authority these organizations act, in whose interest they act, who they are made up of and who they stand for" (Spandler and Söderbaum 2023: 1024).

Summed up with the motto "the world is bigger than five," President Erdoğan has been critical of the disproportionate influence that the permanent members of the Security Council hold in the UN through their veto power. Erdoğan (2017: 13-14) argues that the Security Council should represent "the continents, faiths, origins, and cultures as fairly as possible" and suggests a 20-member Security Council whose members should not have veto power and should be rotating. These elite messages that question the representativeness and fairness of the UN's current structure are mostly directed to international audiences; nonetheless, they may be affecting the legitimacy of the organization in the eyes of Turkish citizens as well. In a different line of messaging and targeting the organization's performance, Erdoğan (2017: 11) also appeals to domestic and international audiences by criticizing the UN for being ineffective on issues of particular interest to Turkish citizens, such as protecting the rights of the Palestinian people.

Research on other countries has found that elite messaging on sovereignty loss and the undemocratic structure of decision-making in the IOs resonate both for citizens who vote for populist parties and those who do not (Kıratlı and Schlipphak 2024). Whether such cueing by political elites matters in the Turkish context and whether the effects are different for voters of different parties has been previously explored in several studies. Aytaç and Çarkoğlu (2018) show that when Erdoğan makes a statement on Turkey's national interest in foreign policy, an issue domain within his prerogatives, AKP voters are more likely to agree with the view, and moreover, such statements do not generate a polarizing effect on the voters of the opposition party. Another survey experiment on the public legitimacy of the WHO, which includes Turkey, among other countries, shows that elite discourses blaming an IO weaken its public legitimacy (Schlipphak et al. 2022). Thus, we conclude that when President Erdoğan, his ruling party, and allies adopt a discourse hostile towards international and regional organizations, this has a negative effect on people's confidence in these organizations.

To summarize, we argue that Turkish respondents' attitudes towards IOs are driven by people's underlying attitudes towards the EU and the US. These underlying attitudes may be further influenced by elites who seek to strategically shape public opinion, either to shift the blame for domestic crises or to signal strategic autonomy. Limitations of existing surveys make it impossible to test these arguments rigorously over time. As a preliminary and limited analysis of our arguments, in Tables 4 and 5, we present the results of logistic regression analyses exploring how people's views of or levels of confidence in the US, the EU, and other international organizations impact their views of the UN, using data on Turkey from the World Values Survey Wave 7 from 2018, and PEW Global Trends survey from 2019 (Inglehart et al. 2022; Pew Research Center 2023). For ease of analysis and interpretation, confidence in the UN and other IOs was recorded as a binary variable (no or little confidence as 0, some or high confidence as 1) in the World Values Survey data. Similarly, for the PEW Global Attitudes data, favorable opinions of the UN, EU, NATO, and the US were recoded as binary variables (somewhat and very unfavorable opinions as 0, and somewhat and very favorable opinions as 1). Due to issues of collinearity, we run separate models including each international organization one at a time as independent variables in the regressions, with the same control variables included in each model, that is, education, interpersonal trust, and trust for non-nationals in the regressions in Table 4, and education in Table 5. To help with the interpretation, we include both coefficients and odds ratios in the tables.



**Table 4.** Results of Logistic Regression, the Impact of Confidence in Different IOs on the Confidence in the UN

		Coefficient	Odds Ratio	P >   z
Model 1:	EU	3.6***	35.1	0.000
	Education	-0.2	1	0.645
	Interpersonal trust	0.3	1.3	0.174
	Trust in non-nationals	0.5***	1.6	0.000
Model 2:	NATO	2.6***	13.5	0.000
	Education	-0.04	1	0.368
	Interpersonal trust	0.4*	1.5	0.016
	Trust in non-nationals	0.6***	1.9	0.000
Model 3:	IMF	2.8***	16.9	0.000
	Education	0.002	1	0.96
	Interpersonal trust	0.3*	1.4	0.05
	Trust in non-nationals	0.5***	1.7	0.000
Model 4:	World Bank	2.4***	10.5	0.000
	Education	-0.03	1	0.503
	Interpersonal trust	0.1	1.2	0.349
	Trust in non-nationals	0.7***	2	0.000
Model 5:	WTO	2.3***	9.7	0.000
	Education	-0.04	1	0.316
	Interpersonal trust	0.3*	1.4	0.048
	Trust in non-nationals	0.7***	2	0.000
Model 6:	ICC	2.4***	11.2	0.000
	Education	-0.02	1	0.715
	Interpersonal trust	0.5**	1.6	0.004
	Trust in non-nationals	0.6***	1.8	0.000

Source: World Values Survey Round 7 (Inglehart et al. 2022)

Note: N=2159 for the first model, N=2059 for the second, N=2099 for the third, N=2068 for the fourth, N=2039 for the fifth and N= 2105 for the sixth model. \*\*\* denote statistical significance at 0.001 level, \*\* at 0.01 level and \* at 0.5 level.

The results in Table 4 show that respondents' confidence in the UN is positively related to their confidence in other international organizations such as the EU, NATO, IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization, and the International Criminal Court, with confidence in the EU having the largest positive coefficient. We can say that holding education, interpersonal trust, and trust for non-nationals constant, a person that has high confidence in the EU has 35.1 times the odds of expressing confidence for the UN compared to a person with low or no



confidence in the EU. Among the control variables, neither education nor interpersonal trust reaches acceptable levels of statistical significance, but trust in non-nationals does. Holding other variables constant, a person who expresses high trust in people from other nationalities has 1.6 times the odds of expressing confidence in the UN compared to a person with low or no trust in people from other nationalities. Models 2 to 6 show similarly that those expressing high confidence in other IOs are also highly likely to express confidence in the UN. The coefficient for education does not reach statistical significance in any of the models, the coefficient for trust in non-nationals is statistically significant at 0.001 level in all of the models, and the coefficient for interpersonal trust is statistically significant in models 2, 3, 5 and 6, but its coefficient is of a smaller magnitude (the odds ratios varying between 1.35 and 1.57). Thus, we can conclude that for Turkish respondents, confidence in other IOs, but especially the EU, is strongly associated with higher levels of confidence in the UN.

**Table 5.** Results of logistic regression, the impact of opinions towards the EU, NATO and the US on opinions towards the UN

	Coefficient	Odds Ratio	P >   z
Model 1: EU	1.6***	4.9	0.000
Education	0.1	1.1	0.520
Model 2: NATO	2***	7.1	0.000
Education	0.2	1.2	0.168
Model 3: US	2***	7.5	0.000
Education	0.2	1.2	0.161

Source: Pew Research Center (2019)

Note: N=846 for the first model, N= 763 for the second model, and N=848 for the third one. \*\*\* denote statistical significance at 0.001 level.

Table 5 presents the results of logistic regressions with the favorability of opinions towards the UN as the dependent variable, and the favorability of opinions towards the EU (model 1), towards the NATO (model 2), and towards the US (model 3) as independent variables, and the respondent's level of education as a control variable. The results show that those expressing favorable views towards the EU, the NATO, and the US are also strongly likely to express favorable opinions towards the United Nations. For instance, a person who expresses a favorable view of the US has 7.5 times the odds of expressing a favorable view of the UN, compared to a person who expresses an unfavorable view of the US. The person's level of education, which is included as a control variable, does not reach acceptable levels of statistical significance in any of the models. These basic regression analyses thus support our arguments that Turkish respondents' attitudes towards the UN are strongly related to their underlying attitudes towards the US and the EU. They also show that attitudes towards different multilateral organizations that form part of the LIO are positively related to one another.

## Conclusion

In the post-World War II era, the US and its Western allies spearheaded economic and political globalization, and these trends reached their apex in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. However, especially since the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, unfavorable attitudes towards economic and political globalization have risen in different parts of the world. The popular backlash has led to more protectionist economic policies in developed countries and a growing reluctance to commit to multilateral cooperation and international and regional organizations. These developments have added to the crisis of the LIO, which has already been under strain from the rise of emerging powers as alternative poles of influence and control and the charge of hypocrisy leveled at the West. However, most of the burgeoning literature on the globalization backlash has focused on developed countries, leaving us in the dark about whether the public in emerging and developing countries, especially those of middle and small stature, continue to embrace Western-led globalization or are skeptical of it.

This article has addressed this gap by analyzing public opinion toward economic and political globalization in an emerging middle power, Turkey. Relying on data from multiple surveys, we have shown that Turkish public opinion is more favorable towards economic than political globalization. In particular, Turkish respondents have been positive about trade, though their attitudes have grown slightly more negative recently. In contrast, Turkish public opinion has been unfavorable towards international organizations, particularly the UN, with the WHO being the only organization that received more positive evaluations before and during the pandemic because it is perceived as a more technical organization.

We have argued that Turkish respondents' negative attitudes towards international organizations can be explained by individuals extrapolating their views on those organizations from their underlying unfavorable views towards other organizations that they know more closely, such as the EU and powerful states that hold significant influence over these organizations, such as the US. Negative elite cueing, especially following the nationalist and populist turn in Turkish politics and foreign policy in the last decade, has likely contributed further to unfavorable opinions of international organizations.

The declining confidence in IOs among the Turkish public is likely to affect Turkey's commitment to multilateral cooperation and its future in the LIO. Such weakening commitment is worrying because it will likely reinforce domestic anti-democratic tendencies and attacks on rights and liberties that have prospered partly thanks to international commitments. Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention illustrates such a possibility and its domestic outcomes.

Future research on the popular backlash against globalization could analyze different features of the phenomena more closely and rigorously if longitudinal data becomes available, allowing researchers to test arguments controlling for individuals' characteristics. For instance, previous research has found that social trust, an individual predisposition, shapes citizens' beliefs in both national and international institutions (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2020).

Interpersonal trust is very low in Turkey (Aytaç el. al. 2017), which may potentially explain an aversion to political and institutional aspects of globalization among Turkish people but not necessarily towards trade. Carefully constructed survey experiments may also help distinguish whether elite cueing or extrapolation from other organizations is the dominant mechanism for individuals to form opinions on IOs and whether partisanship and polarization matter in forming such attitudes. High levels of polarization where a political party with a populist agenda, the AKP, and its leader, President Erdoğan has been incumbent for more than twenty years makes Turkey a particularly interesting case to understand how domestic politics, particularly partisan polarization, shape attitudes towards political and economic aspects of globalization.

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