Analyzing the Role of Non-BRICS Developing Countries in the G-20: 
A Case Study of Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the role of Indonesia in the G20 Summit. As a non-BRICS developing country, Indonesia has shown a particular role which has not been much observed by a large body of literature. Through the lens of role theory, the article shows that Indonesia is not a mere spectator in the G20, but has a certain agenda-setting capability. This unique position is represented through its role as a “bridge-builder,” which has been advocated by Indonesian policymakers as well as expected by external actors. Within this context, the essay falls into four sections. The first section is dedicated to briefly explain the history of developing countries’ inclusion to the G20. The second section will discuss the state of research and the remaining gaps in the literature. The third section elaborates the national role conceptions approach. In the fourth section, the role conceptions theory will involve in examining Indonesia’s role in the G20.

Keywords:
The G20, National Role Conception, Role Prescription, Indonesia, Non-BRICS Developing Nations

Since its establishment in the form of a leader’s summit in 2008, the Group of Twenty (G20)¹ has been widely perceived as an arena to renegotiate the world’s economic governance, which was for decades dominantly influenced by few self-selected powerful nations through the

¹ The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. Additionally, Spain always attends the G20 Summits, making them such permanent invitees. Some heads of international institutions and regional organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) were often invited to the summits as well.
popularly-known the Bretton Woods system.\textsuperscript{2} Considering the growing economic importance of many developing countries, the inclusion of more states at various levels of powers and different regions to solve global financial crisis is inevitable.

The expansion of the G8 to the G20 was crucially needed to add the legitimacy of global policy coordination, particularly in dealing with the financial crisis.\textsuperscript{3} The presence of some economically large developing countries in the G20 provided them with the opportunity to actively be involved in global policy making in more regular and intense.

Despite the presence of developing countries in G20 summits in the last six years, there is unfortunately not much discussion on how developing countries have positioned themselves within the G20. It is widely acknowledged that some developing nations have an increasing global role including in the international institutions, but there are disagreements about how those developing nations behave in G20 negotiations and what causes that lie behind their particular behavior. In an attempt to fill that gap, this article addresses the question of what motivates a non-BRIC developing country play certain position in the G20.

Throughout this article, the term “developing countries” is preferred, instead of other widely-used terms, such as “emerging economies”, “emerging markets”, “emerging powers” or “global south”. Despite their popularity, those definitions are still heavily contested. In contrast, “developing countries” has a more acceptable measurement, which is GDP per capita. The term “developing countries” refers to the World Bank’s definition, which refer as developing countries. According to the World Bank, “developing countries” consists of low and middle-income economies, where low income countries have GDP per capita of less than $1,045, while GDP per capita of middle income countries are under $12,746. According to these measures, developing countries in the G20 are Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey.\textsuperscript{4} The “non-BRIC” term is also extensively used in the article to distinguish the rest of developing countries in the G20 from Brazil, Russia, India and China, which will be explained in the second section.

This article addresses the aforementioned question in four steps of research. First of all, it discusses the historical origin of the inclusion of developing countries to the G20. In the second part, it discusses the gap in the large body of literature, while in the third section, this article explains the role conceptions theoretical framework utilized to investigate the role of non-

\textsuperscript{2} In the shadow of the end of World War 2, allied nations held the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference in Breton Woods, New Hampshire, the United States. Among other important points, the conference agreed on the formation of the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which one of components of the current World Bank.

\textsuperscript{3} Slaughter, “Debating,” 45.

\textsuperscript{4} World Bank, “Country and Lending Groups.”
BRIC developing countries in the G20. To this end, this article explores the use of role theory in explaining Indonesia’s position towards and behavior in the G20. It arrives at optimistic conclusions where in contrast to much literature which largely underestimates the role of non-BRIC developing countries in the G20, nations in that category has played a certain agenda-setting power in their participation in the post-2008 G20 frameworks, as shown by Indonesia’s role performance as a “bridge-builder.”

I. The rise of the G20 and the inclusion of developing countries

Compared to previous informal groupings which rhetorically followed North-South, East-West and developed-developing divides, the G20 uniquely enabled some developed and developing countries to interact more intimately at the same table. The rise of G20 itself was not a sudden process. Nine years prior to the first G20 Summit in 2008, the G20 was established as a meeting between finance ministers and central bank governors. In the wake of the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, the G20 was created to mitigate the crisis, promote cooperation under the Bretton Woods system and advance progress in WTO negotiations, among other things. Canadian finance minister Paul Martin, who later also served as prime minister and was recognized as the initiator of the G20, argued that it was necessary for bringing nations from different stages of economic development so that discussion on global problem could cover various perspectives.

It was also Paul Martin who proposed the advancement of the G20 from ministerial meetings to a summit of heads of states/governments. Martin explained that meeting between heads of states was necessary because they were the ones who have power and mandate to take political initiative and policy. The G7/8 then adopted an outreach mechanism, where the G8 host invited leaders of non-G8 nations to attend the summit. During the UK’s G8 presidency in 2005 for instance, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair created a venue for dialogue between G8

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5 Kim and Haque detailedly explained that the crisis was originated in Thailand when in 1997 foreign investors began to move their money out of Thailand after worrying Thailand’s ability to repay their foreign debt. The Thai Central Bank’s decision to raise the interest rate unfortunately declined asset prices which worsened economic situation. The crisis immediately spread out not only to other East Asian nations, but also to other in different regions, such as Russia and Brazil.
7 "An interview with Paul Martin”, 57.
8 Ibid, 57
9 Russia formally joined the G7 in 1998, thus the G7 was renamed to the G8. Blamed for its role in the Crimean crisis, Russia’s membership was suspended by other G8 leaders who met in the Hague, Netherlands on 24 March 2014.
and Outreach 5 (Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa). In the same vein, Germany Prime Minister Angela Merkel invited those five nations for a high-level dialogue when Germany hosted the G8 Summit in 2007 to specifically discuss economic, energy and social issues with the G8. Shortly following that summit, French President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed the expansion of the G8 to the G13, adding those five developing countries into the group.

US President George W Bush was initially unenthusiastic with any idea for establishing of a more inclusive talk which consists of several nations beyond the G8. As explained by Cooper and Thakur, President Bush was reluctant to give up some part of the US dominance as the world’s more powerful actor unless there was a strong reason for that. Only after persuaded by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and learning the worsening global financial, President Bush agreed to invite leaders from other 18 countries and the European Union to the first G20 Leaders Summit in Washington D.C in 2008.

The inclusion of developing countries into the G20 is seen as a realistic reflection of the “rise of multipolarity”, at least in economic sense. From scholars’ perspectives, the financial crisis is a indication of the “decline of the United States” or “shrink of the West”. Declinists believe that the US preponderance in a unipolar world has started to come to end. Bisley argues that the narrowing gap between the United States and the rest has now become clearer and the world characterized by the existence of single superpower – the United States – might be no longer prolonged. Cooper et al. argued that if the (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, ASEAN and Mexico) BRICSAM economies grew consistently as growth at that period, those nations would have played more important role at global stage.

Even if the United States remains the most powerful state from many points of view, at the very least we must accept the fact of the “rise of everyone else”. Many developing countries have economically grown fast over the past two decades, resulting in a shift in the

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10 Kirton, G20 Governance, 125.
11 Williamson, “Key Emerging Powers.”
12 Heine, “Will They Have,” 1
13 Cooper and Thakur, The Group of Twenty, 24.
15 Some news and literatures also mentioned the role of Kevin Rudd as one of co-founders of the G20. Callaghan (2013) for instance, quoted Rudd’s press conference in Cairns in August 2013 which mentioned his role in creating the G20.
19 Bisley, Great Powers, 142.
20 Zwaan, “Reflecting the World”, 1
22 Zakaria, The Post-American, 1.
distribution of world income away from three dominant powers of the United States, Western Europe and Japan.\(^23\)^24

The G8 needed developing countries to overcome the problem of legitimacy and efficiency in global economic governance. As explained by Payne, legitimacy problem in the G8 could be traced from the lacks of on regional variation and power divisions in its self-selection membership,\(^25\) while the efficiency problem could be seen from the fact that the G8 had lost its previous capability to set the agenda and mitigate the financial crisis.\(^26\) Whether the inclusion of developing countries to the G20 had significantly added legitimacy and efficiency of the global governance remains debatable, and is beyond the scope of this essay.

Although the G20 countries cover around 66% of the world population and 85% of global GDP\(^27\) the issue of political representation is still critical. As self-appointed forum, the G20 always faces criticism about why particular country is selected as a G20 member and how countries outside the G20 can be engaged in policy making.\(^28\) Questions and contestations about G20 membership criteria are particularly sensitive to developing countries whose status as “systematically important countries”\(^29\) were repeatedly questioned. Some argue that the G20 does not really reflect the top twenty largest economies. Argentina and South Africa are not among the twentieth largest economy.\(^30\) Even in the African continent, Nigeria has bigger economic and population than South Africa.\(^31\)

The inclusion of some developing nations has broadened the scope of the G20, but there are still more than 170 nations which are still excluded from direct participation in this forum. In order to “defend” their membership status and to show their “membership credibility,” developing nations consistently try to prove that they are able to represent the voice of “excluded” parts of the world. In the next section, this article discusses the literature gaps of the developing countries’ role in the G20.

\(^{23}\) Goh, *The Struggle for Order*, 134

\(^{24}\) From the World Bank’s Current GDP data, the US share of the world’s GDP declined from 32.1% in 2001 to 21.99% in 2013, UK from 4.6% in 2001 to 3.5% in 2013 and Germany from 5.9% in 2001 to 5.1% in 2013. On the other hand, developing nations’ share of world GDP has increased substantially. China’s share of world GDP increased from 4.1% in 2001 to 10.5% in 2013, India from 1.5% to 2.6% and Indonesia from 0.48% to 1.18%.


\(^{26}\) Ibid


\(^{28}\) Slaughter, op. cit, 46.

\(^{29}\) This term was mentioned in the 1999 G7 Summit Leaders’ Statement in Cologne, Germany, referring to countries which were invited to the G-20 Meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.

\(^{30}\) According to IMF data, Argentina’s GDP in 2013 was the 21\(^{st}\) largest among other countries, while South Africa was the 33\(^{rd}\) largest.

\(^{31}\) In 2013, Nigeria’s current GDP was US$ 521,812 million, while South Africa’s was US$ 350,800 million. Nigeria’s population is predicted to around 183,000 people in 2015, whereas there are around 54,000 people in South Africa.
II. States of Research

Scholarly literature on international institution has often focused on competing claims from realists and liberals. Those literatures are generally divided on how to approach question of whether or not developing countries are rising into threat.

Liberalism, especially neoliberal institutionalist approaches initially appear to be better suited for explaining the G20. Potter argues that according to liberal perspective, the establishment of the G20 was motivated by the result of the desire of the states to work together to prevent the financial crisis. Generally, scholars from the liberal school of thought tend to be optimistic by assuming that developing countries share liberal norms with developed nations in the continuing globalization process.

Liberals argue that the transition of the world order will work smoothly because nations at different level of powers will be in concert to find ways to build a mutually beneficial global architecture. Key neoliberal institutionalist, such as Robert Keohane particularly argues that developing nations will not become aggressive because they benefit from the international order. Ikenberry and Mo believe that developing nations are growingly engaging with other powers in order to pursue their national interests. Under the liberal assumption, developing countries prefer to continue benefiting from the economic dominance of the West, especially in order to keep their economic interest. In this sense, embedding developing countries to the established international order would only strengthen the interests of the United States.

Ikenberry further explains that the United States is acting as a hegemon with liberal characteristic. In the liberal hegemony situation, inferior partners benefit from leadership delivered by a hegemonic state, while hegemon wishes to keep its preeminent position without much use of enforcement effort. For that reason, developing countries in the G20 are expected to become supporters, rather than revisionists to the G20, which was in fact created through the US’ invitation. Jonathan Lurckhust argues that the G20 represents the ad hoc embedded liberalism situation where developing countries prefer to both integrate themselves to the US dominated capitalism, because they do not have major international alternative than a free trade system, and at the same time they continuously influence the current liberal system with the

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32 Porter, “The G-7.”
36 See Hachigian and Sutphen, “Strategic Collaboration.”
Keynesian principles. Other writings are more pessimistic with the role of developing countries.

In contrast to liberal school of thought, realists portray the rise of developing nations in terms of competition vis-à-vis Western countries. Scholars who believe that large and influential developing countries will eventually challenge the established global order, often have been influenced by offensive realist school of thoughts. First postulated by J Mearsheimer, offensive realism argues that non-status quo are mostly dissatisfied with global balance of power. There is a limitless struggle for power among states caused by a quest for security as a result of the anarchic structure of the international system. Classical realists on the other hand, see the rise of developing nations at the global stage as potential sources of instability because the self-definition of their interests will expand along with their increasing capabilities. Different from offensive realism, classical realism believe in balance of power, where states refrain themselves from expanding their influence and power due to the existence of other states. Classical realism prefers to accommodate non-dominant powers, although similar to offensive realism, it is still heavily influenced by the “revisionist” vs “status quo” paradigm.

According to Castaneda, the developing countries’ core values are so different from the current global order that their inclusion to international institutions would create friction and instability. Andrew F Cooper quoted Grigory T Chin’s argument which portrayed from the realist perspective, China’s activism in the G20 reflected its desire to be perceived as “a demandeur inside the system”, either as an individual or through collective position with India and Brazil in the issue such as the reform of International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Realists generally tended to worry that the dramatic rise of any states/powers will create problems of insecurity, rivalry, arms race, and instability in the global landscape. Anarchy makes states always worried about aggression and expansion by other states. It was systemic imperatives which push states to pursue aggressive attitudes towards others. Offensive realists’ assumption was nevertheless widely criticized, especially by liberals.

39 Martinez-Diaz in'The G20 after Eight Years” provided an interesting analysis on the influence of developing countries to the G20 Meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. According to him, between 1999 to 2006, developing countries agreed on most points proposed by the G7 in the.
40 In his book The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (2001), Mearsheimer explains and argues for his theory of "offensive realism" by assumption that great powers are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal’ (29).
41 Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World, 151.
42 Kirshner, “The Tragedy of Offensive Rrealism”, 59
43 Ibid, 71
44 Castaneda, “Not Ready for Primetime.”
45 Cooper, “The G20 as an Improvised,” 746.
The realist approach is often used to explain some of BRICS collective action in the G20, which is seen to challenge the G7 countries. In the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Brisbane for instance, BRICS leaders met and released a statement demanding the G20 to plan debate on variants of further steps which the IMF will present if the United States does not ratify the IMF reform package, which was mandated in the 5th G20 Summit in Seoul, by the end of 2014. From realist perspective, this effort is seen as a consolidation of power and interest of BRICS nations to challenge the United States.

Many studies, especially from the realist camp, on the role of developing nations in international negotiations emphasized the importance of material powers. Common logical interpretation in perceiving the rise of developing nations is that their given conditions, such as strategic geographical position and abundant natural resources and their stellar economic growth, laid the foundations for more assertive foreign policy. Economic strength does not only enable them to improve their military capability, but also provides them with more bargaining power in negotiation table. However, this logic contradicts with the fact that it is still unclear whether material resources significantly influence nation’s certain foreign policy choice. Why did South Africa which has fewer material capabilities than Indonesia for instance, prefer to join coalition with other developing countries through BRICS, while Indonesia seems reluctant to join any coalition in the G20?

Both liberalism and realism are influential and convincing in some respects. Material factors and elite’s rational choice, as assumed by realists, clearly matter. Economic interdependence also had decreased source of inter-state rivalry in many cases, as argued by liberal scholars. Nevertheless, those two current competing schools are not sufficient to explain a state’s motivation in preferring a particular policy choice in the G20. Both schools of thought are not clearly clarifying why developing countries in the G20 pursue complex foreign policies which cannot always be defined merely as either confrontational or supportive to the inherited Western economic governance. To fill with this gap, this article uses the role theory framework to understand actions and behaviors of developing countries at the G20.

Furthermore, this article prefers to elaborate the role of non-BRIC developing nations in the G20. Many studies categorized developing countries in the G20 only into one category.

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46 Paniev, “G20 Summit: Brics Build.”.
47 Such as important role of Brazil and India in the Doha Development Round as explained by Hurrel and Narlikar “A New Politics,” 415-433.
48 In term of total GDP for instance, according to the World Bank, Indonesia’s current GDP was $878.0 billion in 2012 (in the 16th largest GDP in the world), while South Africa’s GDP was only $384.3 billion (the 28th largest GDP).
49 Polachek, Robst and Chang (“Liberalism,” 405-422) argues that free trade is necessary to reduce interstate conflicts. Emerging powers have pursued a lot of free trade agreements (FTAs), including with developed nations. South Africa for instance, had signed FTA with EU in 2012.
which is “emerging powers”\textsuperscript{50} or BRICS, although in fact these countries are too dissimilar to be classified. In many aspects, developing countries in the G20 do not share similar political orientation about the global governance, and therefore pursue not similar position in the G20.

Up to now, while the number of research concerning the role of BRIC nations in the G20, either as individuals or as a group, few academic works look at beyond those countries. The focus on China, India, Brazil, and Russia might be in great part the result of these four countries' large population and area, increasing military spending and significantly growing total GDP.

Non-BRIC developing countries clearly do not pose material powers as much as BRIC. Furthermore, although in term of GDP per capita China and Russia\textsuperscript{51} are considered as developing countries, since the end of World War 2, both countries have become permanent members of the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{52} In terms of military power, military spending of those four countries are much larger than the rest of developing nations.\textsuperscript{53} George Magnus draws differences between developing countries through a pyramid representation from economic weight consideration.\textsuperscript{54} He put China in the top of the pyramid, given its large economic weight compared to other developing countries. India, Brazil and Russia are located in the second group. The third layer is comprised of countries which in 1980s were called as Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), such as Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. Indonesia, Turkey, Thailand and Malaysia are placed in the fourth layer.

The BRICS, except South Africa, have larger power resources and higher position in the world hierarchy which could become strong modalities for them to achieve their desired outcomes. Non-BRIC countries on the other hand, with their different configuration of material powers, express their unique role in the G20 which will be explained using the theoretical framework explained in the next section.

\section*{III. Conceptual framework: National role Conceptions}

Kalevi Jaako Holsti developed the national role conceptions (NRCs) framework by deriving the theory from anthropology, psychology and sociology fields, particularly from George Herbert Mead who explored the impact of the behavior of "others" on an individual's role and

\textsuperscript{50} See for instance Heine (ibid) and Schirm (2011)
\textsuperscript{51} Since 2013 Russia has gained the high-income status from the World Bank.
\textsuperscript{52} China's seat was occupied by Taiwan between 1949 and 1971.
\textsuperscript{53} In 2013 China spent $ 188 billion, Russia $ 88 billion, India $ 47 billion and Brazil $31 billion, while Turkey only spent $ 19 billion for military purpose.
\textsuperscript{54} Magnus. \textit{Uprising: Will Emerging Markets}. 5-6.
recognized differentiation between the "self" and the "alter". Holsti builds a theoretical framework based on the interaction between 'role conception', the idea of the state about itself and the environment, and 'role prescriptions', expectations on appropriate conduct, as main sources of the position or status of the state in the international system.

The NRCs theory could be beneficially used to explain the role played by developing countries in the G20. Its obvious advantage is the inclusion of social milieus in explaining how a state views itself and its role in international politics. According to Holsti, role conception is a product of a nation’s socialization process and influenced by history, culture and societal conception. Using the NRCs enables one to explain foreign policy beyond merely realpolitik because the NRCs helps separate the analysis of national interests from national powers. This view is largely different from major IR theories. Realism for instance, does not regard societal factors as determinants of state’s behavior. Instead, realism emphasizes the importance of material factors and state’s position in international system as source of state’s behavior. The NRCs on the other hand, allows one to incorporate ‘less tangible aspects’ of ‘societal factors’ such as ideology and values to the study of FPA.

Practically, Holsti elucidates NRCs through elites’ perceptions of national role. Holsti argues that “A national role conception includes the policymakers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis ....” Holsti chose elites, instead of wide society/citizens, because elites impact on interests and policies are stronger due to their position as “part of political culture of a nation”. Therefore, strong elite consensus has more impact than a broad but shallow societal agreement.

For more than three decades, Holsti’s gained significant numbers of followers. Recently Cantir and Kaarbo call attention to the domestic sources of NRCs by focusing on the elite-masses nexus that is largely absent in the FPA role theory literature. They criticized early generation of NRCs who look at NRCs as merely elite-driven process. Cantir and Kaarbo advocate the need to investigate complex domestic factors such as public opinion, influence of bureaucracy, government-opposition relations and multi-party coalitions, in order to accurately understand the formation of NRCs. While Holsti assumes that roles are stable and largely
shaped by leaders’ conception, Cantir and Karboo believe that there are continuous conflicts between the elites and masses (vertical contestation) and among domestic political elites (horizontal contestation) over the appropriate NRCs or even the interpretation of agreed upon NRCs. In supporting Cantir and Kaarbo’s arguments, Brummer and Thies investigate the sources of role contestation within parliamentary democracies. From the study case of Germany’s foreign policy from 1949 to 1955, they found that opposition parties have attempted to substitute or modify a government NRC. On the other hand, there was not any conflict within the cabinet based on differences in party ideology of the coalition parties.

While relatively new approaches by Cantir-Kaarbo and Brummer-Thies seem convincing, but this article does not follow them. The reason for underplaying the domestic process is the fact that foreign policy making in developing countries is still heavily elite-driven. Although some developing countries have achieved positive progress on democracy, free flow of information and growing number of foreign policy enthusiasts, the formulation of foreign policy remains dominated by small group of elites and bureaucrats.

Learning from series of interview conducted in Indonesia to various government officials, scholars, journalists and NGO activists from September 28 to November 21, 2014, this article believes that increasing roles of non-state actors do not significantly result in a “de-elitization” process of foreign policy making. This situation is largely different from Cantir-Kaarbo and Brummer-Thies assumption which investigate the domestic process of role contestation in developed democracies, such as France and Germany. In developing countries, the democratic institution is still fragile and underdeveloped so that foreign policy issue is not much contested in public discourse. It is also the case in the G20 where only small elites are in fact involved in shaping country’s strategy and position. According to interviews conducted to Indonesian government officials for instance, not more than twenty officials who are really involved in the G20 issues. Because it is not easy to draw domestic policy-making process clearly and accurately, therefore, the article still applies Holsti’s original concept of the NRCs which put both external actors and the mass public of the state, instead of domestic political process, as determinants of NRCs.

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63 Ibid, 11-6.
66 According to scholars who were interviewed by the author:
Mr Endy Bayuni, interviewed in Jakarta on November 6, 2014,
Dr Evi Fitriani, interviewed in Depok, Indonesia, on November 10, 2014,
Dr Dinna Wisnu, interviewed in Jakarta on November 12, 2014.
To assess role performances, in the next section the article first of all defines sets of domestic context of national self-conception. It then takes the feedbacks taken from external actors or called as role prescriptions. The article then analyzes the interaction between policy makers’ own role conceptions and role prescriptions of the “others” to explain decision and position of governments (performance).

IV. Assessing Indonesia's roles in the G20

Indonesia is selected as a case study because as the aforementioned aim of this article, Indonesia is one of non-BRIC developing countries. With its “modest” total GDP compared to BRIC, Indonesia is an accurate case study in the present analysis. The article takes some roles defined by Holsti, but also combines those with author’s own contemplation on contemporary roles. Regarding the evidence, the investigation of case studies are based on quotes from governments’ official statements, quotes from published and unpublished information, and interview with key government officials, scholars and non-government actors in Indonesia.

Role conceptions

Similar to other developing countries, Indonesia is generally very interested in participating as an active member of the G20 summitry process. The G20 membership becomes a central point of many Indonesian officials’ speeches and statements. Officials often claim that Indonesia’s inclusion to the G20 is a portrayal of its economic success. In the sideline of the first G20 Summit in Washington, DC, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono delivered a speech in a forum organized by the US-Indonesia Society (USINDO) expressing Indonesia’s aspiration for the newly formed G20 summit to facilitate coordinated action to deal with the financial crisis.\(^{67}\) In an annual speech in front of the Indonesian parliament, Yudhoyono emphasized Indonesia’s emerging role as the important problem solver of the crisis.\(^{68}\)

One narrative that is often popularized by Indonesian policymakers is that Indonesia has achieved high economic growth compared to the rest of the G20, providing it with a unique opportunity to become an "engine" of global recovery. Regarding its specific roles in the G20, Indonesian government officials have explicitly mentioned at least five roles as explained below.

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\(^{67}\) Yudhoyono, “Indonesia and America.”

\(^{68}\) Jefriando, “SBY: RI Sudah.”
First, Indonesian foreign policy elites embrace a “regional protector role.” Indonesia is always proud of its status as the sole ASEAN country in the G20. In early years of its participation to G20 summits, Indonesian policymakers faced a tricky question from some domestic scholars who demanded Indonesia to use the opportunity of being G20 member to pursue a post-ASEAN foreign policy. Rizal Sukma wrote a provocative op-ed in the Jakarta Post, criticizing the practice of Indonesia’s foreign policy which was too ASEAN-centric without acknowledging some long standing problem of ASEAN, such as the principle of non-interference.69 In responding to such criticism, the government stated that Indonesia would not choose the G20 over ASEAN.70 Instead, Indonesia would consistently voice ASEAN’s interest in the G20.71

The second role which this article suggests is a “bastion of the revolution-liberator.” This Holsti’s ‘cold-war term’ could be better renamed in today’s context as “the revisionist,” which aspires to reforming the current status quo of global order. This view is particularly related to the need to revise the institutional financial institutions (IFIs) to better reflect the reality of the world distribution of income. Since the first summit Indonesia has supported the IFIs reform.72 Yudhoyono joined BRICS and leaders from developing countries to push the IMF quota reform in the 4th G20 Summit in Seoul November 2010. In the 6th G20 Summit in Cannes, France, Yudhoyono also reminded the importance for the G20 to execute the commitment made in the Seoul Summit to shift six percent of the IMF quota to developing countries.73

The third component of Indonesia’s national role conceptions is a “defender of developing nations.” In all G20 summits, Indonesian officials emphasize Indonesia’s strategic self-positioning as the voice of developing nations. In the sixth G20 Summit in Cannes, Yudhoyono promised to bring interest of developing nations in the G20 table.74 The spirit of pro-developing nations, to which Indonesia has been widely acknowledged as the host of the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference and one of founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, is still influential in the Indonesia’s foreign policy discourse. One important point of its pro-developing nations stance is to ensure the G20 to help developing nations avoid the worst effect of financial crisis.75

The fourth role that Indonesia is assumed to perform is a “status quo supporter.” Although Indonesia embraces the “revisionist” role in some issues, in significant number of

69 Sukma, “A Post-ASEAN foreign policy”
70 “President: RI Will Never.”
71 “SBY Suarakan RI”, 2011.
72 Yudhoyono, op cit.
73 Yudhoyono, “Towards the Cannes Summit.”
74 “Di KTT G-20.”
75 See Yudhoyono’s speech in “Indonesia: Regional Role.”
statements Indonesian officials supported the strengthening of global capitalism. Indonesia for example joined other G20 members, especially industrialized countries to commit to avoid protectionism.  

Domestically, Indonesia has also supported the G20’s longstanding concern, which is to eliminate fuel subsidy, a stance advocated by neoliberal economic framework.

The fifth role of Indonesia’s activism in the G20 is to become a “bridge builder.” This role was numerously mentioned by Indonesian officials. In a statement by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia defined “bridge builder” status as an effort to encourage the achievement of a consensus. As quoted by Hermawan, Indonesian foreign minister at that time Marty Natalegawa stated: “in any international forum, including ASEAN and G-20, Indonesia will BRIDGE different visions between nation-states and show Indonesia’s moderate and strong views.” The “bridge builder” role from Indonesian policymakers’ perspectives is located somewhere in the middle between “the revisionist” and “status quo supporter.”

Not only in the G20, during Yudhoyono’s era the “bridge-builder” concept was also advocated in many other international fora, including climate change negotiations, Islam-West relations and development issue. In the context of the G20, the “bridge-builder” role could be observed by Indonesia’s stance for not being strong proponent of some most debated G20 issues, such as IMF reform and currency wars. Instead, it has focused on ‘less-sensitive issues’, such as infrastructure, financial inclusion and climate change financing, which all parties might share interests.

From explanation above, it is clear that Indonesian political elites perceive their states as having different sets of relationships in the G20. Those policy-makers operate more than one national role conceptions because they are aware the nature of the G20 which is informal and unbinding, thus any nation cannot strictly rely on particular role. Yet, for a comprehensive analysis, the role prescriptions of expectations of external actors should be scrutinized to understand the international roots of Indonesia’s position in the G20. Such an analysis will demonstrate to what extent the role prescriptions of external actors are overlapping or diverging the Indonesian elite’s own national role conceptions.

External actors’ role prescriptions for Indonesia

76 In the 2012 G20 Summit in Los Cabos, Mexico for instance, Yudhoyono urged G20 members to avoid protectionism. See “Yudhoyono Calls for Stronger.”
77 “G20.”
79 See for instance, a statement by the president spokesperson Dr Dino Patti Djalal that Indonesia would take up a “bridge-builder” role to accommodate conflicting interests between various parties in the negotiation. (Adamrah, “RI Eyes”)
Indonesia’s activity in the G20 cannot be reduced to the self-constructed role conceptions of the Indonesian elites only. Rather, the international context also influences this process. The idea, norms and values generated by the international society as well as interaction and expectations of other actors should be considered in order to grasp the external roots of Indonesia’s role in the G20.

Regarding the “regional protector” role, although in the first until third summits Indonesia always described that they were ‘representing’ ASEAN interests, this rhetoric was not enthusiastically advocated by Indonesia anymore in the fourth summit onwards. The “regional protector role” was not effectively pursued by Indonesia because for Indonesia it is not easy to derive what ASEAN’s interests are in the G20. In the 15th ASEAN Summit in 2009, ASEAN leaders mandated the establishment of an ASEAN G-20 Contact Group comprising ASEAN Chair, Indonesia and Secretary-General of ASEAN. The Contact Group however, has not worked effectively. According to series of interviews to Indonesian officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank, the Contact Group has never existed even since the beginning. Indonesian officials only briefly briefed other ASEAN countries in meeting of ASEAN finance ministers regarding some important points agreed by G20 members, but there is no serious and systematic dialogue on either what particular interests Indonesia and ASEAN should present in the G20 summit or what concrete actions ASEAN leaders have to take to support the G20’s commitments.

According to Indonesian G20 Sherpa, Indonesia has achieved one of its main objectives in the G20 which is to ensure that the rotating ASEAN Chair is consistently invited to the G20 Summit. But Indonesia is not concerned very much about solidifying voices of ASEAN countries, in the G20. Indonesia sees no problem for the rotating ASEAN chair to articulate their own national interests, despite the variety in their interests.

During the 2012 G20 Summit in Los Cabos, Mexico, for instance, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen encouraged oil producing countries to help ease high oil prices that hampered the economies of net oil importing countries, such as Cambodia. A year later, high oil prices were not raised as an issue at the St Petersburg summit by Brunei, which took over the ASEAN chair from Cambodia. Brunei, of course, is a wealthy oil exporter and has no interest in lower oil prices. Indonesia did not attempt to reconcile these different stances. Indonesian president even did not hold any bilateral meetings with either ASEAN Secretary General or the rotating

80 Santikajaya, “Strengthening ASEAN”
82 Santikajaya, op cit.
ASEAN chair in the sidelines of G20 summits, except with Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva in the 2nd G20 Summit in London. Ahead to the 2014 G20 Summit in Brisbane, current Indonesian President Joko Widodo also did not use the opportunity to discuss about G20 issues with Myanmarese President Thein Shein, who served as the ASEAN chair. During the meeting, which was only a few days before the Brisbane Summit, President Widodo preferred to discuss bilateral cooperation and did not touch anything about possible collaboration between two countries in the G20. Indonesia also did not pursue regional outreach, which is quite different from South Africa which, together with other African nations, maintains the Committee of Ten (C-10), whose one of the objectives is to "develop a clear strategy for Africa’s engagement with the G20."[^84]

Indonesia’s reluctance to pursue more explicit forms of regional leadership in the G20 issue are motivated by at least two factors. First, Indonesia does not want to be perceived as an aggressive regional hegemony because by doing so, there would be negative reactions challenging Indonesia. Even without any Indonesia’s effort to consolidate ASEAN’s view on the G20, some other ASEAN countries have unilaterally looked for access to involve in the G20 process beyond the “ASEAN quota”. Singapore created the Global Governance Group (3G) in 2009 inviting some Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam to join in. The 3G was aimed to ensure that the G20 hear the aspirations of its non-members.[^85] Singapore has successfully leveraged its diplomatic bargaining in the G20 by regularly invited to the summits since the 2010 Seoul Summit, except to the 2012 Los Cabos Summit, as a representative of the 3G. Indonesia does not have much communication with Singapore during the summits. In the words of an Indonesian official, Singapore never consulted its agenda in the G20 with Indonesia.[^86]

The second factor of Indonesia’s reluctance to call for a united ASEAN position in the G20 is that naturally, ASEAN is never enthusiast to pursue collaboration in any multilateral fora. It is true that the 22nd ASEAN summit in April 2013 mandated officials from ASEAN members to create an ASEAN Position Paper for the G20 Summit, but after more than one year, the document has not existed yet,[^87] which shows ASEAN’s lack of seriousness in developing

[^83]: “Talking Points.”
[^84]: “Committee of Ten”
[^85]: Chowdlury, “The Global Governance Group,” 7
[^87]: From series of interview by the author to some Indonesian officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 30 October, 6 and 11 November 2014 and Ministry of Finance on 29 October 2014, the author obtained information that that there has not been any initiative from either ASEAN Secretariat, Indonesia or the current ASEAN chair to develop the “ASEAN Position Paper for the G20.” Indonesian officials said that the initiative to write down the paper should come from the ASEAN Secretariat. Nevertheless, an official of the ASEAN Secretariat provided an information to the author that that the document is not ready for public yet, although it has been more than one year after the commitment was made.
common position in the G20. ASEAN also does not have a mechanism to reinforce G20 policies and harmonize them with ASEAN’s programs.  

Although Indonesia has become less interested in using the “regional protector” rhetoric, it does not necessarily mean that Indonesia completely abandons its attention to the region’s interests. Indonesia still tries to link its position in the G20 with the interest of other ASEAN countries, such as the need for infrastructure financing which is in line with the ASEAN Connectivity agenda. But the “regional protector” role becomes less explicitly expressed because the responses from other ASEAN nations to Indonesia’s membership in the G20 are not entirely supportive.

Regarding to the “revisionist” role, it is important to note that Indonesia’s push for the reform of global economic governance is different from BRICS. BRICS put the IMF reform issue, especially the quota reform in the heart of their common position. While seeing the IMF quota reform as an important matter, Indonesia does not want to spend too much energy to be involved in the quota reform debate, especially given the political reality that any G20 member cannot intervene in the domestic process in the US Congress. Indonesia sees the global economic governance reform more general than merely the IMF quota reform. This more general reform focuses on the issue of strengthening international financial architecture, such as improving IMF’s lending capacity and its surveillance capacity. In those areas, Indonesia saw a lot of progress has been made. In recent summits, the IMF quota reform even has not become a priority for Indonesia. In the 2012 Los Cabos Summit for instance, Indonesia defined its three main interests: (1) strengthening the G20’s effort to minimize negative impacts of crisis to the most vulnerable groups, (2) prioritizing infrastructure development and (3) endorsing financial inclusion.

Different from BRICS, Indonesia seems to pursue a wait-and-see strategy on the IMF quota reform. One reason for this is because Indonesia’s share to IMF quota will increase modestly, from 0.95 % to 0.97%, according to the 2010 reform package. Hermawan has another reason, which is “..Increasing quota in the IMF means increasing responsibility and contribution to IMF. In this sense, Indonesia’s capacity to support the increasing is not as large as BRICS and other countries.” This argument is supported by the fact that Indonesia’s loan pledge to

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88 Santikajaya, op cit.
89 For more explanation about the ASEAN Connectivity, see the Chairman's Statement of the 17th ASEAN Summit and Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.
93 Kasim et al, “Prioritas Indonesia”
IMF made following the 2012 Los Cabos Summit was less than other developing countries. Indonesia pledged up to US$ 1 billion to boost the resources of the IMF, while China pledged $43 billion, India $10 billion, Brazil $10 billion and Turkey $5 billion.95

The government officials on the other hand have different reason. Mr Rachmat Witoelar, the Indonesian chief of climate change negotiations, said that Indonesia is principally different from BRICS. While BRICS is more confrontational toward the Western countries, Indonesia prefers to become a problem solver which always seeks consensual solution.96 A senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that aside from different norms and values from BRICS, Indonesia was in fact not often invited by BRICS countries to discuss contemporary issues of global governance, thus Indonesia itself felt distance from BRICS agenda on the global governance reform.97

Another difference between Indonesia and BRICS is regarding the issue of the multilateral development banks. Both Indonesia and BRICS acknowledged the importance of reforming the development banks, but while BRICS prefers to create a new multilateral bank, Indonesia prefers to strengthen the World Bank and reform it from the inside. An establishment of a new BRICS bank is more political, serving the strategic interests of BRIC countries more than addressing development challenges of developing and least developed countries.98 Despite some rhetoric on pro-IMF reform, Indonesia has shown moderatism in this issue. For Indonesia, the reforms of IFIs and the bigger share of developing nations in those institutions are crucial, but there are other more important issues which need more attention than those.

Although Indonesia is a “soft” supporter of the IFIs reform, it is not accurate to say that Indonesia is simply a “status quo supporter.” The current environment of international relations which moves to multipolarity has refrained Indonesia from performing the “status quo supporter” role. Moreover, in responding to the worsen impact of global financial crisis, Indonesia implemented some domestic law which is incompatible with the G20’s commitments, such as the mining law’s mineral export restrictions in 2009 which was in contradiction to the commitment to prevent protectionism in the crisis situation. Indonesia’s role as the “defender of developing nations” is also to some extents contested. Other developing nations do not recognize that Indonesia really acts as their “defender,” as shown by the decision of Vietnam and the Philippines to join the 3G as explained above.

95 Press Release No. 12/231
Compared to other role conceptions, it is the “bridge-builder” role which has been encouraged and positively accepted by external actors. Indonesia itself has seen the “bridge-builder” as its asset in dealing with other nations both inside and outside the G20. The “bridge builder” has been consistently mentioned in the government’s documents and speeches.

As an informal and soft binding grouping, the G20 lacks of natural alignment. Even in a group which regularly meets, such as BRICS, there are variations of positions in the G20.\textsuperscript{99} The G20 is lacking of the sense of “we-ness” or togetherness which could dangerously lead nations to promote their national interests only and do little to improve coordination and collaboration. In this sense, the “bridge-builder” role is crucial to encourage G20 members to find common interest in conflicting issues. Indonesia has played the “bridge-builder” role skillfully by advocating some genuine proposals to the G20.

**Performing the “bridge-builder” role**

There are two issues discussed here to illustrate how Indonesia performs the “bridge builder” role: (1) infrastructure and (2) climate change. From the first summit, Indonesia proposed the establishment of a Global Expenditure Support Fund (GESF), which aimed to “…. support budget financing, on top of regular development assistance. … for countries that are most vulnerable and most in need…”\textsuperscript{100} Indonesia continued its effort at the London Summit by bringing this GESF idea in the discussions of IFIs reform. Indonesia proposed the allocation of some part of global funds from the IMF and World Bank to regional development banks so that countries in need of loan, especially to meet debt repayments, can borrow the fund much quicker.

The GESF proposal nevertheless did not attract much attention from other nations in those two summits.\textsuperscript{101} Indonesian delegations then changed the narrative of its proposal from GESF to a Global Infrastructure Initiative. Proposed by President Yudhoyono in the 4\textsuperscript{th} G20 Summit in Toronto, the infrastructure initiative expected more investment on infrastructure as an integral part of sustaining economic growth especially in developing countries. Similar to previous summits, Indonesia’s proposal did not obtain much support from many G20 members. Developed nations argued that amidst global financial crisis, they did not have sufficient fund to

\textsuperscript{99} As explicitly admitted by Deputy Governor of the David Mnimele, “…even among BRICS, positions are not always aligned.” (“South Africa and the G20,” 7).
\textsuperscript{100} Yudhoyono, “Statement.”
\textsuperscript{101} Abimanyu, *Refleksi dan Gagasan*, 255.
contribute to the infrastructure initiative. Mr Siregar added that developed nations generally prefer to restrict agenda, so that the G20 could spend their time and energy to discuss economic matters.

Dealing with developed nations’ reluctance, Indonesian delegations provided three arguments supporting the need for global infrastructure fund. First, global economic weight is now shifting away from developed to developing countries, thus G20 should be more concerned to support the sustainability of developing countries’ high economic growth by providing more infrastructure fund, as a part of effort to revive global economy. Secondly, despite high economic growth, economies in developing countries are still far from full employment condition, meaning that there are still much unexplored economic potential. By supporting infrastructure development in developing countries, developed countries will only get high rate of return at the end. The third argument is that providing infrastructure finance will help not only one particular country, but groups of nations, with significant number of population, to improve their economic condition. Indonesia provided an example of ASEAN Connectivity where countries in Southeast Asia planned to develop connected infrastructure development across the region. Once the global economy has revived, those nations will provide what the world needs, such as cheap and good quality manufactured products, because the better infrastructure has helped them improve their productivity and efficiency.

In term of strategy, Indonesia had assured Mexico which hosted the Summit in 2012, to put infrastructure financing on the table. Both countries had intense communication in other issues as well, such as the Financial Inclusion Peer Learning Program where Indonesia eventually joined Mexico, Chile and some other countries. Leaders’ communiqué of that Summit eventually inserted Indonesia’s initiative which is “.. Investment in infrastructure is critical for sustained economic growth, poverty reduction, and job creation…” According to Indonesian Vice Minister of Finance, Indonesia also successfully ensured the G20 leaders to agree on assigning their finance ministers and central bank governors to “…. consider ways in which the G20 can foster investment in infrastructure and ensure the availability of sufficient funding for infrastructure projects, including Multilateral Development Banks’ (MDBs) financing and technical support…”

Another issue which Indonesia has played important role is the inclusion of climate change issue as the G20 agenda. In the 3rd G20 Summit, President Yudhoyono strikingly

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102 Siregar, Mahendra. Interview by the author. Jakarta, November 5, 2014
103 Siregar, Mahendra. Interview by the author. Jakarta, November 5, 2014
104 Point 65 of the G20 Leaders Declaration, Los Cabos, 19 June 2012.
105 Ibid, point 17.
106 Kasim et al (eds), op cit, vii.
delivered a speech on the need for collaboration of G20 members in addressing climate change challenges. It was surprising because many G20 members initially did not want to discuss climate change in the G20 Summit. Brazil, China and India preferred to use the United Nations frameworks, instead of the G20, to talk about climate change. Indonesia on the other hand, argued that “... It is possible to cure the global economy and save the planet at the same time...,” implying that the G20 should expand its agenda, including on climate change.

In that summit, Indonesia did not ask G20 members to provide specific commitment to climate change. Rather, Indonesia provided its own commitment of reducing emission by 26% by 2020 from business as usual and 41% with international support. Indonesia also presented example of its bilateral climate finance initiatives with developed countries, such as Australia, Norway and France and argues that this kind of collaboration could be modeled by other G20 members. The announcement of pledge is particularly monumental because Indonesia was the first nation to announce that pledge, earlier than many other major developing countries. By announcing the pledge and providing the example of its bilateral initiatives, Indonesia took different stance from BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) which pursued more hard-line approach to developed nations on climate change issue. Indonesia’s moderate and conciliatory approach might have inspired other developing countries, such as Mexico to confidently propose to discuss climate finance in the 2012 Summit, although deeper investigation is needed to prove this hypothesis.

From explanation above, the article argues that Indonesia has expressed a desire to innovate in the G20 Summit. It is true that Indonesia’s ability to “bridge” many interests in the G20 is not as powerful as South Korea which successfully carved out a “bridge-builder” role by advocating a development agenda when it hosted the G20 Summit in 2010. As an OECD member and a ‘former’ developing country, South Korea has both financial and diplomatic capacity to become a leader on its own initiative. South Korea has the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) which could provide a concrete example of the implementation of Seoul Development Action Plan. Indonesia, on the other hand, does not have capability to ensure that its initiatives were adopted and accommodated by the G20.

The article argues that Indonesia has to back its initiatives up with concrete action which to some degree has degraded its bridging role. In the infrastructure financing issue for instance, Indonesia shows modest level of compliance of its own initiatives by spending only around 7.5%

107 Yudhoyono, “Intervention.”
of its national budget or less than 1.5% of GDP on infrastructure.\textsuperscript{109} Indonesia also does not much assist least developed countries in Southeast Asia, such as Laos and East Timor on infrastructure issue, which is inconsistent with its initial commitment to become a champion of infrastructure investment among developing nations.

Having said that, compared to other perceived roles, the “bridge-builder” role is the most visible and reliable role performed by Indonesia, as explained above. Indonesia seems skillfully successful in managing its conflicted multiple roles by keeping up rhetoric that it is still representing interests of ASEAN and developing countries, but in fact it is building its own credibility as a “bridge,” a role it now whishes to be indentified. For the G20 as a group, the “bridge-builder” role is crucial. No matter level capacity and power a certain member has, the bridge-builder behavior could positively bring the cohesion and the willingness to synergize in the group.

**Conclusion**

Membership in the G20 process provides countries, including developing countries, with the opportunity to creatively pursue an innovative way in managing their diplomatic. It is important to note that while G8 countries in the G20 are heavily concerned with the necessity to address the financial crisis, the concerns of developing countries in the group are generally how to improve their position on the global stage. Therefore, those developing countries naturally always try to propose certain and unique initiatives which could draw attention from other G20 members.

While large body of literature focuses much on BRIC and on contestation between realism and liberalism approaches, the article suggests the national role conceptions as an important framework to explain what particular role played by developing countries in the G20. As argued in the entire of this article, the “bridge-builder” role is the most performed role by Indonesia in the G20. Through this role, Indonesia has positioned itself not as a mere spectator at the G20. Indonesia has shown effort to shape the G20 process by “bridging” various interests at the G20, among others through its initiative on infrastructure financing and climate change. While it is impossible to undermine the fact that the United States, European countries and few large developing countries – especially China – have dominated the G20 summits, this article argues that the “bridging” approach and behavior is crucial to achieve consensus and collective

\textsuperscript{109} Wihardja, “Indonesia and the G20”
commitment amidst widely-acknowledged unique characteristics of the G20, such as diverse political system and economic challenges of its members, variation on national priorities and difficulty to create any joint stance.

For future research, the article suggests the analysis of the “bridge-builder” role in other non-BRIC developing countries. The “bridge-builder” seems to become an increasingly interesting role pursued by those countries at the G20. In a speech ahead to the Brisbane G20 Summit, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davotaglu promised that during its G20 presidency in 2015, Turkey will promote its role as a “bridge between the least and most developed countries.” It would be academically interesting to understand how non-BRIC developing countries use the “bridge-builder” rhetoric to optimize room for diplomatic maneuver at the G20.

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