

Hedging Strategy of Turkey in Great Power Competition

Mehtap Kara

The ongoing power shift and challenges to the rules-based international order highlight the importance of the secondary states in various regions and their alignment strategies. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the United States (US) and its allies have failed to recruit more states from the developing world to join the Western coalition against Russia and China to defend the liberal international order. Turkey as a swing state is an example of this trend despite being a NATO ally. It occupies a strategic geography in the changing power structure, and it is an important country for European security.

This presentation will explain how Turkey has adopted strategic hedging to avoid taking sides in the US-Russia rivalry by engaging both sides to increase the range of strategic options available to it. The 'return-maximizing' and 'risk-contingency' measures of hedging allow Turkey to cope with competing great powers and the systemic uncertainties in world politics simultaneously. The country's hedging against an uncertain future helps Turkey to extract commercial concessions, elevate the country's status, preserve strategic autonomy, and provide regime survival for President Erdoğan in 2023 elections despite severe economic problems and domestic polarization in the country. The presentation will introduce Turkish elites' attempt of (re)positioning the country between US and Russia and possible implications of Turkey's contradictory and ambiguous hedging behaviours in shaping the emerging regional order as well as the behaviours of the competing great powers.

Mehtap Kara is a Visiting Scholar at the Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) from Bahçeşehir Cyprus University (BAU). She received her PhD in International Relations from Eastern Mediterranean University and currently works as an assistant professor at BAU. Her articles have appeared in peer-reviewed journals including *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, *Turkish Studies*, and *Uluslararası İlişkiler-International Relations*. Dr. Kara's areas of research include IR theories, foreign policy analysis, and political psychology. Her research at the SNUAC focuses on hedging strategies of secondary states including Turkey, India, South Korea, and Brazil in great power competition. The research aims to map out economic, political, and military hedging strategies of four influential countries which occupy a strategic geography in the changing international order.

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Place: Asia Square (3rd Floor)