

Strategic Balance in an Era of Geopolitical Fragmentation: Turkey's Diplomacy as a Middle Power in the Face of the Russo-Ukrainian War and Escalating Tensions in the Middle East

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Abstract

The current international system is undergoing a process of structural disintegration that defies easy categorization. Deepening geopolitical divisions, ongoing armed conflicts, and the progressive erosion of multilateral norms have fundamentally altered the behavior of regional actors. This restructuring is particularly evident in the strategic decisions facing medium-sized states at geopolitical crossroads. Turkey's position at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East provides it with both the incentive and the opportunity to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy based on a strategic balance. This study examines Turkey's behavior as a middle power during a period of intensified great-power competition, analyzing middle-power theory and the regional security complex. The study consistently highlights four empirical areas: Turkey's mediation efforts in the Russo-Ukrainian War, its balanced stance in the Israeli-Iranian tensions, its conduct during the Twelve-Day War in June 2025, and the energy route opportunities created by the Strait of Hormuz Crisis in 2026. Through qualitative case studies and discourse-based process observation, the study argues that Turkish foreign policy embodies a hybrid form of middle-power diplomacy. This form combines risk aversion, selective adaptation, and normative signaling within a consistent, albeit fraught, strategic logic. The article suggests that this capacity for self-preservation strengthens Turkey's regional influence and underscores a broader shift in the behavior of middle powers in the emerging multipolar order.

Keywords

Containment policy, middle power diplomacy, multipolarity, regional security complex, Russia-Ukraine war, Strait of Hormuz, strategic balance, Twelve-Day War, Turkish foreign policy.