



CHAPTER 10

**GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND
TÜRKİYE'S MIDDLE POWER
GRAND STRATEGY**

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Abstract

In today's new Cold War, the return of great power rivalry has emerged in a different fashion and context. This perception of the new situation has started to be described in the West as a new stand-off between the free world (USA-EU) and Russian-Chinese authoritarianism. However, a closer look at world affairs reveals a more complex picture, where the activism of new middle powers appears as a significant driving force reshaping the international environment. Since the 1990s, there has been confusion in IR literature regarding the conceptualization and categorization of middle powers, as well as their similarities and differences. This situation remains relevant today. Grand Strategy is mostly associated with great powers; however, the present uncertainty stemming from great power rivalry has forced middle powers to seek ways to lessen their exposure to systemic risks. Hence, they have developed different domestic capabilities to overcome these challenges. At the same time, the recent observable shift in international order has surely allowed enough room for middle powers to influence emergent regional orders and beyond. This newly observed middle power activism, operating in the new multipolar system, has started a debate among IR scholars about the differences between traditional and newly emergent middle powers. However, what is more important today is to diagnose the radical changes that have come about in today's middle powers. During the Cold War years, middle powers had to adjust themselves to the plans of great powers, but today it is the USA, China and Russia that need to manage a world influenced by middle power activism. Hence, in the first section of this paper, a brief look will be given to different definitions of middle powers, both traditional and new. In light of today's middle power activism, it is also necessary to briefly mention the availability of alignment strategies of middle powers. Next, the focus will shift to why middle powers, like great powers, deserve to develop a grand strategy. Finally, referencing Ramon Pacheco Pardo's model of middle power grand strategy (Pardo, 2023, pp. 1-336), the main contours of Türkiye's grand strategy will be outlined.

Keywords

*Middle Power, Grand Strategy, New Cold War, Middle Power Activism,
Türkiye, Foreign Policy Behavior, Autonomy*

Introduction

In today's new Cold War, the return of great power rivalry has emerged in a different fashion and context. This perception of the new situation has started to be described in the West as a new stand-off between the free world (USA-EU) and Russian-Chinese authoritarianism. However, a closer look at the world affairs reveals a more complex picture, where the activism of new middle powers-as great powers have gradually started to lose their means and zones of influence around different parts of the world (Kielm, 2023) - appears as a significant driving force reshaping the international environment. Since the 1990s, there has been confusion in IR literature regarding conceptualization and categorization of middle powers, as well as their similarities and differences. This situation remains relevant today.

Very recently, the 2024 Davos Economic Forum's White Paper once again highlighted the problem of lacking an exact and agreed-upon definition of the middle power concept (UN, 2024). Despite the continuous confusion about what constitutes middle powers in IR- due to the persisting belief that middle powers sit below great powers, which are the countries with permanent seats in UNSC- the newly observed rising middle power activism, exerting influence over global politics with their extensive diplomatic, multilateral, economic, and military capabilities over the last two decades, cannot be sidestepped or overlooked. The recently published 2024 Davos World Economic Forum's White Paper is new evidence of this certainty. In fact, regardless of the term or the category under which they are grouped, middle powers continue to play a vital and growing role each passing day.

According to Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, the new reality of the return of great power rivalry, which has resulted in a geopolitical divide, is the greatest impediment to dealing with global challenges (UN, 2024). He acknowledges that there is no effective global strategy to address today's security challenges, and worst of all, it is the current geopolitical divide and rivalry that is preventing the global community from coming together around the most needed global solutions (UN, 2024). However, UN Secretary-General Guterres is also optimistic about building a new multipolar global order through a reformed and inclusive networked multilateralism (UN, 2024). Recognizing middle powers' preference for multilateralism and their past experiences in mediation and international innovation, this year's Davos Forum White Paper concludes that middle powers are expected to strengthen this vision (UN, 2024).

The reason of why middle powers are drawing attention among IR circles today is associated with a new conviction that the 21st century world order has already started to be shaped by the great power rivalry between USA/EU and China/Russia, due to the continuing power shift from a unipolar system to a strengthened multipolar one. However, contrary to the general expectations, this power shift is now said to be resulting not from the rivalry between the great powers but from the increasing activism of middle powers present in the system (UN, 2024). In this regard, Dino Patti Djalal, the founder and chairman of the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia, at the 2024 Davos World Forum, supported the newly observed effectiveness of middle powers. He further stated that since there are more middle powers proliferating in the system across the world's regions than ever before, this situation is bringing more opportunities for these states, which vary in size, ambition, and resources, to play a significant role in the future determination of the world order.

Numerous attempts have been made to define grand strategy so far, but the focus has mostly been on great powers, neglecting middle powers in this sense. There is rich literature on the grand strategy of great powers, where some scholars have concentrated on historical perspective, examined the case of USA as the sole superpower until now, and lately studied China as the new emerging great power. In the process of explaining the grand strategy of great powers, all scholars have focused on how these great powers tie ends to means.

Very few scholars have attempted to convince the IR community why middle powers can and do have a grand strategy at our time. For this article, I chose Roman Pacheco Pardo (Pardo, 2023, pp.1-336), who relied on William Martel's definition of grand strategy using South Korea as a case study (Martel, 2015, pp.1-535) to explain how and why middle powers can and do have a grand strategy. Before examining Pardo's scheme designed for the grand strategy of middle powers, it is necessary to briefly

mention the lacking consensus on the definition of middle powers. In the next step of this paper, the major commonalities of the middle powers' foreign policy analysis will be stated, which is considered essential for analysis of a middle power state's grand strategy. In between, a brief look will be taken at the alignment strategies available for middle powers. Finally, this paper aims to assess whether it is possible for Türkiye to advance its likely grand strategy as a middle power by prioritizing autonomy and defining its high political ends in the near future.

Middle Powers and Grand Strategy

The current situation in Europe has been called as the new Cold War. Scholars like Galbreath (2008), Hahn (2014), Monaghan (2015), Doyle (2018), Lucas (2019), and Buzan (2024) assumed that signs of the rise of New Cold War in Europe were already there because of changed and assertive Russian Federation foreign policy behavior. The energy-based arguments between Russia and Ukraine led Europeans to experience cold nights after 2006 due to Russian gas supply cuts. However, it was the annexation of Crimea that triggered and proved that Moscow is now becoming an expansionist actor that does not recognize the rules of liberal order—that was initiated at the end of Cold War and strengthened in the 1990s. It is now commonly accepted that the world we live is not the same as in the 1990s when USA was the likely single hegemon in the system. Recently the world is going through transitional times that have given way to tri-polar competition in the emergent multi-polarity system between USA-Russian Federation, and China, unlike the two-polar rivalry among USA and Soviet Union that was seen in Cold War years (Doyle, 2018). Though these three heavy weight big powers stand out in the new Cold War, they are not yet geopolitically equal (Doyle, 2018). That is why, these great powers are not in position to dominate and control all the events happening around the different parts of the world.

On the one hand, this complex situation is opening an opportunity for middle and small powers to be more active than before, both in their region and on the global stage. On the other hand, in NATO's strategic concept, Russia is defined as a direct threat and China as a real challenge for Euro-Atlantic world. Hence, even if there was no new Cold War, because of the threat and risk perceptions of the Alliance, Cold War-like rivalry is a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to some scholars, negative repercussions of the new tri-polar rivalry may lead to a hot war or direct military confrontation beyond the Ukrainian war in Europe because of the well-known "Thucydides Trap" (Allison, 2017).

Especially after the outbreak of the Ukrainian war, the European space was divided between opposing antagonistic blocs, unfortunately, military solutions are increasingly seen and accepted as tools for managing international relations. Furthermore, the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war is fueling this mindset of seeing each other as existential threats and resorting to war as a strategy of survival, rather than finding diplomatic solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "It is a very well-known fact that in continued periods of peace and cooperation the non-great states-middle and small powers-have little chance of shaping the global and regional political agenda" (Minakov, 2023). On the contrary, when great powers enter antagonistic or hostile relations, middle powers gain a foothold to strengthen their sovereign stature and influence relations between the states in their region or even globally. Hence, the current conflict and rivalry among the USA, China and Russia have created an environment suitable for the growth of the middle powers (Russell, 2023). Alec Russell, on the other hand, perfectly depicts the increasing number of middle powers in the international system in 2024, as "*a la carte*" world of our new geopolitical order (Russell, 2023). He asserts that since the USA and China are at "loggerheads, a range of middle powers see this situation an opportunity to pursue their interests" (Russell, 2023). According to Russell's standpoint, as the era of hegemonic America in the 1990s, when Washington stood as the sole superpower, started to fade, the system has been shifting into a more fluid order. The countries that once existed in the previous system are now freed and no longer have to choose from a fixed menu of alliances (Russell, 2023).

It is true that seismic changes happening almost every day are reshaping the global world order, especially as the stand-off between China and the USA gains ground. Ivan Krastev draws the attention of the IR community to the fact that one should not confuse the non-aligned movement—the group of African, Asian, and Latin American countries formed in the Cold war—with the new middle power activism of today (Krastev, 2022). It is true that non-aligned countries in the past aimed to remain

neutral in the contest between East and West and did not align with either of the opposing blocks. Today, although middle powers also do not want to be part of the ongoing great power rivalry, they prefer to engage in multi-aligned relations as a survival tactic. That is why Krastev (2022) describes the newly observed middle power activism as a multi-aligned movement.

At this moment, it is necessary to briefly recall the general acknowledged alignment strategies available for middle powers under divergent international structures in different times. Mainstream research on alignment and military strategy has focused on the strategies of great powers and has paid little attention to how power asymmetries between more or less resourceful states may influence perceptions of national interest and choices of strategic means and ways (Edström & Westberg, 2020). It is argued that middle powers do not have develop great power like alignment and military strategies, but the structural realist approach that is adopted in this paper accepts today middle powers have the opportunity to engage in multi-aligned relations with many countries.

Hence, middle powers acting under different polarity systems are expected to consider various choices such as balance of power, isolation, bandwagoning, hedging, bandwagoning for profit and leashslipping (Edström & Westberg, 2020). Additionally, at another level of analysis, it is asserted that the alignment and military strategies of middle power states will differ due to their belonging to different regional security complexes (RSCs) According to Hakan Edström and Jacob Westberg's book titled "Military Strategy of Middle Powers: Competing for Security, Influence in 21st Century" (2022, pp. 1-228), the assertion is that "the higher degree of great power rivalry and great power penetration into specific RSC realizes, than the fewer middle powers do have chance of development of individual defense strategies, or vice versa" (Edström & Westberg, 2022). Besides, "security communities-from the perspective of alignment strategies and military means-are expected to tend developing hedging strategies and do have greater opportunities to focus on expeditionary warfare" (Edström & Westberg, 2022). In contrast to security communities in which actors promise to solve disputes peacefully, relations among middle powers in the regional security environment are characterized by high expectations of war and conflict. Hence, they tend to pursue balance of power strategies, and develop capacities related to national defence and deterrence (Edström & Westberg, 2022). Despite to above mentioned theoretical expectations, this paper's focus will be on the continuous systemic changes happening due to great power rivalry and how this situation is advanced by middle powers in their interest in accomplishing a grand strategy.

The Debates on Definition of a Middle Power State

It is true that the radical occurrences like the return of great power rivalry in the 21st century have created a much more uncertain and challenging international environment. But at the same time, this has brought a real window of opportunity for the rise of a new generation of middle power activism in different parts of the globe. Thus, this observable increasing influence of middle powers has triggered the old debate about a contested issue of how one state can be defined as a middle power.

Unfortunately, there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes a middle power. According to Andrew Cooper, Richard Higgot and Kim Nossal, the definition of middle powers are varied but can be divided into four categories: (i) positional, (ii) geographic, (iii) normative, (iv) behavioral. First, in the positional definitions of middle power, the focus is on the material capabilities of different types of power. In line with this categorization, international hierarchy of states has been defined, where middle powers attain their proper place-like great, middle, and small. Second, the geographic definition refers to the geographical and ideological position of middle powers. Moreover, the third normative definition refers to the role of *honest brokers* performed by middle powers among the major and lesser powers. Finally, the behavioral definition refers to the type of diplomatic behavior that middle powers commonly share and practice. Later, Andrew Carr criticized these four types of definition and offered his own three categories of middle power definitions instead. According to Carr, in the positional definition of a middle power references quantifiable factors like the size of a state's economic or military power as well as its geographical location. In the behavioral definition, the distinct type of behavior that belongs to a middle power will be noticed and depicted. In the third definition of identity, a reference is made to states that have used the term middle power to refer themselves.

What is striking is that when the four and three category definitions are compared, Cooper, Higgot and Nossal do seem to agree with Carr on the positional, geographic, and behavioral definitions of middle powers. Among all these scholars, Eduard Jordaan comes closest to a definition on which a consensus among international relations scholars might be reached (Jordaan, 2003). According to Jordaan, “middle powers are the states neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity, and influence but they are also capable of demonstrating to promote cohesion and stability in the world system” (Jordaan, 2003). According to Jordaan’s perspective, middle powers need to be identified on a case-by-case basis (Jordaan, 2003). Because middle powers, due to their limited capabilities, are not expected to affect the international system as often as great powers. On the other hand, small powers, in comparison to great and middle powers, are presumed to play little or no influence in international relations. These are the system-wise realities that conditions and limits states as being a great, middle or small power. Great powers, from the perspective of a system-based approach, are the first-ranked powers that determine the polarity of the system. That is why they are called system-determining states.

Some IR theorists today continue to differentiate various types of middle powers as either traditional or emerging ones. There is a general agreement that countries like Australia, Canada, South Korea, or Sweden are considered traditional middle powers that have been studied as such for decades. On the other hand, there is an inclination to define others- who have created a significant impact on the international system, especially in the last decades- such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Türkiye as emergent middle powers. According to Jordaan, the different histories, domestic characteristics, and geographical positions of Western and emergent middle powers explain their different patterns of behavior (Jordaan, 2003). From this perspective, traditional countries are said to be privileged to be in a rich and democratic environment, benefiting from the US-led liberal order since WWII. As a result, they are not very interested in regional integration or prioritizing the reform of the global system (Jordaan, 2003).

On the other hand, the recently launched unjust approach to the new emergent middle powers as being different and uncooperative entities compared to traditional ones is not a legitimate argument. These countries, like traditional ones, intend to help stabilize the liberal order but emphasize reforming some institutions that fail to function according to their basic recognized objectives established at the end of WWII. In this regard, middle powers, whether located in the West and wealthy areas or entitled as newly emergent middle powers -with often competing ideologies-are not revisionist powers but can be entitled as status quo powers. After all, these newly emergent middle power states neither have the desire nor the power to make a change in the present liberal international order. Hence, they cannot be labeled as revisionist powers.

In numerous attempts to define the concept of middle powers, they are often defined by what they are not. This paper’s focus on the definition of middle power differs from the 1990s, 2000s and Cold War era, which emphasized middle power states as self-identified from the perspective of their adherence to various specific diplomatic practices. As mentioned before, Eduard Jordan comes closest to offering a middle power definition on which there could be consensus among IR specialists. Jordaan describes “middle powers as the states that are neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity, and influence and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world” (Jordaan, 2003). In summary, Jordaan’s definition describes middle powers as those assumed to influence the international system despite the presence of great powers, whereas weak powers are assumed to have little or no influence in the international system.

Since February 2022, after the Russian Federation launched a war against Ukraine, the states that were on the periphery and living in the shadow of the global core are now playing a much bigger role and enjoying a much stronger influence in international relations (Edström & Westberg, 2020). This is because the age of the Western set of norms in international relations seems to be gradually coming to an end. The new order in progress, in contrast, seems to be heavily influenced by middle powers activism today. As middle power activism has become more observable, this situation has triggered the attention of some IR experts and made them revisit the question of whether middle powers can have a grand strategy of their

own. Currently, the answer to this question is still debatable. What is undisputable is that there is a rich literature on the grand strategy of great powers in international relations. However, the literature about middle power grand strategy is very limited in numbers, and its definition is highly debatable.

Pardo is one of the latest and most well-known academics among the writers on middle power grand strategy. In his book titled "South Korea's Grand Strategy", Pardo explains why there is a shortage of written publication on middle power grand strategy. According to him, one of the most important reasons of this literature gap is structural factors or systemic impediments. As is known, during the Cold War (1945-1989), due to the powerful great power overlay, there was little room for middle and small powers to conduct an autonomous foreign policy of their own. Hence, the rigid ideological great power rivalry of the Cold War was the main hindrance preventing middle powers from acting independently to form different alliances or hedge in the two-bloc power system. Those countries mostly defined as middle powers-Australia, Sweden, etc. -were part of the Western liberal order and they were always useful in terms of their niche diplomacy contribution that eased superpower originated crises. Since the end of the Cold War, this situation has strengthened the divide in definition of middle powers as old vs. emergent ones, mostly countries from the global south. Pardo rejected these different definitions of middle powers. He emphasized that both the gained capabilities and status of these powers in the international system make some actors middle power and pave the way for these states to adopting a grand strategy. To sum up, he approaches the concept of middle power as a holistic one, covering both traditional and emergent middle power players and their demand for reform and niche diplomacy. I fully agree that the end of the Cold War and especially the worsening great power relations now provide an opening opportunity for middle powers to be effective in the liberal system. That is why we see that middle powers have made various requests, like UN reform. One can only name very few scholars like, Balzacq, Dombrowski, Reich (2019, pp. 6-7), and Silove (2018, pp. 31-32), Eten Solingen (1998, pp. 1-352), and few others that have studied and supported the idea that middle powers should have their own grand strategy. Being aware of this neglect of middle power grand strategy in IR studies, Pardo in his book made a revolutionary attempt and took Martel's theorization on the grand strategy of great powers and adapted it to the approach of a middle power (Pardo, 2023, p. 46). Therefore, Pardo's model expresses a unique approach by which we can better understand how middle powers swing between being established moderators of the system and being reformer of the system. I thought that Pardo's model in my paper suits Türkiye's newly emergent middle power role witnessed in the last two decades. The main prerequisites in Pardo's model were almost met-other than the economic criteria, which need to be perfected-by Türkiye.

Hence, in this article, an attempt is made to describe why Türkiye's likely grand strategy should follow Pardo's theoretical roadmap, as it certainly suits with Ankara's middle power characteristics. But before doing this in the last part of the paper, a brief look is required to visit Pardo's theoretical background of middle powers grand strategy.

Ramon Pacheco Pardo's Grand Strategy Model

Ramon Pacheco Pardo's middle power strategy model basically rests on the interaction between a country's ends and means. When one analyzes Pardo's model, it is clear that it reflects the basic needs of middle powers required for the development of a grand strategy. In this regard, he identifies four levels of analysis as prerequisites for his model of middle powers' grand strategy. These are (i) Geographical scale, (ii) Temporal scale, (iii) Type of Ends, and (iv) Types of Power (means) (Pardo, 2023, p. 47).

Pardo, in his description of what should be the geographical scale of a middle power strategy, references to Martel's theorization of grand strategy, where he mentions that the geographical scale of any grand strategy should be a global one (Martel, 2015, p. 46). This makes sense since great powers like USA, China and others are all system-determining states and hence are capable to performing foreign policy on a global scale. One can remember that during the Cold war period, despite the ascendancy of the USA-led liberal order, Russia tried to bring about a socialist ideology-based world system as alternative, but this attempt was not successful (Edström & Westberg, 2022, pp. 171-190).

Presently, middle powers aspire to have global influence like great powers such as China and the USA, yet they are very well aware of how unlikely that is due to their limited resources. That is why they often become compelled to be selective about the number of global issues they may be involved in (Pardo, 2023, p. 802). Hence, Pardo in his middle power grand strategy model, puts geographical scope primarily on a regional dimension as the first condition of developing a grand strategy. But at the same time, he further says that there might be times when middle powers may become compelled to react to developments caused by great powers activism. Hence, he does not undermine the likely occurrences when middle powers may get involved in conflict resolution of global issues (Pardo, 2023, p. 47).

Moreover, as it is known, Martel explains that the temporal scope of a country's grand strategy needs to be long-term and expected to last for decades. Similarly, Pardo insists that middle power states that desires to have a grand strategy should make their plans in long-term time horizon. Hence, Pardo puts long-term horizon planning as the second must-condition to be met by middle powers in their efforts to proceed with a grand strategy. As is known, according to Martel, a state's highest political ends are equated with the most fundamental and vital priorities, which surely include economic security and military security. Pardo completely agrees with Martel's viewpoint about what should be the highest political ends for a state in the making of a grand strategy (Pardo, 2023, p. 47).

So, thirdly, Pardo, in his newly created middle power grand strategy model, like Martel, underlines the necessity of attaining highest political ends, such as security, prosperity, and status, as key prerequisites for the middle powers (Pardo, 2023, p. 48). Nevertheless, Pardo makes clear that autonomy is a separate and key goal of any middle power, hence it takes priority over all higher political ends. (Pardo, 2023, p. 48). It is expected that middle power autonomy, in Pardo's view, is often likely to be constrained by three factors; "(i) the behavior of great powers (ii) middle power's relatively limited resources and (iii) the structure of international system" (Pardo, 2023, p. 48). For this reason, Pardo rightfully asserts that autonomy of a middle power should always be a primary objective that takes precedence over higher political ends. Furthermore, Pardo reminds that there is not always a guarantee for a middle power, via the use of its grand strategy, to achieve its targeted autonomy. He thus asserts that middle powers, even in the case of not accomplishing their full autonomy, should be expected to continue achieving their higher political ends, as specified in their grand strategy. (Pardo, 2023, p. 48). Again, in Pardo's thinking, there is also a possibility that states can gain partial autonomy, similar to the case of South Korea in 2024 (Pardo, 2023, pp. 80-128).

Lastly, Pardo, like Martel in his model, lists and acknowledges the use of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments as key means that states should pursue in the implication of their grand strategies (Pardo, 2023, p. 49). He further adds cyber and soft power as necessary instruments among the means for implementing a middle power grand strategy (Pardo, 2023, p. 49). More importantly, Pardo, like Martel, believes that the use of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments should always be the primary means in the conduct of a middle power grand strategy in relation to other available means. Therefore, other types of means are evaluated by him as secondary and not crucial in both great and middle power's process of building their grand strategies (Pardo, 2023, p. 49).

Foreign Policy Behavior of Middle Power

In IR studies, there is a rich and developing literature focusing on analyzing the foreign policy behavior of middle powers. Scholars like Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott and Kim R. Nossal have drawn attention to the issue of foreign policy behavior relevant to most of the middle powers (Cooper et al., 1993, p. 20). Hence, at this point, a brief examination will be given to revisit the known matters here to create awareness among the readers of this paper.

As one recall, multilateralism and multilateral solutions for solving international problems and disputes- via international cooperation and compromise- are usually very common behaviors observed among middle powers (Cooper et al., 1993). Secondly, middle powers are often considered "good citizens," which is another reason why they support international diplomacy.

In comparison to great powers, since middle powers have limited means to shape the international system- they lack great powers' means of, for instance, issuing a war or economic carrots-sticks policies in times of need - "good citizenship" is often left as a crucial alternative means of affecting international system for the benefit of middle powers.

Furthermore, middle powers are often characterized as "honest brokers" in the present international system. They often prefer this type of behavior due to their belief that it helps de-escalate conflicts present in the system, which serves the interests of middle powers. Simultaneously, the "honest brokers" attitude is a status-seeking behavior favored by middle powers. When middle powers decide to act as honest brokers in the IR system, this helps them to show their commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts. By doing so, they earn the label of peace-supporting and peace-loving countries.

Additionally, network diplomacy and coalition-building are also known to be common middle power behaviors. Networking policies often stand as the only means available for middle powers in the process of advancing their favored policies, due to their lack of various needed material capabilities. This networking attitude of middle powers also works both as legitimation of certain politics and as catalysts for international cooperation.

Moreover, middle powers have been known to be countries that often try to infuse norms. By acting as norm entrepreneurs, they try to gain leverage, particularly by specializing in one or a small number of issues. In literature, this is often labeled as niche diplomacy. By doing so, they find a way to abstain from accepting the enforced norms promoted by great powers.

Finally, regional integration is also considered to be a common behavior of choice among middle powers. It is well-known that middle powers benefit from stable immediate environs around themselves, which is why they opt for regional cooperation that is hoped and expected to lead to regional integration. Another reason they favor supporting regional cooperation and hence integration is associated with the expectation of gaining a positive status in and around all states present in IR system.

What's more interesting is that most of the current literature unfortunately tends to ignore the fact that middle powers, if necessity, may not refrain from using military power as another type of foreign policy behavior. It is known that some middle powers today, who are located close to war-prone regions, are inclined to develop military capabilities related to national defense (Edström & Westberg, 2020, p. 171). Hence, survival gains priority among these kinds of middle powers in comparison to gaining influence or status. Most of these middle powers that try to ensure survival might be expected to follow balance of power approaches (Edström & Westberg, 2020). Those who have overcome survival concerns are then expected to support and join international peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations to gain influence and status (Edström & Westberg, 2020).

Türkiye as a Middle Power: Is Ankara Ready to Advance a Grand Strategy?

Some analysts and policymakers may consider a multipolar- or relatively less Western-centric world- world as more unstable (Waltz, 1979). However, Türkiye as country involved in a growing number of diplomatic forums and having a strong diplomatic tradition that includes various soft power tools- such as humanitarian aid diplomacy -together with hard power, is now maintaining an influential middle power status. This is particularly true at a time when the effects of the declining USA hegemony are being observed in its environ and beyond. Despite this geopolitical shift, Türkiye is currently more proactive, capable, and determined to express its views more than ever, especially in the field of international relations. Therefore, one can claim that Ankara, as of 2024, is now more capable and ready to shape its own future. That means that Türkiye, as a middle power, is prepared to advance a grand strategy of its own. Hence, in this paper, it is necessary to discuss what should be the main contours of Ankara's grand strategy.

Among the objectives of a grand strategy of Türkiye, pursuing autonomy on a global scale ought to be the overarching primary aim. For Ankara to achieve its autonomy as the main goal, it needs to play an active role across three core regional levels: namely the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the Caucasus. However, it is also expected to act globally whenever the need arises. As is known, Turkish elites in the last two decades have worked on a single, central ultimate end to be achieved, which is autonomy. They wanted Türkiye to make its own destiny by independently making decisions on the right policies that are hoped to serve the country's interests. Hence, Turkish elites in this regard have set higher political goals to be achieved. Among Turkish political leaders, one can witness references to the issue of autonomy. For instance, in this address at the United Nations General Assembly, President Erdoğan referred to Türkiye's insight into global and regional priorities, mentioning the objective of consolidating Türkiye's strategic autonomy (Yeşiltaş, 2023; Haugom, 2019). Within the government, references to Türkiye's autonomy can be seen in the statements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan (Sari & Sula, 2024). The head of the Turkish Intelligence Ibrahim Kalın also emphasized the importance of Turkish autonomy, describing it as Ankara finding its own axis in the world during one of his speeches addressed at SETA conference (Daily Sabah, 2023).

Autonomy is a goal that almost every country in the world desires. However, during the progress of attaining autonomy, it sometimes becomes a more challenging effort, especially for middle and small powers, as they face both structural and other constraints- such as limited assets -that limit their independence of action. This holds true for Ankara as well. However, all countries, even great powers, due to changing geopolitics as part of the international system, are sometimes constrained during the conduct of foreign and security policy.

In the last two decades, without issuing a grand strategy, Türkiye has already started pursuing a clear set of political ends for itself and has begun using specific means to achieve them. In fact, Turkish elites have issued several high political ends to be met within the overarching primary aim of Turkish autonomy. Firstly, as one can assume, they intend to secure and protect both the homeland and people as well. This means that Türkiye should be able to protect itself from any external state and non-state military threats. State survival is the basic aim of any state in the world. To this end, every state seeks protection from external military threats. In the face of ongoing Ukrainian and Israeli-Hamas wars, one can easily conclude that a military strike or even an invasion from a foreign power is not impossible in the 21st Century. It is no surprise that Türkiye, in the last two decades, has used several means to protect itself from actual third-party state and non-state military threats. In this regard, Türkiye has prioritized strengthening its deterrence capabilities first by building a reformed indigenous military capability (Youtube, 2024, 45:17:00:00). Since, Ankara maintains a NATO membership, the Alliance's military capabilities continue to add value to its deterrence. This is how Ankara, due to its effective deterrence capabilities, has until now achieved most of its goals of protection that she faced coming from multiple terrorist attacks beyond its southern borders as of 2023 and 2024. Türkiye currently continues its counterterrorism operations beyond its southern borders, along with building new alliances with neighboring countries in the fight against the PKK (Abdulrazek, 2024).

Moreover, Ankara, with its highly skilled diplomats, has managed to maintain its alliance with the USA and NATO in both 2023 and 2024. Additionally, due to the present thaw in some parts of the MENA region, Türkiye has improved and continued its cooperation with other states beyond the Western camp. This simultaneous diplomatic commitment of Ankara to engage both with the West and other great powers like Russia does not seem to hinder Türkiye's effort to pursue its autonomy.

Previously witnessed tension between Ankara's declared desire to achieve autonomy and its NATO/ USA alliance commitments is not unique to Türkiye. This is a natural feature of most alliances. For instance, the well-known tension between France and the USA during the Cold war is a fresh memory for IR circles. Even today, we observe Macron's France determined to attain both its and EU's strategic autonomy as much as possible, despite the USA's efforts to strengthen NATO alliance relations under the Biden administration (Anderlini & Caulcutt, 2023). This situation worsened especially under the Trump administration when Macron stated that the Alliance had suffered brain death (BBC, 2019). Moreover, Washington's alliance members' reluctance and rejection of supporting the USA's policy of unilateral invasion of Iraq in 2003 is another striking example of the divide within NATO.

However, when middle powers, in their dealing with superpowers like the USA, invent alternative ways of displaying their resentments in the form of soft balancing, this situation has surely led to a lively academic debate. According to Pachco Pardo, “alliances usually build on a common threat perception that is shaped by geography and balance of power that does not preclude each state from having distant geopolitical interests within alliance and on the contrary this behavior would enhance its endurance” (Pardo, 2023, p. 45). He also believes that the USA’s network of alliances, whether in Europe or Asia, is not a one-way mechanism where Washington is solely responsible for extending deterrence to its alliance members (Pardo, 2023, pp. 25-50). On the contrary, it is the USA that benefits from these alliance’s geopolitical, military, and economic functions. Truly, the USA’s power projection and its forward bases around the world would be impossible without the willing cooperation of alliance partners.

Hence, the past public debates among Turkish residents about İncirlik base in Türkiye- whether its closure is necessary or not- especially during times of poor relations between Ankara and the USA, can be given as examples of hardships Washington has faced. It is true that current USA and Türkiye relations, due to a recent reset, have started to move in a more normal direction, stemming from recent geopolitical shifts among the great powers. These radically changing conditions have surely produced numerous challenges to the Biden administration lately, prompting the President to encourage the delivery of F-16 jet-fighters to Ankara (Le Monde, 2024) with the aim of upgrading Turkish air forces within the Alliance to increase overall security and deterrence of NATO, especially in the face of assertive Russia. Likewise, in the aftermath of Türkiye’s consent to Sweden’s membership in NATO, the decision to include in the formation of the European defense shield program has also been made with the same mind set.

All in all, the inspiration behind these decisions comes from the geopolitical shifts happening in the heart of Europe- especially due to the Ukrainian war- and hence Westerners are trying to legitimize their actions against Russia by securitizing current and future likely European threat perceptions.

Turkish elites, who have declared achieving autonomy as their top primary objective, have secondly anticipated accomplishing the goal of deeper integration into the world economy. It is no surprise that all countries around the world want to be prosperous. Hence, achieving economic development and growth is one of the common political end goals of any leader who wants to attain and remain in power and hence needs to provide economic wealth to their citizens. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has classified Türkiye as an emerging and developing economy. As is known, Ankara was one of the founding members of the OECD and a member of the G-20 from its inception. According to the ranking by gross domestic product, Türkiye became the 19th largest economy in the world in 2022, with its GDP amounting to 905 billion U.S. dollars (Dierks, 2024). Over the past two decades, there have been crucial developments in the Turkish economy and industrialization, with the country experiencing rapid growth. However, since 2018, the country has been facing an economic crisis, mainly triggered by a combination of the continuous weakening of the Turkish Lira, an excessive account deficit, a large external debt, and low interest rates. Despite this continuing economic crisis, Türkiye is still attracting. Despite the upsurge in geopolitical tensions, together with presidential and local elections that resulted the deceleration of global economic activity and the negative impact of earthquakes in 11 cities, the Turkish economy managed to grow above its potential with 4.5% in 2023 (İleri et al., 2024). However, in 2024, Türkiye is still trying to overcome a high inflation rate and stabilize its deteriorated economy.

Turkish elites, who declared achieving autonomy as their primary objective, thirdly expected to accomplish recognition by the international community as an influential power. Truly, all countries in the global system want to gain international recognition, and this holds true for middle powers too. In the last two decades, Türkiye has fulfilled successful reforms in defense sector- achieving 70 percent domestic production of military equipment- and now even uses its military capability to assist other countries. Azerbaijan’s second Karabagh war, where the successful use of Turkish drones was displayed, is a striking example. Additionally, Türkiye transfers military equipment to those who demands it (Bastian, 2024). As a result, Ankara, even though it is a NATO country, is now recognized as a capable military power in a global scale.

Moreover, from the perspective of international recognition as an influential middle power, Türkiye uses its highly competent diplomatic corps very successfully at both the regional and global levels. Ankara's diplomatic success was especially noticed during the Ukrainian war, where it managed to get the consent of both Kyiv and Moscow twice for a grain deal that had positive effects not only at the regional level but also globally. This diplomatic success of Türkiye was due to Ankara's skillful use of balancing and mediation strategies. Turkish elites desire to see trade, investment, and humanitarian aid as tools to project Türkiye's overall capacity throughout its region and beyond so that other states see and acknowledge Ankara's effectiveness as a middle power.

Another important example of Turkish diplomatic activism in the UN was witnessed from 2009-2010 when it held a non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Since then, Ankara has tried to play a more constructive role in global governance but also not hesitated to introduce certain demands for reforms in the international liberal order, which can be assessed as within-system challenges but also positive efforts to improve the international liberal order (Bir et al., 2023). In the last decade, Ankara's favored multilateralism has not limited its increasing activism in the UN, but Türkiye has also continued to further reform demands in various global political and financial institutions like the IMF and others. Of course, Türkiye's G-20 strategy and its past 2015 rotating presidency surely supported and encouraged Ankara's future preferences and reform aspirations (Dal, 2014) regarding the existing liberal order. Hence, it is no surprise that President Erdoğan's famous "The world is bigger than five" (Turan, 2023) motto is still valid, pointing to the emergent reforms needed to address UNSC ineffectiveness, especially at a time when the Russian Federation has launched its war against Ukraine. As is known, the world community is accusing the five permanent Security Council members of not fulfilling their major responsibility-the use of veto powers blocked resolutions related to the Ukraine war-to maintain and preserve world order and peace. The same situation holds true for Hamas-Israeli war, where due to the use of veto powers- here it is the USA-the needed resolutions to stop the war could not be operationalized.

Türkiye considers assistance to countries in distress due to natural disasters, war, poverty or social conflicts as a humanitarian duty and an important contribution to the stability of the international community. Currently, Ankara remains one of the leading countries in offering humanitarian aid worldwide in 2024. According to a report by UK-based Development Initiatives (DI), Türkiye spent 5.59 billion in humanitarian aid in 2021 alone, accounting for 0.86 percent of its GDP. This number shows that Ankara remains the most generous country in terms of aid given in relation to its GDP (Ergocun, 2022).

All in all, Türkiye's display of smart power- a combination of soft power and renewed hard power-over the last two decades has surely helped and strengthened Türkiye's self-perception and contributed to Ankara being recognized as a middle power. Ivan Krastev, in his commentary on how "Middle Powers are Shaping Geopolitics" in the Financial Times, discusses his diagnosis that "the post-Cold war order has been [already] cracked and [hence] Ukrainian war is one evidence of it" (Krastev, 2022). He also draws attention to the rising middle powers activism. He suggests that despite their differences, middle powers are now determined to be at the table-this is their only commonality- next to the great powers rather than being on the menu when it comes to regional or global issues that needs to be dealt with (Krastev, 2022). By mentioning Türkiye's President Erdogan, he highlights Ankara's role in the Russia-Ukraine war, which could be presented as a textbook example of middle power activism (Krastev, 2022). Furthermore, in his evaluation, he points out how Ankara as a NATO ally, skillfully managed to play the role of mediator between Moscow and Kyiv during the Ukraine war (Krastev, 2022).

Conclusion

In today's new Cold war, the return of great power rivalry has emerged in a different fashion and context. This perception of the new situation has started to be described in the West as a new stand-off between the free world (USA-EU) and Russian-Chinese authoritarianism. However, a closer look at the world affairs reveals a more complex picture, where new middle powers activism -where great powers have gradually started to lose ground in different parts of the world- appear as an important major driving force reshaping the international environment.

It is a very well-known fact that in the periods of peace and cooperation, middle and small powers have little chance of shaping the global and regional political agenda. On the contrary, when great powers enter antagonistic or hostile relations, middle powers gain a foothold to strengthen their sovereign standing and hence influence other states in their region and beyond. Hence, the current conflict and rivalry among the USA, China and Russia has created an environment suitable for the growth and expansion of the middle powers.

On the other hand, it is true that radical occurrences like the return of great power rivalry in the 21st century have created a much more uncertain and challenging international environment. But at the same time, this has brought a real window of opportunity for the rise of a new generation of middle power activism in different parts of the globe. Thus, this observable increasing influence of middle powers has triggered the old debate about the contested issue of how one state can be defined as middle power. Unfortunately, there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes a middle power. However, in numerous attempts to define the concept middle powers, they often are defined by what they are not. This paper's focus on the definition of middle power differs from the 1990s, 2000s and Cold War era, which emphasized middle power states as self-identified from the perspective of their adherence to various specific diplomatic practices.

In this regard, the 2024 Davos Economic Forum's White Paper once again has pointed out to the problem of a lack of an exact and agreed-upon definition of the middle power concept. However, despite the continuous confusion about what middle powers in IR- due to the persisting belief that middle powers sit below great powers, which are the countries with permanent seat in the UNSC- the newly observed rising middle power activism that is exerting influence over global politics with their extensive diplomatic, multilateral, economic, and military capabilities in the last two decades could not be overlooked. The recently published 2024 Davos World Economic Forum's White Paper is new evidence of this certainty. In fact, whatever term or category they are grouped under, middle powers continue to play a vital and growing role each passing day. Fortunately, the current international system is providing a great opportunity for middle power activism, where these states are becoming more active, effective, and hence more visible.

Pardo, after examining both the systemic conditions and the newly gained capabilities of middle powers that made them visible in the 21st. Century, has concluded that the middle power states can develop a grand strategy. Hence, in this paper, Pardo's grand strategy model, where he proposed three levels of prerequisites expected to be fulfilled by a middle power desiring to advance a grand strategy, has been taken as a model for Türkiye. As is known, Pardo first describes that the geographical scale of a middle power strategy should be primarily based on regional dimension as the first condition of developing a grand strategy. However, he further states that there might be times when middle powers may be compelled to react to developments caused by great powers activism.

Secondly, in Pardo's newly designed middle power grand strategy, the temporal scope of a country's grand strategy is cited to be long-term and hence expected to last for decades. Thirdly, Pardo in his middle power grand strategy model stresses the necessity of attaining the highest political ends, such as security, prosperity, and status, as key criteria. On the other hand, Pardo correctly asserts that autonomy of a middle power should always be a primary objective that takes precedence over higher political ends. Lastly, Pardo lists and acknowledges the use of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments as key means that states should always pursue in the implementation of their grand strategies. He additionally adds soft power and cyber capabilities as necessary instruments among the means for implementing a middle power grand strategy. Importantly, Pardo believes that the use of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments should always be the primary means during the conduct of a middle power grand strategy. That is why Pardo describes other means available to middle powers as secondary.

In the last two decades, without issuing a grand strategy, Türkiye has already started pursuing a clear set of political ends for itself and has begun using specific means to achieve them. Some specialists argue that Türkiye needs to side with European approach. This means Ankara should fulfill the democratic and other necessary criteria of being a member of the EU before developing a grand strategy (Aydınlı, 2020; Bazoğlu, 1992; Aydın, 2021; Taner & Açıkmeşe, 2023; Baç, 2020; Uca, 2024).

In contrast to these views, others believe that Türkiye has developed significant material and soft power tools and unconventional foreign policy approaches, such as humanitarian foreign policy, and hence already deserves to have a grand strategy of its own (Pirinçi & Yeşiltaş, 2020; Yeşiltaş & Pirinçi, 2021; Yükselen, 2021; Aktürk, 2020; Aktürk, 2021; Sarı & Sula, 2024). Moreover, the current continuing transformation in the international system, together with the return of great power rivalry, is surely bringing opportunities for middle powers like Ankara to pursue proactive and relatively autonomous foreign and security policies both within its regional environment and on the global stage.

In fact, Turkish elites have issued several high political ends-such as state survival and sustaining security, deeper integration in the world economy, and gaining recognition from the international community as an influential power-to be met within the overarching primary aim of Turkish autonomy. Moreover, it is beneficial that Ankara has achieved very skillful means, such as the use of diplomatic, military, and economic instruments, in the last two decades, which Pardo's model reveals to be essential in the advancement of a middle power grand strategy.

Overall, Türkiye is currently more proactive, capable, and determined to express its views more than ever, especially in the field of international relations. Therefore, one can claim that Ankara, since it meets the prerequisites of Pardo's middle power grand strategy as of 2024, is more capable and ready to shape its own future. That means that Türkiye, as a middle power, is prepared and deserves to advance a grand strategy of its own.

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