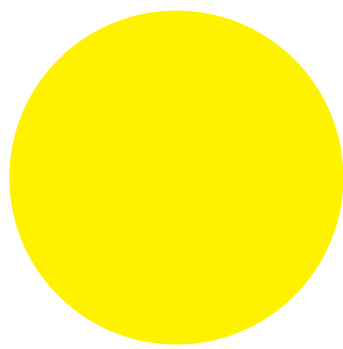


Construction of Iran's first private town gets underway

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A staff member removes the Iranian flag from the stage after a group picture with foreign ministers and representatives of United States, Iran, China, Russia, Britain, Germany, France and the European Union during the Iran nuclear talks in Vienna, Austria on July 14, 2015. **REUTERS**



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Art of hedging: Turkey's global strategy



By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

Turkey, the heir to the Ottoman Empire and NATO's eastern bastion, has in recent years played a role on the international stage that has left many observers perplexed, and at times astonished. On one hand, it purchases Russian S-400 air-defense systems and shakes hands with the Kremlin's president; on the other, it supplies its own domestically-produced drones to NATO allies in Eastern Europe. Ankara is simultaneously on the verge of joining a defense pact with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, without ever uttering a word about leaving

NATO. This "apparent contradiction" is, in fact, a sophisticated and calculated manifestation of an advanced hedging strategy whose goal is to transform Turkey from a "follower ally" into an autonomous and influential "Central power."

Main pillar: NATO as insurance, not prison

Turkey has no intention of leaving NATO. Membership in the alliance provides its primary security insurance and access to advanced technology. However, Ankara regards NATO not as an inevitable destiny, but as a strategic choice that must be leveraged according to its own national interests. The purchase of the S-400 from Russia was not merely a military decision; it was a clear geopolitical message: "Turkey is autonomous in choosing

its security partners." This bold move, while angering Washington, gave Ankara unprecedented bargaining leverage within NATO and demonstrated that it can manage the cost of defying Washington's directives.

Alternative branches: networking in east & south

To reduce its dependence on the West, Turkey is actively weaving a network of alternative relationships.

- Russia: This relationship is a classic case of "cooperative rivalry." The two countries are competitors in Syria and the Caucasus, yet partners in energy (the Turk Stream pipeline), tourism, and even military affairs (despite differences over Ukraine). This interdependence increases both sides' room for maneuver.

- China: Participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, attracting Chinese investment, and even considering the purchase of Chinese defense systems open another option alongside Western technology.

- The New Middle East: The improvement of relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt after a decade of tensions reflects Ankara's economic and security realism. Should a defense pact with Riyadh and Islamabad materialize, it would create a security pole independent of NATO, with Turkey as one of its pillars.

- Emerging Organizations: Expressions of interest in joining BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization show that Ankara does not see the future international order as confined to the West.

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Iran pledges funding discipline as Fadjr Int'l Theater Festival closes in Tehran

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