

Policy Paper 1

Turkey, Asia and the EU in a Changing Global Order



Turkey-Asia Relations in a Changing Global Political and Economic Order

Policy Paper

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Executive Summary

This policy paper is an outcome document of the 1st panel organized as a part of the project entitled “Turkey, Asia and EU in a Changing Global Order”, on the 22nd of April 2022. Diverse views about Turkey’s increasing relations with Asia are examined. Recently, due to an increasing number of bilateral diplomatic visits with Asian countries, Turkey’s acquisition of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia, Turkey’s desire to be a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and its increasing bilateral trade with China push for

arguments about a pivot to Asia in Turkey’s foreign policy. Nevertheless, the existence of such a vivid shift remains questionable in the policy circles. Also, among those who assert that such a pivot indeed took place, there is no agreement over the reasons for this shift. This policy paper analyses various perspectives about Turkey’s recent foreign policy formulations vis-à-vis Asia and the views about the reasons behind Turkey’s pivot to Asia.



Introduction

In the last couple of decades, many analysts argue, Asia has been overshadowing the West. The hegemony of liberal international order is waning, and this provides a space for multipolarity and in which middle and regional powers are on the rise.¹ Against this background, the consequences of this power shift to Asia for Turkish foreign policy are extensively discussed. Some scholars maintain that Turkish foreign policy has undertaken a dramatic turn particularly after the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, reorienting itself towards

Eurasia.² However, there is no agreement on whether and to what extent such a change happened, nor on the reasons behind it. To search for answers to if and why Turkey shifted its foreign policy axis to Asia despite the substantial appreciation of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) by the West, this policy paper examines diverse views about Turkey's increasing relations with Asia.

A Foreign Policy Axis Shift to Asia?

Particularly after the Second World War and the Democratic Party's coming into power in 1950, Turkey has been seen as an ally of the Western world. It became a NATO member in 1952 and applied for the first time for full membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the EU, in 1987.³ Likewise, Westernization has been long equated with modernization within the country, a goal that goes back to Ottoman Empire and has been pursued by most Turkish governments.

During the Cold War, to offset the strengthening of communism, transatlantic allies supported Islamism as a political ideology and fostered its spread (e.g., so-called Green Belt Project).⁴ Thus, Western support to founding groups of the AKP began even before the party's formal establishment. Likewise, when it was first instituted, the AKP was not against developing good relations with the Western capital and finance. It supported globalization. It played a significant

¹ Fouskas, V. K. and B. Gökay (2019). *The Disintegration of Euro-Atlanticism and New Authoritarianism: Global Power-Shift*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

² Erşen, E. and S. Köstem (2021). *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order*. London: Routledge; Kutlay, M. and Z. Öniş (2021). *Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order: Strategic Autonomy or New Forms of Dependence?* *International Affairs*, 97 (4), 1085-1104.

³ Güney, A. (2005). *The Future of Turkey in the European Union*. *Futures*, 37 (4): 303-316.

⁴ Aydın, M. (2005). *Küresel Politikada Orta Asya: Avrasya Üçlemesi I*. Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık. 18; Ünlü, O. (2020). *Yeşil Kuşak: Bir Nefret Projesi [Green Belt: A Project of Hatred]*. *Birgün*, 1 July. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/yesil-kusak-bir-nefret-projesi-306679> (accessed 05.06.2022).



role in accelerating Turkey's neoliberal transformation that was initiated with the 24 January Decisions in 1980.⁵ The ambitious neoliberalization process was also promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and accelerated by the EU accession process in the next decades. With its rise to power in the 2000s, the AKP government pursued the same neoliberal packages as the previous government, as prepared by the IMF and Kemal Derviş.⁶ In this process, equality, rights of workers, and freedoms apart from those

related to identity and religion were hollowed out to a great extent.⁷ Political democratization was defined based on market-oriented reforms and religious and identity-based freedoms. However, consequently, despite the rhetoric that Turkey had undergone an economic miracle during its neoliberalization process, Turkey's relative marginalization increased. Especially the highly skilled workforce started to flow out of the country due to their discontent.⁸

In its early days, the pro-NATO, pro-EU, and pro-growth AKP won the support of not only many domestic groups, including the Kurdish political movement, a rising Islamist bourgeoisie, the left-leaning liberal intelligentsia, and upper-class business but also some external groups. This included both the US and the EU member states.⁹ Consequently, Turkey, under the lead of the AKP, was greeted by the transatlantic allies both during the Bush and the Obama administrations, as an exemplar Muslim democracy with pro-Western values and a free market with high growth rates.¹⁰ However, in the mid-2010s, Turkey's military interventions in Syria and Libya, tensions with Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the acquisition of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia heated up a debate over Turkey's foreign policy alignment. American sanctions on Turkey after its acquisition of the S-400 system, the US' recognition of the Armenian genocide in 2019, a joint declaration on strategic cooperation with China in 2010, as well as Turkey's rapprochement to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a dialogue partner – as the first and only NATO member state – provided further evidence for deteriorating relations between Turkey and the West.

⁵ Uzgel, İ. (2010). AKP: Neoliberal Dönüşümün Yeni Aktörü [AKP: The New Actor of the Neoliberal Transformation]. In AKP Kitabı: Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu [AKP Book: A Balance-sheet of a Transformation]. İ. Uzgel and B. Duru (eds.) 2nd edition. Ankara: Phoneix. pp: 11-40.

⁶ Göneç, D. and G. Durmaz (2020). The Politics of Neoliberal Transformation on the Periphery: A Critical Comparison of Greece and Turkey. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 20 (4): 617-640.

⁷ Bedirhanoğlu, P. and G. L. Yalman (2010). State, Class, and the Discourse: Reflections on the Neoliberal Transformation in Turkey. In *Economic Transitions to Neoliberalism in Middle-income Country*. A. Saad-Filho and G. L. Yalman (eds.). Oxon: Routledge. pp: 107-128.

⁸ Talani, L. S. (2022). Turkey in the Global Political Economy: Technological and Economic Integration. Presentation delivered in the panel. 22 April 2022.

⁹ Op. cit. Tuğal.

¹⁰ Landon, T. Jr. (2011). In Turkey's Example, Some See Map for Egypt. *New York Times*, 9 February.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06turkey.html> (accessed 03.06.2022); Tuğal, C. (2021). Turkey at the Crossroads? *New Left Review*, 127.

<https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii127/articles/cihan-tugal-turkey-at-the-crossroads> (accessed 03.06.2022).

There is, however, no consensus on whether Turkey’s foreign policy indeed shifted to Asia. We can divide the standpoints about Turkey’s increasing relations with Asia into two groups (Table I): those who believe that there has been a pivot to Asia and those who assert that such a pivot did not take place. Among those who believe in the shift, there are four lines of argument explaining this: some claim that the shift occurred due to a committed choice; others claim that it is a consequence of the changing domestic political environment; a third group assert that Turkey is pursuing a win-win economic strategy; and the fourth group claim that the shift is taking place due to neoliberal globalization. In addition, those who assert that such a pivot did not take place can be sub-categorized into two groups: those who assert that increasing relations between Turkey and Asia are happening due to Turkey’s balancing strategy and those who claim that these are taking place due to Turkey’s hedging strategy. These views are certainly not isolated from each other. They are interdependent and occasionally complement each other.



Table I. Perspectives about Turkey’s Foreign Policy Axis Shift to Asia



I. Yes: Pivot to Asia has taken place.

The idea of developing close relations with Asia is not entirely new in Turkish foreign policy. In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a renewed interest in establishing relations with Turkish-speaking geography in Central Asia. This would not only enhance Turkey's geostrategic role in a region with natural resources but also counter speculation that after the demise of the Soviet Union, Turkey's relevance to the Western camp would diminish. Strengthening relations with Central Asian Turkic Republics was not only supported by those with a pan-Turkic and/or nationalist ideology but also by the more mainstream right-wing groups.¹¹ However, the turn to Asia in the 2010s is argued to be different than the mere enthusiasm in the 1990s. China and Russia, as new superpowers, enter the Turkish

foreign policy radar more prominently. This is evidenced by an increasing number of bilateral diplomatic visits, expanding interactions in economic and commercial spheres, Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia and Turkey's desire to be a member of the SCO. Elaborations about the use of local currencies in trade between Russia and Turkey,¹² a sharp increase in Turkish-Chinese bilateral trade since 1995 as well as the status of China and Russia as the top two sources of Turkey's imports since 2018 further solidify this argument (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2022).¹³ However, there is no consensus over the reasons for this axis shift to Asia. The paper considers four different reasons for this.

a. Committed Choice

The group emphasizing the committed agency behind the Turkish pivot to Asia tend to underline the increasingly multipolar structure of the global order. China's GDP ranked as the second largest in the world after the US in 2021, while India ranked as the sixth largest, bypassing France, Italy, and Canada.¹⁴ The 2007–2008 global financial crisis particularly surfaced the vulnerability of the international order created by the West. Under such circumstances, the manoeuvring capacity and strategic autonomy of states, especially middle ones like Turkey, increased. Turkey could, therefore, shift its foreign policy focus from a strictly Western-oriented one into a more diversified stance.¹⁵ Accordingly, since the EU's credibility is decreasing in the eyes of Turkish citizens and the rhetoric on neo-Ottomanism has not produced attractive results for the AKP government either, Eurasianism could be adopted as a pragmatic alternative. In addition, developing closer relations with Russia and China could create the appearance of a more independent and nationalized foreign policy and withstand Western pressures when necessary.¹⁶

¹¹ Kınıkloğlu, S. (2022). Eurasianism in Turkey. SWP Research Paper 7. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022RP07/> (accessed 07.06.2022). p: 8.

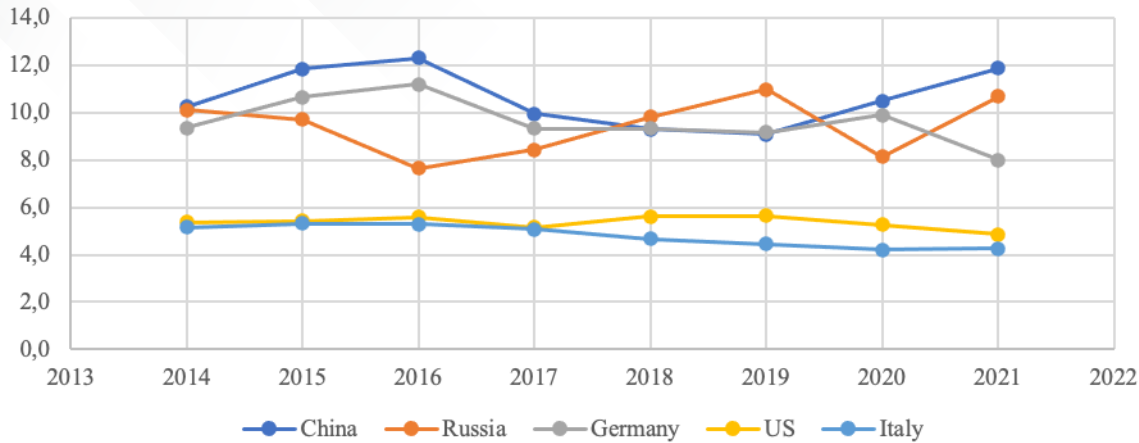
¹² İşeri, E. (2010). Eurasian Geopolitics and Financial Crisis: Transforming Russian–Turkish Relations from Geopolitical Rivalry to Strategic Cooperation. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12 (2): 173–186.

¹³ Turkish Statistical Institute (2022). Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri: İstatiksel Tablolar [Foreign Trade Statistics: Statistical Tables]. <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Kategori/GetKategori?p=dis-ticaret-104&dil=1> (accessed 07.02.2022).

¹⁴ World Bank (2022). World Development Indicators Database. 1 July 2022. <https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf> (accessed 12.07.2022).

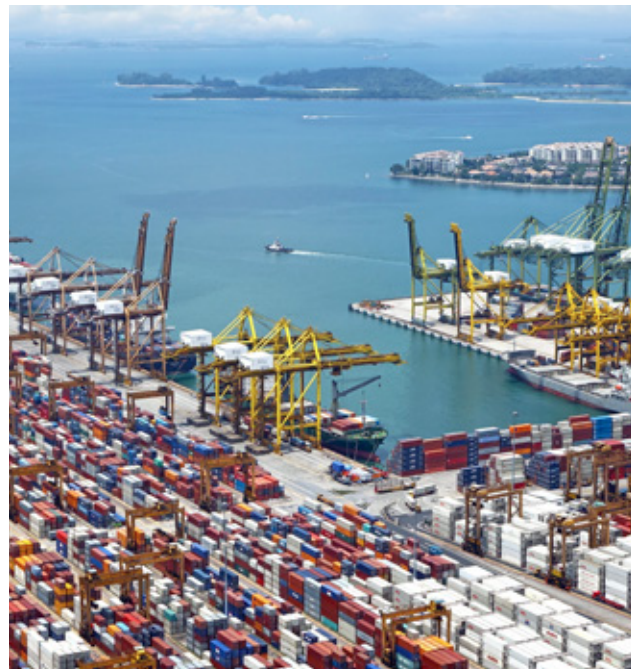
Table II. Top 5 Sources of Turkish Imports

Top 5 countries that Turkey imports from (%)



(Turkish Statistical Institute, 2022)

Announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative by China in 2013 created a further motivation for a turn to Asia. Due to its location as a gateway to Europe, Turkey has been hoping to receive significant Chinese investment, particularly in infrastructure and maritime projects.¹⁷ The reorientation of the foreign policy is also stimulated by the recent oil and gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean because of French and Italian support to the Greek Cypriot position. Increasing European support to Greek Cypriots and to People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, which is considered a terrorist group by Ankara, further pushed Turkey to look for partners outside of the West.¹⁸



¹⁵ Aslan, Ö. (2022). A Déjà Vu All over Again? Identifying and Explaining 'Change' in Turkey's Asia Policy. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. Online first. DOI: 10.1080/19448953.2022.2037980.

¹⁶ Atmaca, A. Ö. and Z. Torun (2022). Geopolitical Visions in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 24 (1), 114-137.

¹⁷ Üngör, Ç. (2019). Heading Towards the East? Sino-Turkish Relations after the July 15 Coup Attempt. In *Turkey's Pivot to Asia*. E. Erşen and S. Köstem (eds.). Oxon: Routledge. pp: 64-78.

b. Changing Domestic Political Environment

This group puts emphasis on changes within the domestic political environment in Turkey as a reason behind the axis shift. Accordingly, it is claimed there are some interest sub-groups within the AKP. The failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 revealed the power struggle among these sub-groups, notably the so called Erdoğanists and the Gülenists, who support the exiled religious leader Fetullah Gülen accused of orchestrating the 2016 coup attempt. Since the Gülenist group had been aligning with the West to a greater extent than the Erdoğanists, after the coup attempt Europe suddenly turned cold towards Turkey. This served to push Turkey more towards Russia and China.¹⁹

In fact, Turkey-EU relations during the AKP era can be analysed in three distinct periods: Europhilism (2002–2005), Euroscepticism (2005–2012) and Anti-Europeanism (2012–2022).²⁰ During its initial years, the AKP pushed hard for Turkey's full EU membership and implemented a series of accession reforms. This period was profoundly applauded by the left-leaning liberal intelligentsia as well as Kurdish and upper-class business groups. Nevertheless, due to both increasing questioning of the Turkish plea for full membership on the part of the EU and the EU's constitutional impasse, the momentum for EU membership ceased during the second half of the 2000s.²¹ In the last phase, the power balance among different groups within the AKP changed. This finally paved the way for the coup attempt in 2016. Consequently, the government has boosted authoritarian practices against any type of

oppositional group. This increasing authoritarianism finally culminated into a centralized and top-down presidential system in 2018.²² In such an environment, the AKP further distanced itself from the EU and an anti-European rhetoric started to manifest in the discourses of President Erdoğan and his leading elites.

Under these circumstances, Turkey began looking for support from countries with similar undemocratic tendencies.²³ Rapprochement with China and Russia provided leverage to the AKP leadership domestically and against the Western camp internationally. Likewise, the government coalition (AKP and the Nationalist Party MHP) formed a de facto alliance with Doğu Perinçek's Patriotic Party (Vatan Partisi). This party's Eurasianist views have begun to find extensive presence in the pro-government Turkish media.

²³ İşeri, E. (2022). International Autocratic Linkages and Regime Survival in the Post-liberal Order: Domestic Sources of Turkey's Eurasianist Turn. Presentation delivered in the panel. 22 April 2022.

²⁴ Atli, A. (2022). Growth Paths of Turkish-Chinese Economic Relations: A Regional Perspective. Presentation delivered in the panel. 22 April 2022.

²⁵ Op. cit. Turkish Statistical Institute.

²⁶ Turkish Central Bank (2022). Tablo 12. Yurt Dışında Yerleşik Kişilerin Türkiye'deki Doğrudan Yatırımları- Coğrafi Dağılım.

<https://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/cb23c98d-d9a5-465f-8c9c-9f84b533aaf8/uyup.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-cb23c98d-d9a5-465f-8c9c-9f84b533aaf8-o5.Wk6m> (accessed 12.07.2022).

c. Win-win Economic Strategy

This view does not treat Turkey's increasing relations with Asia as a binary choice. As such, Turkey's increasing relations with Asia do not have to come at the expense of its relations with the EU.²⁴ Furthermore, due to Turkey's long-term and established economic ties with the West, even if Turkey wants to make a replacement, this would not be so easy. For instance, in 2021, Germany's share of Turkey's total exports was 8.6%, Italy's was 5.1%, that of France was 4.0% while the share of Russia was 2.6% and that of China was 1.6%.²⁵ In 2021, in terms of foreign direct investment stocks, the European share was 68.1% while China's share was 0.5%.²⁶

Nevertheless, economic diversification of partners, and establishing ties with rising economies like China and Russia, makes

Turkey's economic development trajectory more secure and less dependent on only a limited number of countries. Diversification of economic partners, with Turkish products reaching new markets, becomes even more important given the recent difficulties the Turkish economy has been facing. The year 2018 witnessed the country's long-running current account deficit and foreign currency-denominated debt causing a sharp decline in the value of the Turkish lira, triggering a political row with the US administration.²⁷ As of mid- 2022, there is no improvement in the value of the Turkish lira. The erroneous neoliberal economic policies, long followed by the AKP, have started to illustrate their detrimental consequences. The engine of the economy remains the construction and energy sectors only.

Under such circumstances, according to this view, establishing stronger cooperation with China, the second largest economy in the world, with an ambitious trade and investment project like the Belt and Road Initiative, and Russia, one of the world's significant economies with lucrative oil and gas resources, looks like a favourable policy option. Currently, China's total investment in Turkey is above 4 billion dollars and mutual investments between Turkey and Russia are around 10 billion dollars.²⁸ Alibaba's purchasing of Trendyol, one of Turkey's leading electronic commerce platforms, and the 65% Chinese stake in Kumport near Istanbul stand as two important Chinese investments in Turkey. With Russia, cooperation in the tourism sector is particularly crucial. The number of tourists visiting Turkey from Russia has risen from 4.7 million in 2017 to 7 million in 2019, achieving a record level²⁹ and topping the number of tourists from Europe.

²⁷ Atlı, A. (2019). Turkey's Economic Expectations from a Rising China. In Turkey's Pivot to Asia. E. Erşen and S. Köstem (eds.). Oxon: Routledge. pp: 79-92.

²⁸ T. C. Dış İşleri Bakanlığı (2022). Bölgeler [Regions]. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.tr.mfa?03af1e06-bd93-40cb-ae4f-2c4ac27672e7> (accessed 11.06.2022).

²⁹ T. C. Dış İşleri Bakanlığı (2022). Türkiye-Rusya İlişkileri [Turkey-Russian Relations]. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-rusya-siyasi-illiskileri.tr.mfa> (accessed 11.06.2022).

³⁰ Op. cit. Bedirhanoğlu and Yalman.

³¹ Op. cit. Gönenç and Durmaz.

d. Neoliberal Globalization

Unlike the first three arguments which stress the agency dimension of the Turkish foreign policy's pivot to Asia, this fourth argument stresses the structural dimension. Accordingly, the neoliberal economics that have been implemented by Turkey with assistance from the IMF and the EU, are now making the country dependent on China and Russia in addition to the core capitalist economies. The IMF and the EU have played a chief role in transforming Turkey's development strategy into a more market-directed system of resource allocation.³⁰ Policies based on privatization, reduction of market regulations, and financialization have deepened Turkey's reliance on global markets and on speculation.³¹ Thus, now that Turkey is more reliant on the global economy, the country is also being affected by the new global powers. In other words, the reasons for Turkey's increasing relations with Asia are in fact structural.³² As such, China's competitiveness in the global markets, primarily coming from its low labour costs, has hit Turkey's economy negatively, as is also the case for other countries. The consequences of the EU-Turkey Customs Union, a trade agreement that entered into force in 1996, are a good illustration of this. Accordingly, goods started to travel between Turkey and the EU without any customs restrictions, except for a few sectors including agriculture, services and procurement. Turkey implemented tariffs and duties on third parties determined by the EU without even taking part in its decision-making mechanisms.³³ Likewise, both after 1996, the year when the Custom Unions entered into force and after 2001, the year when China became part of the World Trade Organization, imports from China to Turkey experienced strident increases. Subsequently, Turkey's trade deficit with China has grown faster than its overall trade deficit.³⁴ This situation also pushed Turkey to develop relations with China. In other words, the increase in economic relations with China was not related to Turkey's committed choice but was instead a required consequence of the global market principles alongside low-cost production and competition. Increasing economic relations, in turn, have caused rising political relations as well.

Concerning economic relations with Russia, a similar dependency story embedded in neoliberal policies is repeated. Turkey obtains a significant bulk of its energy from fossil fuel resources, most of which are imported. In 2020, Russia exported \$13.1 billion to Turkey, of which 19.1% was refined petroleum and 6.87% was crude petroleum.³⁵ The dependency of Turkey on Russia in terms of energy resources is, however, occurring due to the unregulated,

unplanned and growth-oriented economic policies. In Turkey, decisions on energy policies are taken in a top-down and untransparent manner without genuine participation.³⁶ Policy projections are made as if increasing consumption and economic growth are always inherently positive, without considering alternative options or policy consequences such as creation of dependencies or environmental destruction.

³² Fouskas, V. (2022). Ukraine and the Political Economy of War. Presentation delivered in the panel. 22 April 2022.

³³ The free trade agreements signed by the EU did not extend to Turkey.

³⁴ Atlı, A. (2011). Questioning Turkey's China Trade. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 10 (2): 108-116.

³⁵ OEC (2022). Russia and Turkey. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/rus/partner/tur> (accessed 13.06.2022).

³⁶ Aydın, C. İ. (2019). Identifying Ecological Distribution Conflicts Around the Inter-regional Flow of Energy in Turkey: A Mapping Exercise. *Frontiers in Energy Research*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fenrg.2019.00033>

II. No: Pivot to Asia has not taken place.

Not all scholars treat Turkey's increasing engagements with Asian countries as a pivot to Asia in Turkey's foreign policy. Those who do not see Turkey's increasing contacts with Asian countries as a pivot to Asia have divergent reasons explaining their stance. Some argue that behind Turkey's increasing relations with Asia there is a balancing strategy while others assert that Turkey is using a hedging strategy.

a. Balancing Strategy

It is not uncommon that Turkey's relations with Asia are seen as a balancing act between the West and the East rather than a pivot to Asia. In our panel, none of our panellists voiced this position. Nevertheless, for understanding the concept of hedging, which was discussed in our panel to explain Turkey's relations with Asia, it is worthwhile to first mention the balancing strategy.³⁷ Balancing is the act of offsetting the threat of one great power by aligning with another great power. Accordingly, the country aligns with one great power over an issue or for a period with the aim of balancing the power of another one. It is an approach that requires remarkable manoeuvring techniques and that is commonly engaged by middle-power countries like Turkey.³⁸

b. Hedging Strategy

This view does not treat the increasing relations as a foreign policy axis shift from the West to the East but as a hedging strategy. Hedging is meant to preserve as much independence as possible by hedging risk by engaging with as many great or middle powers as possible. This allows a country to diversify economic, diplomatic and military dependencies. It mitigates the risks in strategic conditions since in engaging with every great or rising power, the government takes fallback security measures as a form of insurance.

According to this view, Turkey is argued to pursue a hedging strategy to become its own pole between Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. A pivot to Asia seems strategically irrelevant for Turkey, as Turkey's turn away from the EU towards Russia and China looks quite limited for the time being. The war in Ukraine comes as yet another point supporting this assessment.³⁹ Although Turkey is a dialogue partner to the SCO, the latter is a very loosely integrated institution compared to NATO. Also, now that India and Pakistan have become members and Iran has started its accession process, any viable military cooperation between the SCO members looks much less likely. Secondly, the EU remains Turkey's biggest trade partner and its largest source of foreign

³⁷ Julienne, M. (2022). Hedging Rather Than Shifting: China's Role in Turkey's Geopolitical Ambition. Presentation delivered in the panel. 22 April 2022.

³⁸ Aydın, M. (2020). Grand Strategizing in and for Turkish Foreign Policy: Lessons Learned from History, Geography and Practice. *Perceptions*, Autumn-Winter, 25 (2): 203-226.

direct investment. In 2021, the EU's share in Turkey's total imports was 31.5% and in total exports was 41.3%. At a single country level, even though Russia and China are Turkey's biggest import partners, exports to Germany are still more than three times higher than those to Russia, and more than five times higher than those to China. Germany bought \$18 billion from Turkey in 2021, while Russia and China bought \$5.7 billion and \$3.6 billion respectively.⁴⁰ In addition to having a more balanced trade sheet with Germany compared to Russia and China, Turkey has also a large diaspora in Germany, establishing strong political and economic ties between two countries.

Another reason why Turkey's relations with Asia cannot be called a pivot is the structural trust deficit between Turkey and China due to the Uyghur issue. According to this argument, Turkey's backing to the Uyghur minority due to linguistic and religious connections remains a barrier against improvement of Turkey-China relations beyond short-term exchanges or purely commercial relations. Hence, rather than deeming Turkey's increasing relations with Asia as a pivot to Asia, it is more accurate to call Turkey's stance a hedging strategy against global uncertainties.⁴¹



³⁹ Op. cit. Julienne.

⁴⁰ Op. cit. Turkish Statistical Institute.

⁴¹ Op. cit. Julienne.

Conclusion

This policy paper has examined diverse perspectives on Turkey's increasing relations with Asia by reflecting upon the points raised in the panel. Due to a recent increase in contacts between Turkey and Asian countries, it is commonly argued that Turkey's foreign policy is experiencing a pivot to Asia. Nonetheless, the presence of this shift remains contended among scholars and in policy circles. Besides, among those who assert that such a pivot indeed took place, there is no agreement over the motives for this axis.

Four lines of argument are identified among those who claim for an axis shift in Turkish

foreign policy: some hold that the shift occurred due to a committed choice; others put forward that it is a result of the changing domestic political environment; still others argue that Turkey is following a win-win economic strategy; and a fourth group believe that the shift in Turkish foreign policy is taking place due to neoliberal globalization. Moreover, those who state that such a pivot did not take place can also be sub-categorized into two groups: those who proclaim that increasing relations between Turkey and Asia are taking place due to Turkey's balancing strategy and those who argue that Turkey is pursuing a hedging strategy.

