

The London School of Economics and Political Science



*Greek and Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Small States
and the limits of Neoclassical Realism*

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The thesis seeks to answer the question, “What are the explanatory limits of Neoclassical Realism (NcR) when applied to small states?.” The aim is to test NcR's top-down methodology on small states, an important universe of cases, and to account for the relationship between international and domestic politics in the foreign policies of small states. An NcR-inspired theoretical framework fit for explaining small-state foreign policy is developed. The framework is built by interrogating the interconnection between NcR and the literature on small states' foreign policies and political economies. The main argument is that small states prioritise security threats in their immediate geographic environment. Domestic variables – the perception of the leadership and the state's political economy – act as complementary or moderating factors but are not drivers of foreign policy in this immediate geographic space. However, when a small state's foreign policy targets areas outside its near geographic environment, the domestic level variables become the main drivers of foreign policy, transforming into independent variables, given the lack of threats from the international system. The testing ground of the theoretical framework is the foreign policies of Cyprus and Greece in the Middle East in the period 2004-2022. The case studies focus on two sub-regions of the Middle East: The Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the security threat of Türkiye becomes the key driver of the foreign policy of both states, influenced, nonetheless, by the perception of the executive and economic and political considerations at the domestic level. In this case, NcR's top-down methodology works. In the Gulf, however, NcR's top-down methodology is not useful because no regional state fulfils the threat threshold. Here the intervening variables become the main foreign policy drivers.

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Για τη Γιωρκούλλα τζιαι τη Μυροφόρα

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKEL	Progressive Party of the Working People
AKP	Justice and Development Party
ANEL	Independent Greeks
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ASDAK	Supreme Military Command for the Defence of Cyprus
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BoC	Bank of Cyprus
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CNG	Cypriot National Guard
CoM	Council of Ministers
COP21	2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference
COSCO	Cosco Shipping Corporation
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DEPA	Democratic Alignment
DIKO	Democratic Party
DIMAR	Democratic Left
DISY	Democratic Rally
DTA	Double Taxation Agreement
EAM	National Liberation Front
ECB	European Central Bank
EDEK	United Democratic Union of the Centre/Movement for Social Democracy
EDES	National Republican Greek League
EDF	European Defence Fund
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ELAM	National Popular Front
ELDYK	Hellenic Force in Cyprus
EMGF	East Mediterranean Gas Forum
EMU	European Monetary Union
ENI	Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi
EOKA	National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters
EOKA B	National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters B
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIR	Flight Information Region
FM	Foreign Minister
FPE	Foreign Policy Executive
FSA	Free Syrian Army
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
G20	Group of 20
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGBs	Greek Government Bonds
GNA	Government of National Accord
GNC	General National Congress
GNP	Gross National Product
GNS	Government of National Stability
GNU	Government of National Unity
GNU	Government of National Unity
HAF	Hellenic Armed Forces
HoP	House of Parliament
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State
J&P	Joannou & Paraskevaïdis
JCP	Justice and Construction Party
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Action Plan
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
KYSEA	Government Council of National Security
LAOS	Popular Orthodox Rally
LNG	Liquified Natural Gas
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MBT	Main Battle Tank
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NC	National Council
NcR	Neoclassical Realism
ND	New Democracy
NFA	National Forces Alliance
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAK	Panhellenic Liberation Movement
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PM	Prime Minister
PSI	Private Sector Involvement
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SNC	Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces
SSSF	Small State Support Forum
SVE	Small and Vulnerable Economies

SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
TMT	Turkish Resistance Organisation
TOTAL	Total Energies
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UBP	National Unity Party
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS III	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWII	World War Two

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On 2 and 4 January 2000, BBC One broadcasted a series of comedy sketches entitled *The Nearly Complete and Utter History of Everything* (Humphreys 2000). The shows consisted of a series of comedy sketches that portrayed important historical events ranging from the battle of Hastings to the 1912 Terra Nova Expedition. One of the sketches depicted the negotiations for the Treaty of Westphalia. Just as the ambassadors were preparing to wrap things up an advisor mentions the issue of Luxembourg. The tiny state remained under nobody's control and there was no question that it should remain so. Although at first neither the Swedish nor the French or English representatives cared for it, in the end it was another piece of land which should not be left without an imperial master. The Swedish envoy believed it would be useful as “storage for its pickled herring,” the French liked the idea of reaping the economic benefits of the “shop selling things made out of straw,” while the British representative did not care much, after all, it was pretty similar to Stevenage (Ibid). After much deliberation, the tiny state was split in two between the Swedish and the French with the hope “that it would give something to future journalists to write about,” in the event Swedish and French Luxembourg came to blows (Ibid). Notably, the Luxembourgeois were never asked about their fate and were not even present at the negotiations.

This scene portrays the way a large part International Relations (IR) scholarship has looked at small states for decades (Neumann & Gstohl 2006).¹ Small states were unimportant because they never really had a place in the table with Great Power heavyweights or even the Middle Power welterweights. Especially, the structural theories that dominated IR during the Cold War - Structural realism and Neoliberal Institutionalism - had little room in their grand theorising for the agency of small states (Walt 1979; Mearsheimer 2001; Keohane & Nye 1977; Keohane 1984).² Small states were not actors but were acted upon. The disdain towards the study of small states was once highlighted by Peter Katzenstein (2003, 10) who remarked that a colleague of his asked “[S]ince nobody cares about small states, why waste so much time writing about them?”

Not all IR scholars held this narrow view. Within the discipline a line of scholarship emerged that enquired into the nature and impact of small states (Schou & Brundtland 1971;

¹ Here I am primarily referring to the Realist and Liberal traditions which have historically dominated the discipline. Nonetheless, this argument could also apply to structuralist accounts of Marxism and constructivism.

² Structural realism is often referred to as neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism as neoliberalism within IR.

Clarke & Payne 1987; Knudsen 2002; Ingebritsen et al. 2006; Cooper & Shaw 2009; Baldacchino & Wivel 2020). The emergence of multiple small states throughout the 20th century highlighted the need to factor them into our analysis of international relations. As Annete Baker Fox(1969, 752) remarked “any particular small state may not be an ‘essential actor’ in the system, but it would not be the same system without this class of powers.” Additionally, scholars have theorised ways to aid small-state governments to navigate the geopolitical and financial challenges they were facing(Long 2022; Briguglio et al. 2006; Cooper and Shaw 2009; Sutton & Payne 1993). This thesis belongs to this line of scholarship. It proposes a framework for understanding small state foreign policy which can also be used by small state Foreign Policy Executives(FPEs) to understand their condition and act upon it.³

To achieve this, I build on Neoclassical Realism(NcR). NcR is a branch of the Realist tradition in IR. Unlike structural realism – its predecessor – it is not focused on grand theorising and its explanatory scope is much more limited. The causal chain of NcR is based on three levels; the international system and the relative distribution of power (independent variable), the domestic level, which forms the transmission belt (intervening variable), filtering systemic inputs leading to foreign policy outcomes (dependent variable). Three main approaches exist; i) a theory of foreign policy mistakes(Type I), ii) a Foreign Policy Analysis(FPA) Theory(Type II), and a theory of international politics (Type III).⁴ NcR has been used to theorise great power decline, underbalancing, overbalancing and imperial overstretch among other phenomena of international politics(Mallet & Juneau 2023; Schweller 2003; 2006; Snyder 1991).

Most theory-building by NcR scholars has focused on great powers and middle powers(Juneau 2015; Taliaferro 2019; Sterling-Folker 2009; Brawley 2009). While NcR's theory building potential has not been exploited regarding small states, it has been used to explain the foreign policy of specific small states(Tziarras 2019; Wivel 2013; Steinsson 2017). Small states often face different challenges to great and middle powers. Theorising small state foreign policy through NcR is an important theoretical exercise. It allows NcR to engage with a new universe of cases while expanding its theoretical toolkit by incorporating insights from

³ By Foreign Policy Executive I mean the heads of government and the upper echelons of the Foreign Policy apparatus within the state and any other high ranking actor that has an input in the formation and execution of foreign policy. See Chapter 3.

⁴ Type I NcR is a theory of mistakes, seeking to explain suboptimal foreign policy choices(Rose 1998). Type II NcR is a foreign policy analysis theory (Lobell et al. 2009). Type III NcR is a theory of international politics,(Ripsman et al. 2016).

the literature on small states. Therefore, the puzzle and research question driving the thesis is “What are the explanatory limits of NcR when applied to small states?”

Additionally, the Realist tradition with its focus on survival, hard power and military security is arguably the IR tradition which has been the most sceptical about small state agency. Classical realists remind us of the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides' Peloponnesian War where the powerful Athenians destroyed the small island-state of Melos because they refused to abandon their neutrality and do Athens' bidding (Baldacchino 2009).⁵ For realists, might is right and small and weak actors can do very little to resist the will of greater powers in the anarchic self-help world of international relations. Influential structural and neoclassical realists like Waltz (1979, 184-5, 195), Jervis (1978), Snyder (1991), and Walt (1987, 21-31) have also argued that small states have a narrow margin for error, and a very hard time finding allies or building up military strength to counter the will of greater powers. Therefore, their survival is easily threatened, and state security should be the sole focus of their foreign policies. Scholars working on small state foreign policy acknowledge this argument and as Godfrey Baldacchino (2009) states “the logic of Thucydides still holds”.

However, the scholarship on small states highlights that apart from state security, small states need to cater to several needs linked to societal security, and their economy and development (Sutton 2011; Lee & Smith 2010; Milne & Baldacchino 2000; Prasad 2009; Briguglio & Kissanga 2004). In short, small state's vulnerabilities are not only linked to their survival in the international system but also to their economic and societal prosperity. This is a fact that realist theories do not consider. Furthermore, despite the importance of the international system there are cases where domestic factors such as regime type and constitutional constraints (Elman 1995) or ideas and identities (Gvalia et al. 2013) have proven more useful in explaining the foreign policies of small states. The utilisation of NcR will on the one hand remedy the fault of realists concerning the importance of political economy considerations of small states and simultaneously incorporate both systemic and domestic factors into a cohesive theory of small state foreign policy.

The theory's testing ground is the foreign policy of Cyprus and Greece in the Middle East from 2004 to 2022.⁶ Cyprus and Greece are two small EU member states located in the Eastern Mediterranean, adjacent to the Middle East. The rationale behind case study selection

⁵ Thucydides has often been misused within IR (Bagby 1994).

⁶ I use the term “Cyprus” to refer to the Republic of Cyprus. For the internationally non-recognised “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” I use the term TRNC.

will be outlined in the methodology section below. The aim here is to not only offer a theoretical contribution but also contribute to the study of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy.

Since the early 2000s Greece and Cyprus have rediscovered the Middle East. The focus of Greek and Cypriot FPEs has been on two sub-regions of the Middle East; the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the two states have engaged in hydrocarbon explorations, a proactive diplomacy aiming and a status-seeking foreign policy. In the Gulf, the two states have for the first time engaged systematically with the sub-region through a proactive policy focusing on economic diplomacy, status-seeking and bolstering(Huliaras & Kalantzakos 2017; ISPI 2019). This flurry of activity stands in stark contrast to the period of the late 1990s and early 2000s, where the interaction with the region was limited to Greco-Turkish relations and the Cyprus Problem(Athanassopoulou 2010).

Although the Middle East lies in the immediate geographic environment of both states, their foreign policies towards the region were either inactive or paid lip-service to a declining Third Worldism(Ibid; Ker-Lindsay 2008).⁷ Developments in the Balkans (especially the wars in Yugoslavia and the Macedonian name dispute), tensions with Türkiye, and Cyprus' bid to become an EU member, kept Greek foreign policy engagement with the Middle East limited. For Cyprus, the country's political system came to the conclusion by the early 1990s, that EU accession would boost Cyprus' capacity to resolve the Cyprus Problem on favourable terms. Hence, EU accession became the primary goal of Cypriot foreign policy. Cypriot involvement in the Middle East was minimised as a result.

Nonetheless, by the end of the 2000s both FPEs had firmly reestablished the Middle East as a region of prime importance to their foreign policies. This project seeks to account for this turn and outline the drivers behind the Middle Eastern policy of both states. Namely, it seeks to answer the question “What are the drivers behind Greek and Cypriot foreign policy in the Middle East since 2004?” In the following sections of this introduction, I will turn my focus to the methodology and research design the before finishing with an outline of the thesis' content and structure.

1.1. Methodology and Research Design

This thesis seeks to test the limits of NcR's explanatory power on small states. This is important for the theory because, as Tang(2009) noted, the majority of NcR works have focused

⁷ On Third Worldism see Chapter 5.

on cases “confirming” NcR rather than cases where NcR might face difficulties. The latter set of cases is important in terms of theory falsifiability, a key attribute to any strand of theory that seeks to stive scientific status(Popper 2002).⁸ I employ a process tracing methodology on two in-depth case studies to achieve this. Along with process tracing, I conducted elite semi-structured interviews, which enabled data gathering, data triangulation and the conceptualisation of the FPE's perception – an intervening variable in the theoretical framework I am proposing.

Process tracing generates and analyses data connected to the “causal mechanisms, or processes, events, actions, expectations and other intervening variables, which link putative cases to observed effects”(Bennet & George 1997, 5). This approach examines the link between cause and effect through in-depth case studies(Van Evera 1997, 64). Process tracing seeks to examine causal mechanism’s impact on the outcome. To do so, it breaks the process down into smaller sequential parts and then looking for empirical evidence verifying those steps. Causal mechanisms explain how intervening variables and related processes lead to specific outcomes. Finally, having gathered the relevant data and material through historical reconstruction using analytical narrative, the material is presented in “a chronologically sequential order, and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots”(Stone 1979, 3)

Within an NcR framework, the first step is to choose a structural realist theory, to act as a “baseline” (Ripsman et al. 2016, 114-118). Subsequently, this theory and other s will be tested on the selected case studies, indicating their limitations. Finally, by re-examining the independent variable and by introducing appropriate intervening variables, a new causal mechanism fit to explain the outcomes of the case studies can be created.

Although the thesis will lead to an NcR-inspired framework for small-state foreign policy, this will be developed through the theory-testing exercise. Unlike most works utilising process tracing that use case studies to explain historical outcomes, build theories and generate hypotheses via an inductive process, this work primarily aims to use the case studies as a testing ground for NcR's causal mechanism driven by a top-down deductive logic(Beach & Pedersen 2011). Ulkiksen and Dadalauri(2016, 225) argue that in “such historically oriented studies, the use of theory is more eclectic; whether the identified causal explanation of an outcome in a specific case can be generalised is 'a secondary concern“.

⁸ On this I accept Quin’s(2013, 179) point that attaining scientific knowledge of human interactions has its limits and this is true of NcR of course.

It is essential to differentiate my approach from congruence analysis. Congruence analysis uses case studies to source empirical evidence to test “the explanatory relevance or relative strength of one theoretical approach in comparison to other theoretical approaches”(Ibid, 225). Congruence analysis, like process tracing, relies on within-case analysis. However, unlike process tracing it does not unpack “each part of the causal mechanism as a continuous process,” linking the independent with the dependent variable(Wauters & Beach 2018, 296). Theories are thus used as “modus operandi,” explaining key parts without an in-depth theorisation of the causal process(Ibid, 296).

1.1.1 Hypotheses and testing

Two competing hypotheses are formulated to test NcR's utility on small states. The first is based on NcR's top-down causal mechanism, and the second on an *Innenpolitik* bottom-up causal mechanism. *Innenpolitikers* argue that systemic conditions i.e. the balance of power or the balance of threat do not help explain foreign policy outcomes. Instead, we should only rely on domestic-level variables to explain foreign policy outcomes. As I argue in Chapter 4, the domestic-level variables are the FPE's perception and the state's political economy. I conceptualise both variables in Chapter 4. The two hypotheses are:

H1: Systemic threats and opportunities act as the independent variable. They prescribe optimal foreign policy choices and the limits the FPE has to operate within. Domestic variables – the FPE's perception and the political economy - act as intervening variables filtering systemic inputs into foreign policy outcomes. The foreign policy outcome will be suboptimal if domestic variables take the driving seat.

H2: Systemic threats and opportunities play a minor role in determining foreign policy. Instead, the FPE's perception and the state's political economy are the main drivers of foreign policy and act as independent variables.

Both hypotheses will be tested on the two case studies dealing with Greece and Cyprus's foreign policies in the Middle East. As I will argue in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the Middle East is split into three distinct but interconnected sub-regions: the Eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf, and the Maghreb. The Maghreb, for reasons explained in Chapter 6, is not significant for either Greece or Cyprus. Instead, the other two sub-regions are the main focus. The Eastern Mediterranean is in the immediate geographic environment of Greece and Cyprus, where it is more likely for systemic threats and opportunities to emerge for reasons explained in Chapter 4.

Hence, we would expect that in the immediate geographic environment – the Eastern Mediterranean - H1 will pass the test, and H2 will fail. Inversely, in the Gulf, which is geographically further away, there will be no significant threats and opportunities from a structural realist perspective. Therefore, this should be a hard test for H1 but an easy test for H2. The assumption here is that geography acts as a structural modifier, i.e. it modifies the effects of the international system's structure.⁹

1.1.2 Case study selection

The project uses two case studies to test NcR's utility and analytical limits on small states. This section will discuss the process which led to the identification of Greek and Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East as case studies. Case study selection is important in projects driven by a deductive methodological approach where the project's primary aim is to test the validity of a theoretical framework. Beyond the methodological aspect of case study selection, several other logistical caveats, and the capacity to conduct the research in the selected case studies need to be considered. I will first deal with the latter set of challenges before dealing with the purely methodological part of the selection.

When doing case study research, “scholars continue to lean primarily on pragmatic considerations such as time, money, expertise, and access”(Seawright & Gerring 2008, 295). This is an important consideration which has also affected this work. An important challenge that had to be acknowledged and overcome was the Covid-19 pandemic. This project began in October 2019 and soon afterwards, the world was facing lockdowns and limitations to travel. This limited my options for a logistically care-free case study selection.

To a considerable extent, the choice of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy was dictated by being pragmatic in what was feasible during this period. The pandemic pushed back fieldwork by approximately a year and a half, meaning investigating an unfamiliar case study would be daunting. I had a solid basis on the politics and foreign policies of both countries prior to the onset of the project. Additionally, I conducted fieldwork in Cyprus on projects concerning Cypriot foreign policy, where I interviewed elites. Therefore, I had an established network. Although I did not have the same exposure in the Greek case, my supervisor's network and the LSE's Hellenic Observatory network would serve as a solid starting point. Finally, my native language is Greek, which allowed me to access primary and secondary sources written in Greek. All interviewees(see below on sources and interviews), bar one, were more

⁹ On structural modifiers see discussion in Chapter 3.

comfortable in speaking in Greek, thus allowing me to gain access and rapport, enabling richer discussions.

Despite these challenges, both Greece and Cyprus are small states (per the definition employed in Chapter 2). However, in terms of the independent variable, they face important differences and one key similarity. The similarity is that they both face a military threat from the same state – Türkiye. The main differences between them are differences in capabilities. In that respect, they are *most different* case studies (Ibid). Greece is a small state relatively closer to middle power status compared to Cyprus. Regarding military forces, Greece has a considerable military, while Cyprus armed forces are one of the weakest in Europe. Greece is much more powerful in terms of population and the size of its economy.

If both cases yield similar outcomes to the tests, I submit them to, then there is a higher probability that the argument made on the relationship between small states and NcR holds water. As argued before, the result of this exercise will allow us to formulate an NcR-inspired theory of small-state foreign policy, highlighting NcR's scope conditions and the foreign policy drivers when NcR fails. Therefore, if the theory outlined in Chapter 4 is able to explain both case studies, then, this is an important step towards a generalisability claim for the theory. Of course, I acknowledge the limitation arising from the fact that the theory is only tested on two case studies which limits claim of generalisability. Nonetheless, it can serve as a solid starting point for the theory and can open new research avenues for (as I explain in Chapter 9).

1.1.3 Sources and Semi-structured interviews

The material consulted for both case studies relies on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include publicly available government documents, newspaper articles, and memoirs of politicians. Secondary sources include scholarly and policy work conducted by academics, think tanks and journalists in English and Greek. Secondary sources often come with limitations when utilised on a theory-driven work like this thesis, namely, the questions that they seek to answer are very different to the ones this project seeks to answer (Ripsman et al. 2016).

To alleviate these limitations, I have relied on semi-structured elite interviews with diplomats, journalists, academics and politicians during multiple rounds of fieldwork in Athens, Nicosia, and Paphos between June 2021 and February 2023.¹⁰ Additionally, I have

¹⁰ The main standard questions of the interviews can be found in the Annex.

relied on semi-structured elite interviews conducted in December 2015 and June and July 2018 in Nicosia and Paphos. These interviews were carried out for my undergraduate and MSc dissertations. The first project was related to the connection between hydrocarbons and the Cyprus Problem, and the second to the emergence of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral. Although the research questions were different, the topics are related, and the insights of these interviews are helpful in this research project.

I have conducted eight interviews in Athens in April 2022 and between September and November 2022. The interviewees include one current Minister, three former Ministers, two prominent analysts, and two diplomats. In Cyprus, I am relying on eighteen interviews conducted specifically for this project and another 8 interviews from the previous project mentioned above. The interviewees include the current President, the opposition leader, two former Ministers, diplomats, MPs, and journalists. The interviews carried out in 2015 and 2018 also included a former President of Parliament.

In Greece and Cyprus, many interviewees had various roles throughout the examined period, enriching their perspectives. For instance, the current President of Cyprus was formerly a diplomat, a government spokesperson and a Minister of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, as multiple parties and administrations have governed, I have sought and was able to speak to individuals involved in all of the administrations in Cyprus and Greece bar Kostas Karamanlis' premiership(2004-2009). In this respect, the sample is balanced and representative across all political forces in Greece and Cyprus. In addition, the sample did not rely exclusively on politicians or diplomats, incorporating the views of journalists and academics, including some that have worked in policy roles either in political parties or government.

Given that the interviewees were elites, several caveats need to be considered when interviewing them. Elite interviews come with several challenges, such as access to the interviewees, establishing rapport, and asking the right questions in a limited time because these people are often busy, even if they have stepped down from public office(Mikecz 2012; Ostrander 1995; Peabody et al. 1990). Additionally, elites are highly educated individuals who want to express their views via the interview. Hence, the “straitjacket” of specific questions like “Do you agree concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Declaration between Greece, Cyprus and Egypt during the Cairo Summit?” will not be met with approval(Peabody et al. 1990). Questions of this manner, unless a follow-up to the response on a broader question, can make it difficult for the interviewee to respond and even create issues with the rapport established(Ibid).

Due to these challenges, social science researchers have a consensus that semi-structured interviews are the best way to interview elites (Mikecz 2012; Osrtander 1993). Semi-structured interviews allow probing through open-ended questions that give “the responded considerable freedom to expand on a given question.” (Peabody et al. 1990, 452). Therefore, the interviewees are not placed in a straitjacket and can outline their views in-depth, providing richer data. This allows the researcher to ask more specific questions where needed without threatening the establishment of rapport between him and his interviewees. These nuances have been followed in all the interviews used in this project.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is split into two parts: a theoretical and an empirical. The theoretical part consists of three chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature on the definition of small states. The goal of the Chapter is to articulate a small-state definition necessary for the theory-building which will take place in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 serves as an introduction to NcR, conceptualising its independent, dependent, and dependent variables. The Chapter ends with a literature review of the works that have used NcR to explain the foreign policies of small states. NcR serves as the basis of the theory developed in Chapter 4, which seeks to explain small-state foreign policy. Before articulating the theory, I touch upon the works of Innenpolitik scholars that inspired the theoretical framework and its limitations when applied to small states. Subsequently, the hypotheses are presented, and then the independent, intervening, and dependent variables are conceptualised. This conceptualisation combines insights from NcR, Innenpolitik and small-state literature, aiming to provide a theory that caters to the needs of small states.

The second part comprises four chapters and deals with the case studies. Chapter 5 applies the definition of smallness articulated in Chapter 2 on Greece and Cyprus, illustrating that both states meet the threshold. Subsequently, the Chapter defines the Middle East region and provides a historical outline of the relationship between the two states and the Middle East before 2004. Chapter 6 defines the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf as sub-regions of the Middle East and provides an account of their international relations. As with Chapter 5, this Chapter aims to provide the reader with important information that will be necessary background information for the Analysis in Chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 focuses on Cypriot foreign policy in the Middle East, while Chapter 8 focuses on Greek foreign policy in the region. Both Chapters follow the steps outlined in Chapter 4, and each Chapter ends with a section testing the two Hypotheses on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. Finally, Chapter

9 concludes the thesis, focusing on the main theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis, its limitations, and avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2: SMALL STATES AND DEFINITIONS

A perennial question in the study of small states is, “What is a small state?” In other words, what defines a small state? According to one scholar, this has proven “elusive”(Maas 2009). Even though scholarly work on small states spans more than six decades, there has been little consensus on the defining characteristics of “smallness”(Vital 1967; Rothstein 1968; Keohane 1969; Henrikson 2001; Kassimeris 2009; Chong & Maas 2010; Long 2017). Some have engaged with small states without providing a definition. An illustrative example is Annette Baker Fox’s(1959) classic book *The Power of Small States* which focuses on the foreign policies of non-great powers during WWII. Fox does not define small states, while some of her case studies, like Spain and Türkiye, are not small states.

Others have questioned small states' viability as an analytical unit and a field of study due to the lack of a standard definition(Bull 1968, 302; Baehr 1975, 459). According to Maurice East(1973), small states are too broad a category to analyse. Christmas-Moller(1983, 40) argues that while we might categorise some states within small and large groups, the social world exists on a continuum with indistinguishable borders between categories. In turn, this would then render a definition of smallness impossible(Ibid). Additionally, the subject of small states within IR has been treated at times by many as inconsequential and deserving of little scholarly attention. Katzenstein(2003) notes that prominent figures like Barrington Moore and Kenneth Waltz also shared this view despite their fundamentally different viewpoints on international politics. As one of the most cited scholars of contemporary IR maintains, only great power politics matter in the grand scheme(Mearsheimer 2001).

Although arriving at a commonly accepted set of defining criteria for smallness in international politics might be impossible, the vast majority of states within the international system are not great powers. Three broad approaches have developed over time within small state studies to deal with the issue of definition: i) material, ii) relational, and iii) sociological/ideational. Material definitions seek to define smallness based on measurable material characteristics. Although sharing some commonalities with this approach, the relational approach uses features that showcase small states' relative vulnerability in material terms vis-à-vis other states in the international system to define smallness(Maas 2009; Wiberg 1987). The third group of definitions utilises sociological and constructivist insights and focuses on the discursive and contextual construction and perception of smallness and vulnerability. The structure of this chapter follows the three aforementioned approaches. Each

approach will be presented in turn before focusing on the definition used in this work. Finally, the adopted definition – a modified version of Toje’s definition - will be outlined before concluding the chapter.

2.1. Material definitions

Material definitions of smallness have attempted to define small states by using quantitative characteristics. Some definitions focus solely on one factor, with population and the state’s GDP being the most usual choices. For instance, Kuznets(1960) argued that small states have less than ten million population. Similarly, the British Commonwealth defines small states as any country with a population of 1.5 million or less(Commonwealth Secretariat 2015; Kissanga & Dancie 2007). The World Bank(2019) places the same threshold in defining smallness. For Deutsch(1968), the crucial factor in defining smallness is the state’s Gross National Product(GNP); in particular, Deutsch argued that a state is *de facto* small if its GNP is less than 1% of the global GNP. However, most approaches within this family of definitions argue that a single measurable characteristic cannot define smallness. Demas(1965) identified a small state with a population of five million and a usable land area of 10000 to 20000 square miles. Jalan(1982) instead classified a small state as a country with a population below five million, a Gross Domestic Product(GDP) under US\$2bn and a land area below 25000 square km while also defining micro-states.¹¹

David Vital(1967) argued in favour of a more dynamic two-fold definition of small states, arguing that advanced, industrial states with a population size of 10-15 million people or underdeveloped states with a population of 20-30 million could be considered small states. Similar multidimensional definitions have also been suggested by scholars like Olafsson(1995), who uses the size of the economy along with territory and population and Maurice East(1973), who adds the size of national armed forces on top of the criteria used by Olafsson. The most sophisticated attempt is Charles Taylor’s(1969) employment of cluster analysis to determine micro-states by focusing on criteria like the distance to key capitals, GNP, population, area, and the distance to the nearest state with more than two million inhabitants.

Although these characteristics are important in assessing a state's position within the international system, they come with fundamental problems. Due to their hard quantitative data employment, these definitions could be seen as ‘objective.’ However, there is inherent

¹¹ The ‘micro-state’ is also used as a category in several studies but again suffering from the same definitional issues as the ‘small state’(Jalan 1982; Hein 1985; Handel 1981; Cooper & Shaw 2009; Taylor 1969).

subjectivity in setting their cut-off points. What considerations can we rely upon to decide a cut-off point for any of these criteria? How can you claim that a state with one million inhabitants is small while a state with one million and one inhabitants is not?

Similarly, a state with a GDP of 1,01% of the global GDP, not a small one, follows Deutsch's(1968) definition. Based on this definition, in 2017, Saudi Arabia would be considered a small state, while the Netherlands, a state with roughly half the Saudi Arabian population with a significantly smaller territory, would escape being branded small. If one considers Saudi Arabia's importance for global energy security and its material and ideological influence in the Middle East, one will think twice about the usefulness of Deutsch's definition. Moreover, how useful is Vital's definition of smallness when Switzerland or Israel have considerable capabilities in certain areas that compete with or surpass those of established middle powers? For instance, Switzerland enjoys a position of fundamental importance in the global banking system, a vital pillar of the global economy. At the same time, Israel is a technological and military power and is considered a *de facto* nuclear power.¹² The choice of different numerical cut-off points by studies claiming to study the same thing prevents the comparison of findings between those studies and the generalisability of the results.

Another striking example is the World Bank's Small State Support Forum(SSSF), comprising fifty states: eight, however, have a population of more than 1.5 million, which is the limit according to the World Bank(2019). According to the World Bank Group, the rationale is that the slightly larger states face "similar challenges" to explain why the group has diverged from its definition(Ibid). In this respect, although the World Bank has an official quantitative definition, that definition by the Bank's standards is problematic in practice. Implicitly, this leads to a redefinition based on a set of common challenges, thus, moving away from a purely quantitative definition to one based on qualitative criteria.

2.2.Relational definitions

The example of the SSSF highlighted issues with purely quantitative material definitions and illustrated the capacity of relational and qualitative criteria in defining smallness. Some scholars working in the field of small states have argued that smallness matters because, more often than not, it is related to 'weakness' and an inability to shape or

¹² On the issue of Israel's nuclear capabilities there is no official acceptance of their existence by the Israeli government. Nonetheless, it is considered a fact that Israel has such capabilities by experts and governments across the world with the Israeli government's policy of deliberate ambiguity seemingly validating their concerns(Toukan 2009; Simon 2009)

affect the international politico-economic environment to match one's interests.¹³ The oldest way of establishing the small states - or instead small powers since up until well into the twentieth century, the latter terminology was preferred - at any given era was to examine which states were invited to international conferences and which were not. Consider the following excerpt:

The available case studies in IR heavily concentrate on great powers, thus looking at only one particular sample of states. Small states started life as a residual category and under a different name. Until well into the twentieth century, in all European languages states were routinely referred to as 'powers' (French puissance, German Macht, Russian derzhava, Spanish/Portuguese poder, etc.). While this noun is still used for a different category of states, namely 'great powers' (and, more rarely, also for 'middle powers'), 'small powers' are nowadays simply referred to as 'small states' (Neumann & Gstohl 2006, 3).

As Neumann and Gstohl point out, states that did not matter or were considered inconsequential were not invited to conferences. In time, instead of being referred to as powers, they were referred to as small states, thus, highlighting their perceived lack of capabilities and inability to influence international affairs.

The approach above is connected to the realist school. For realists of all strands, material power defined in terms of capabilities is critical to their explanations of international relations. All realists argue that military and economic capabilities primarily or exclusively define power.¹⁴ For realists, power establishes a state's standing in the international system. What defines a great power is how much power it possesses. Because of their military and economic capabilities, great powers can withstand other states' will whilst wielding increasing power to shape the policies of other states and define the system. On the contrary, small states

¹³ Some have contested this approach arguing that it further confuses the matter. This goes back to the discussion of Dahl and Tuftes (1973, 5) on the relationship between size and effective government. In their words there is no ideal size for achieving the "twin goals of citizen effectiveness and system capacity". Writing with a focus on IR, Barry Buzan (1983, 65-69) argues that a small state can be a strong state with high legitimacy while a weak state does not have high legitimacy. Conversely, a weak power has limited capabilities while strong powers do not. In this regard, Sutton (2011, 144-5) finds Handel's (1981) use of the term 'weak state' in his work *Weak states in the International system* problematic because Handel does not deal with weak states but with weak powers.

¹⁴ Structural realists like Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (2001) have defined power in purely material terms while their classical predecessors (Carr 1946; Morgenthau 1948) despite stressing the importance of material factors they have also included non-material factors in their understandings of power in international relations. See the discussion on power in chapter 3.

are those states that cannot withstand the will of great powers because they lack material capabilities, especially military capabilities (Vandenbosch 1964, 294; Krause & Singer 2001; Small et al. 1982). In this respect, small states are defined in “contradistinction to great powers” and can be viewed as weak and ineffectual powers (Baldacchino 2009, 26).

Despite the centrality of power as capabilities in realism, realists have not been able to find a way to measure power and thus rank states. The focus of realism is relative power between states. Hence, to assert that a relative increase in power has occurred, that increase needs to be measured. If it cannot be measured, it becomes arbitrary whether an increase has occurred. However, power – even in the narrow way defined by realists - is hard to be measured because it is not one-dimensional. It has different facets, e.g., economic, military, and demographic. For instance, a state possessing a robust economic power base might be unable to transform that economic power into military power to fight a conflict (Zakaria 1998; Brawley 2009b).¹⁵ Since there is no clear measurement of power, there is also no clear cut-off point based on which a state is considered a great power, a middle power or a small state. Some states might fall into those categories, like Malta as a small state or the US as a great power, but the limits become fuzzy with others. For instance, is Sweden a small state or a middle power? Realism does not have a definitive answer.

Thinking about small states as weak powers turns attention to vulnerability. In the words of Payne, “small states are mostly acted upon by much more powerful states and institutions... vulnerabilities rather than opportunities ... come though as the most striking manifestations of the consequences of smallness in global politics” (Payne 2004, 634). This turns attention to another realist mantra, survival within the perpetual insecurity of the anarchic state system. Since small states lack the coercive power associated with material capabilities, they are the most vulnerable to threats against their existence and sovereignty. For instance, Fox argues that small states are those states that cannot effectively project power on the international stage to advance their interests while also being unable to prevent outside intervention in their affairs (Fox 1959). Handel’s definition is two-fold, encompassing both a quantitative and qualitative facet but firmly remains within the realist spectrum. On the quantitative side, for Handel, small states have a population between 5 and 10 million, while smaller states with populations under five million are considered micro-states (Handel 1981). More importantly, however, he examines the asymmetric relations with which small states are

¹⁵ Neoclassical realists unlike their structural realist predecessors have offered new insights on this approach. See chapter 3.

interconnected to the global economy and other states. Handel's work is addressed to the 'weak states' of the international system, reserving the term for states that have limited capabilities and are in most respects on the weaker side of economic and military asymmetries with the great powers of the international system.

A similar vulnerability based conception is proposed by Rothstein(1968, 29), who argued that small states could not pursue their interests without the aid of "other states, institutions, processes or developments". Critically, however, Rothstein adds the psychological element of perception since the small power recognises its lack of material capabilities. Keohane(1969, 292) accepted the importance of this and argued that psychological factors and power differentials should be considered. Keohane also borrows from the conceptualisation of Vital. Vital(1967,7-8) accepts that the categorisation of state's is purely an arbitrary affair and then introduces a category between great and small powers, that of middle powers. Based on this, Keohane categorises states into great, secondary, middle, and small based on their capacity to influence the international system. Great Powers can define the system, secondary powers can influence it, middle powers can affect it, and small powers are "system-ineffectual"(Keohane 1969). Both Rothstein and Keohane implicitly echo and acknowledge the practice followed at the Conference of Vienna.

2.2.1. Vulnerability and International Political Economy

Vulnerability also emerges as a key definitional characteristic of small states in the fields of IPE and international economics, albeit from a financial and economic perspective rather than a survival-oriented one. This literature draws heavily from the insights of interdependence theorists like Keohane, Nye, Oye and others. As Keohane and Nye(1977) have argued in their seminal *Power and Interdependence*, military power is not the only source of power in international relations, while security is not the only issue in the agenda as realists would have it. The true source of power, in their view, is found in the asymmetric and interdependent relationships between states which "provide sources of influence for actors in their dealings with one another"(Keohane & Nye 1977; Keohane & Nye 1987). While military power would matter in one issue, it could be completely ineffective in another because it would cause more harm than good. Nye and Keohane drew attention to the forces of economic globalisation that were increasing interdependence between states in asymmetric ways.

In this respect, vulnerabilities for small states are not only concerned with physical security. Instead, vulnerability is usually defined "based on the premise that a country's

prone to exogenous shocks stems from several inherent economic features, including high degrees of economic openness, export concentration and dependence on strategic imports” (Briguglio 1995; Briguglio et al. 2004; Prasad 2009; Katzenstein 1985). According to IPE scholars and organisations like the World Bank and the Commonwealth, globalisation and the interconnectedness of the international economy are seen as the primary source of vulnerability for small states (Sutton 2011; Winters & Martins 2004; Prasad 2009; Commonwealth Secretariat 1997). The argument starts by pointing to the lack of primary resources and raw materials, leading to a limited industrial base and, in turn, limited domestic opportunities. As a result, small states need to favour trade liberalisation and foster economic openness since protectionist policies would cause more harm than good.

Additionally, export costs for small states are usually higher compared to those of larger states due to their remoteness and the smaller cargo loads (Cooper & Shaw, 2009b, 3). If those states are bordering a far more powerful state, then a dependent relationship is developed, which also has geopolitical implications (Ibid). Moreover, their limited resource base results in a narrow industry incapable of creating economies of scale. The manufactured goods are few. There is a focus on few products that enhance the dependence of small states on specific sectors and few markets, highlighting the inability of their economies to diversify adequately. In this respect, a downturn in one of these sectors would lead to an economic crisis of the whole economy. Small state economies are thus highly vulnerable and susceptible to crises due to adverse developments in foreign states and markets to which they are highly dependent (Katzenstein 1985, 82-87). Furthermore, the low population numbers are viewed as another potential source of vulnerability because low numbers are connected to a shortage of certain skills and high per capita costs in providing government services. Finally, most small states, mainly developed economies, rely on overseas aid and preferential agreements, which often come with obligations, limiting their independence by allowing other states and organisations to meddle in their internal affairs (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997).

In response to this lack of a definitional consensus, an innovative approach to escape from this ‘definitional trap’ is the argument put forward by Tom Long (2016). Instead of finding a common denominator for what constitutes smallness, a futile task as it seems, Long has argued that we should instead look at the relations and asymmetries between dyads of states. Long (2016) stresses that by focusing on the nature of the asymmetry and leaving questions based on absolute definitions of either power or capacity, it is easier to account for the challenges related to survival, security and economics faced by individual states vis-à-vis much

more powerful rivals. This approach, thus, allows for an in-depth understanding of how ‘hypo-powers,’ the term reserved by Long for the weaker state in the relationship, might operationalise aspects of this asymmetry in their favour. Having operationalised the asymmetries between dyads of states, one could employ network analysis. This approach heavily borrows from the interdependence and economic statecraft literature and has some parallels with the work on economic statecraft and geoeconomics (Keohane & Nye 1977; Duval 1978; Baldwin 1980; Handel 1981; Mouritzen & Wivel 2005; Blackwill & Harris 2016; Scholvin & Wigell 2018; Baldwin 1985; Mastanduno 1988; Mastanduno 1999).

However, Long’s work also suffers from similar definitional problems because in defining the ‘hypo-power,’ some factors have to be chosen over others when two states are of comparable stature. Furthermore, if asymmetry is the key to escape the “definitional trap,” why does Long (2022) fall into the trap himself by entitling his work *A Small State’s Guide to influence?* Long argues that his focus on asymmetrical relationship concerns “states that are located towards the extremes of dyadic continuums of state size” (Ibid, 47). To make his case, Long used the example of Greece and the brinkmanship of Greek leaders during the Eurozone crisis in 2011 and 2015 (Ibid, 139-42). The asymmetry was between the large EU and small Greece. Let us conceptualise an asymmetrical relationship between Greece and North Macedonia based on his criterion (Nimetz 2020). Greece is a large state here, and North Macedonia is the small one. In this respect, Long’s work is not limited to small states, but it is, in essence, a very useful theory of asymmetrical relationships.

2.3. Constructivist and sociological approaches

In the past three decades, ideas have gained a significant place within IR, evident in the advent of constructivism as a mainstream theory and the revival of the English School. The English School views the international environment as a society rather than a system of states (Bull 1977; Butterfield & Wight 1966; Gong 1984; Buzan 2004; Keene 2002; Hurrell 2007). According to Hedley Bull’s (1977, 13) classic definition, states act within a society when they “conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions”. Bull and others recognised that despite the anarchic nature of international relations, states agreed to certain norms and practices to govern large parts of their relations. Critically, the word “institution” from Bull’s definition of society does not refer to international organisations or other transnational bureaucratic bodies- these are considered secondary institutions- but rather, it refers to established and accepted practices within international society. These primary institutions

include the balance of power, limited war, international law, and diplomacy. Finally, states ought to pass a “standard of civilisation” to become members of the international society.¹⁶

One of the primary institutions to the function of any international society is the institution of great powers. English School scholars, particularly the earlier generations, focused on the impact of great powers in forming international societies and in their management and upholding. Despite writing and theorising on international society, the earlier generations of English School scholars had little to say about the lesser members of the international society. In the case of decolonization, for example, the foundational works of the English School argued that the acceptance of the Westphalian rules by non-European states allowed them to become members of the society, irrespective of their internal politics through a “reciprocal recognition of sovereignty”(Bull 1984, 103; Watson 1992). All parties agreed that accepting the norms of the society was in ‘their interest’ and accepted them in a spirit of “co-existence and co-operation”*(Bull 1984, 112). Apart from the minor references on decolonisation, these early accounts tell us very little about the role and impact that the non-Great Power members play within international and, more importantly for this chapter, how these members should be defined.¹⁷

This gap has been partially filled by the more recent scholarship on the English School that has paid attention to middle and regional powers. Examples of this scholarship are Zarakol’s(2011) account of three non-Western regional powers-Russia, Türkiye, and Japan-and how they dealt with the stigma of backwardness caused by the need to fulfil the standard of civilisation and become members of the Western international society. Suzuki(2009) also offers a similar account regarding the socialisation of China and Japan in the “Janus-faced international society”. Another recent work by Tristen Naylor(2019) touches upon middle powers but mainly focuses on status groups within international society, like the family of civilised nations or the G20. Despite dealing with middle powers, these works did not choose their case studies based on their status as middle powers. Instead, the choice was made either because of participation in an international grouping or their non-Western origins.

¹⁶ Given the historical nature of the early English School accounts by Manning, Bull, Wight, Butterfield and others the standard of civilisation initially referred to the racist concept used by European imperialists to justify their right to annex large parts of the globe. Those who belonged to the European and ‘civilised’ core had the ‘right’ to civilise the rest of the world. More importantly, however, in terms of theory the standard signifies the threshold and requirements needed for a state to become a member of the international society. For instance, nowadays the standard is set by UN recognition. If a state is recognised by the rest of the international community as a state then it should be able to gain UN membership(Buzan 2014)

¹⁷ The exception of the rule here is the work by Carsten Holbraad(1984) on middle powers.

Consequently, the English School does not provide a coherent definition of which states should be understood as middle powers and, in turn, does not define or deal with small states.

Even though the School acknowledges the existence of international hierarchies, it does not pay attention to the position of small states within those hierarchies. According to Tim Dunne(2003, 304), within international society, there were always “gradations of power: world powers, great powers, middle powers, minor powers, and so the subdivisions go on. In other words, the sovereign states system has historically admitted many formal and informal hierarchies”(Ibid, 304). Nonetheless, it is unclear which factors place a state in Dunne’s four categories since his work addresses the question of US supremacy. Furthermore, the English School has understood hierarchies through the institution of the standard of civilisation, meaning that those states that pass the threshold set by the standard become members of the international society. At the same time, those that do not remain outside of it and thus lower in the international hierarchy(Stivachtis 2015).

Although the standard in any given period is not the same, and those that set it to do so because they are in a position of power, it does not mean that small states are the ones that are left out(Gong 1984). For instance, if we agree with Stivachtis(2008) that the new standard of civilisation is political and economic performance within the liberal international order, a regional power like Iran would be left out. Still, small states like Switzerland or Luxemburg would be considered hierarchically higher because they meet the standard’s requirements and are part of the international society(Stivachtis 2008). Essentially, the English School lacks a definition of small states, and that is because no scholar within the School has grappled with small states.

Since the early 1990s, IR has experienced an ideational turn that propelled constructivism as a mainstream theoretical strand.¹⁸ Constructivists argue that ideas and the discursive processes by which they are spread are responsible for shaping the international system's national interest and structure(Wendt 1992; Campbell 1998). Regarding smallness, constructivist scholars have paid more attention to small states than their English School counterparts. Arguably the first constructivist work on small states that adopted a conceptual view in the definition of smallness was Katzenstein’s(1985) *Small States in World Markets*. According to Katzenstein, the small European states- Austria, Denmark, and Switzerland – he

¹⁸ I use constructivism here in the broader sense encompassing not only the thin constructivism in the tradition of Wendt and Katzenstein but also critical and poststructuralist approaches. This definition of constructivism is akin to the one used by Nicholas Onuf’s in *World of Our Making*(1989).

examined historically perceived themselves as small. This intersubjective understanding of smallness among the population and the leadership of these small states enabled the creation of a corporatist economy and state to mitigate the effects and pressures emanating from the advent of global capitalism.¹⁹

A more recent work by Gingleux(2016) argues that the position of a state within the international system is based on the one hand on the role the state perceives it can play and, on the other hand, on the role the rest of the international community believes it can play. Hence, the position of a state in the international hierarchy and its status as a small, middle, or great power is pertinent to this intersubjective understanding. Thus, the approach of constructivists to the definition of smallness is not standard but is contextual and intersubjectively constituted. For instance, the category of Small Island Developing States(SIDS), which has gained prominence both in the UN but also in the World Bank, was the result of a competent “performance of smallness” by SIDS, which led to the acknowledgement of their status by the other members of those international organisations(Corbett et al. 2019). Essentially, this label was created by reaching a consensus that these states are small and vulnerable in a specific way.

The main critique to this approach is that this intersubjective understanding is primarily based upon material characteristics such as the size of a state’s economy and its capacity to project power on a regional or global level, among other factors. For example, even if Germany wanted to play the role of a small state, the international community would never view Germany in this light because of its economy and its importance to European and global politics, both in historical and contemporary terms. In the same way, if Malta claimed that it saw itself as a regional powerhouse in the Mediterranean with aspirations of establishing a sphere of influence, nobody would view these claims seriously because, in relative terms, Malta is too weak to impose its will on its much more powerful neighbours.

A more adept historical example would be the realisation of France and Britain that they were no longer the imperial forces of the past during the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956. During the crisis, the foreign policy executives of the two states, thinking that they maintained their pre-WWII position of dominance in the international system, deployed their forces on the Suez Canal, defeating the Egyptians forces intending to halt its nationalisation. However, pressure

¹⁹ Katzenstein(2003) notes in an article reflecting on *Small States* that although this was in his view a key insight of his work, it was not picked up by his peers at the time due to the dominance of materialist theories in IR. He notes that the book was critiqued and praised on those materialist grounds.

from the international community and, more importantly, from the two superpowers, the USSR, and the US, led them to a humiliating withdrawal signalling their demise in status. To determine a state's position within the international system, ideas, and self-perception matter as long as they correspond to material realities.²⁰

An approach that touches upon constructivism is the work by Abulof(2015) in *The Mortality and Morality of Nations* where the author adopts an existentialist lens to interrogate the experiences of three small nations: Quebec's French Canadians, Israeli Jews, and South African Afrikaners. Abulof's defines small nations as nations that "deeply doubt their symbolic immortality and endow their morality with existential rationale" and "by being so existentially anxious about these qualities, amplify their importance"(Ibid, 8). The defining characteristic is the nation's collective mortality, which is non-quantifiable and intersubjective.

Although mortality is paramount for small states, its possibility has not bothered only small nations but also to larger, "mightier" nations, to use the author's words. The pre-eminence of survival as a concept within IR testifies to this. As mentioned in the introduction the discipline emerged as a great power discipline and the pre-eminence of survival as a strategic goal illustrates how seriously the possibility of mortality was taken in this context by larger states. In this respect although the work aims to deal with small nations its scope is much broader, and it differentiates from the statist view taken in this work. The only state in Abuloff's cases is the state of Israel via the experiences and narratives of Jews and Zionists. Nonetheless, by most Israel would not qualify as a small state because it belongs to certain material clubs that elevate its status above smallness. As mentioned above Israel is a de factor nuclear state. Only a handful of states on the globe have such material capabilities. Therefore, the smallness of Israel is debateable in terms of material characteristics.

Overall, the author's reading of IR, arguably the social science that has dealt extensively with the issues of peace, war, survival and nation mortality, is poor at best. The author differentiates his work from IR realism arguing that he is not attempting to offer an account of security in material and physical terms but mostly an account of security as "freedom from doubt; confidence, assurance."(Ibid, 30). Abuloff's narrow account of IR, which takes a page and a half, leaves much of what has been covered within the discipline which is relevant to his subject out. For instance, the concept of survival, which is inextricably linked to mortality, is

²⁰ Gigueux(2016) accepts this point.

not mentioned once. In short, although Abulof's account offers an alternative account centring on epistemic and ontological insecurity, it cannot offer a compelling definition of smallness.

2.4. Adopted definition.

This work will conceptualise smallness based on the work of Asle Toje(2011) for two reasons. Firstly, the theoretical framework and the research design of this work. This work's theoretical framework is based on NcR, which is also the framework followed by Toje. Toje's work is arguably the only one in NcR's tradition to define smallness, forming a crucial starting point. The second point is that Toje's work comprises insights from the quantitative and relational approaches. Being a realist work, it places importance and primacy on material capabilities and power, and thus, it has a strong foundation in the quantitative approach. Toje does not seek to define smallness solely on material capabilities as most realists do but proposes additional characteristics that focus on the state's position in the international system vis-à-vis other actors and their strategies to overcome their vulnerability.

Toje is following Keohane's stratification to categorise states(Ibid). Confusingly, Toje assumes that there is another category of small powers between great powers and small states. One would expect that in that position, you would find middle powers. According to him, small powers are the states that cannot dominate or influence the system but can affect it, primarily when they act in a group. Essentially, Toje's small powers correspond to the middle powers under Keohane's taxonomy. So Toje, in his work, is not writing on small states but middle powers while calling them "small." Arguably this is not very clear.

However, the four characteristics he employs to define a middle power - dependence, variable geometry, defensive posture, and a tendency to follow international law and join international organisations - can define small states of all forms. Even those states considered system ineffectual would abide by these four defining characteristics. Based on Toje's conceptualisation, the only differentiation between small states and middle powers is their ability to affect the system. Therefore, it is the result of their actions that categorises them, not their characteristics.

The first element of smallness is dependence, meaning that the state in question recognises that it cannot achieve security on its own; thus, it seeks to remain neutral or associate itself, preferably through an alliance, with a stronger state to guarantee its security. The second component is variable geometry(Ibid, 48). By variable geometry, Toje highlights those small states, due to their limited capabilities and resources, geographical location, and the

international system's constraints, must set clear priorities in their foreign policy while seeking to internationalise any disputes with greater power(Ibid, 48). Therefore, in his view, small states are primarily status quo powers.

Small states use diplomatic means to achieve their interests and focus on international law, settling disputes in international courts and utilising procedures within international organisations.²¹ This leads us to small states' third characteristic and behaviour: the tendency to follow international law and a preference for working through international institutions(Ibid, 48). The rules-based global system based on international law gives small states some capacity to curb great powers. Given the lack of resources, international organisations and concerted international efforts minimise the costs of diplomacy, providing platforms for information gathering and sharing that the small state could not have set up on its own, increasing the state's ability to influence decisions at the international level.

The fourth and final component is the adoption of a defensive posture(Ibid, 48). These states know that even if they want to change the status quo, this cannot happen via military means. Unlike the previous three characteristics, which fall into the relational approach, this component draws heavily from the quantitative tradition. Their limited resources and the substantial power differentials vis-à-vis potential aggressors lead them to adopt a defensive military strategy and develop their military capacity with defensive rather than offensive capabilities in mind. Finally, adopting a defensive posture is strategically and financially rational because small powers have regional concerns and not extra-regional aspirations. These aspirations would require developing and acquiring more sophisticated weaponry and creating sizeable naval and fighter jet fleets capable of power projection abroad.

I am proposing two alterations to Toje's conceptualisation. The first alteration concerns dependency. By incorporating the insights from the literature on asymmetry, globalisation, and the IPE of small states, I argue that apart from the security facet of dependency, there is a financial and economic aspect. The economic vulnerabilities exhibited by small states result from their disadvantageous position within the global economy, characterised by their lack of resources and the necessity of maintaining an open economy. For small states to exhibit resilience to external shocks, macroeconomic stability and market efficiency are crucial. The

²¹ This should be differentiated from claims to morality and the attainment of moral high ground. For instance, Abulof(2013). For instance two of the cases in Abulof's book, the Jews and the Afrikaners, had crafted moralising tales due to their fear of collective mortality. Nonetheless, many of their actions were not in accordance to provisions of international law. The Afrikaners were instrumental behind apartheid in South Africa while Israel is occupying land that under international law belongs to neighbouring states.

second alteration focuses on Toje's argument that small states are always status quo powers with no will to alter the international system. Although this might be true in most cases, some small states would like to see changes in international relations and alter the status quo. Critically, they will only seek to modify the status quo through the legal instruments available in the rules-based international system and not by using force since that would be a self-defeating strategy.

2.5. Conclusion

As the literature review showed, there is no consensus on defining small states. The three approaches described propose different ways of defining smallness, but none of these groupings enjoys universal acceptance within IR and small state studies. Nonetheless, this fact has not pushed back the work on small states. Some argue that this lack of a common definition has been beneficial. In the words of Maas, this "fundamental disagreement over what makes a state small has benefited the area of small states studies by providing it with conceptual flexibility to match different research designs as well as the quite substantial variations among actual small states in the world."(Maass 2009) Adopting Toje's definition will allow this work to build on the work on small states within NcR. The definition also offers an all-encompassing overview of smallness building on quantitative and relational approaches.

CHAPTER 3: NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

The following chapter will introduce NcR. NcR is the youngest strand within the realist school of thought and is the starting point of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 4. NcR is primarily a foreign policy analysis framework, and in this respect, it differs fundamentally from the structural realist focus on macro-historical explanations of international politics.²² The term NcR was coined in Gideon Rose's(1998) *World Politics* article to describe the works of Christensen, Schweller, Wohlforth and Zakaria that introduced domestic variables to explain away foreign policy outcomes that were not consistent with the prescriptions of structural realism. NcR sits between the works of classical realists and *Innenpolitikers* who used domestic politics, political economy, the nature of domestic institutions, and domestic actors' perceptions to explain foreign policy outcomes and the parsimonious and macro-level structural realist accounts that seek to explain international politics across time. NcR signalled the return of the state and the statesperson in realist thought that was prevalent in classical realism(Morgenthau 1948; Carr 1946; Niebuhr 1932; Dickinson 2015).

Taking heed of Kenneth Waltz's(1979, 121; 1996) acknowledgement that his theory is not fit to explain “why state X made a certain move last Tuesday”, NcR seeks to fill that void by offering rich accounts of foreign policy. As Juneau(2015, 17) puts it, “structural realism is not a theory of foreign policy: its dependent variables are aspects of international politics such as wars and the recurrence of the formation of balances of power. Much of structural realism is therefore characterised by a high degree of indeterminacy concerning foreign policy: it explains how structural pressures and incentives push and pull states in certain directions, but it does not, and neither does it aim to, hold as its central object of study states' external behaviour.” In this respect, NcR has been considered by many as a “natural expansion of structural realism.”²³

²² This assertion pertains to the bulk of NcR works which are works of Foreign Policy Analysis. However, there are exceptions to this rule that have tried to increase the chronological scope of NcR by expanding it to explain international politics(Ripsman et al. 2016; Kitchen 2010; 2018; Rathburn 2008; van Evera 1999). On the distinction between Foreign Policy Analysis and international politics see Kenneth N. Waltz's(1996) On the scope of Foreign Policy Analysis see the work of Valerie M. Hudson(2005).

²³ Quinn(2013) argues that NcR was at a fork. Its proponents could either choose to maintain the position of being an extension of structural realism or choose to question Waltz's primacy of the system and turn into a neo-behavioural theory that will seek to articulate new laws of state behaviour. Essentially moving away from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. Without following Quinn's approach Ripsman, Lobel and Taliaferro(2016) have challenged Waltz but not on the primacy of the system. Instead, they have pushed NcR

The causal chain of NcR is based on three levels; the international system and the relative distribution of power (independent variable), the domestic level, which forms the transmission belt (intervening variable) and the foreign policy outcome or chosen grand strategy (dependent variable). The independent variable and starting point of analysis is the international system and power distribution at a global or regional level. A state's foreign policy, grand strategy, and international ambitions are determined primarily by the position of the state in question within the international system and its power vis-à-vis other actors. As Foulon(2015) points out, the advantage of NcR is that it acknowledges the importance of a geopolitical structure that “binds” the state. The FPE’s or policymakers’ perception in Foulon’s parlance, affects “the operationalisation of that structure” and domestic economic and social interests are felt by the FPE, “but only within the context of binding geopolitical factors that constrain”(Ibid, 636).

Nonetheless, in many cases, the position of a state within the international system cannot explain why it chose a specific foreign policy or grand strategy. In these cases, the international system can only provide the scope of foreign policy choices or grand strategies the state should pursue rationally. Still, it cannot ensure that these will be followed. After all, the executives who conduct foreign policy on behalf of the state and its people are human and can make mistakes or follow suboptimal and detrimental foreign policies and grand strategies for various reasons. Therefore, to account for foreign policy outcomes, the black box of the state needs to be opened, looking at the “warp and woof” of domestic politics (Schweller 2003, 347). The state's domestic, political, institutional, and economic environment and its effects on foreign policy decision-making would need to be examined. At this point, NcR scholars can use insights of *Innenpolitik*, focusing on the impact of identities, personalities, institutions, and state-society relations. The insights from the domestic level act as intervening variables to explain why state X acted differently from the optimal path according to the independent variable or to explain state X's grand strategy shifted over a period of time. In the first instance, NcR works as a “theory of mistakes,” while in the second, it seeks to account for grand strategic and foreign policy shifts and outcomes.²⁴

to account for international politics, maintaining the position of domestic-level. Waltz(1979) would argue that this would be reductionist. Nonetheless, the capacity of NcR to account for international politics has been called into question due to the broad array of domestic-level variables which would make the systematisation of the theory difficult and for the lack of empirical cases that would support their case (Smith 2018, 746-747).

²⁴ These two pathways for NcR have been classified by Taliaferro, Ripsman and Lobell as Type I and Type II NcR. Type I corresponds to the “theory of mistakes” approach which characterises the works reviewed in Rose’s

This chapter will unfold as follows. First, the focus will be placed on the independent variable. This section will discuss the nature of the international system, power, and structural modifiers. The domestic political environment's role as an intervening variable will be presented. The focus then turns to the dependent variable and the formulation of foreign policy and grand strategy. The following section will answer to criticisms mounted against NcR while also explaining why NcR should be considered a realist framework. Finally, this chapter concludes with a short section on realist literature on small states, including uses of NcR to interpret the foreign policy of small states.

3.1. The Independent Variable: The International System, Power, and Structural Modifiers

The following section will outline the components of the independent variable(s) within an NcR framework. NcR utilises the insights of structural realism on the international system and power as the backbone of its independent variable. Hence, the point of departure for this section will be an analysis of those two concepts from a structural realist perspective. Building on those insights, Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell(2016) have also suggested that structural modifiers, non-structural systemic factors, should be considered when conceptualising the international system. Initially, the structural realist conception of a system will be provided, focusing on Waltz's accounts before explaining power. This section will end with a discussion of structural modifiers.

3.1.1. The International System

The independent variable within an NcR framework begins with the international system. Gideon Rose(1998, 146) argued that for NcR scholars, “the scope and ambition of a

article and Juneau’s strategic analysis variant. In line with Type I NcR Juneau(2023) has recently suggested that NcR can be developed into a theory of correcting mistakes. Type II NcR sought to expand the scope of what NcR can do by showing that the theory’s explanatory power can move beyond just accounting for “mistakes”. (Lobell et al. 2009; Ripsman et al., 25-32; Juneau 2015, 29-34). Building on from the assumption that the cases in which the FPE is faced with a clear threat are often rare, NcR scholars working within this group argue that NcR can explain for a greater array of foreign policy choices including grand strategic adjustment. Examples of NcR Type II works include the contributions in the Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro edited volume, Kitchen’s argument that a state’s grand strategy is a combination of the empirical assessment of the international system and a competition between strategic ideas at the domestic level. A third pathway is the nascent international politics approach or NcR Type III. This approach seeks to expand the explanatory scope of NcR by accounting for international politics. A more recent innovation is proposed by Vasileiadis(2023) who recently argued that NCR should be reformulated towards a “transitive” model looking at relative power change. In his theorization he departs from the modus operandi of Type I, II, and III NcR arguing that we should understand domestic preferences in light of the state’s structural position and by extension its power-seeking objectives, focusing instead on factors that cause systemic change and by extension affect key domestic interest groups(power generators, power consumers and policy entrepreneurs).

country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities". For NcR, the view of the international system is akin to a structural realist view. According to Kenneth Waltz, the father of structural realism, international political systems are defined by their structure and the interacting units within them. They are formed by the "coaction of self-regarding units"(Waltz 1979, 91). Those units are the primary political actors of any given era. In his account, Waltz lists city-states, empires, and nation-states(Ibid, 91). The coexistence of these similar, self-regarding units creates the system's structure. Drawing from neoclassical economics, Waltz argues that international political systems, like markets, might be individualist in origin, meaning that the participating actors do not wish to be constrained and wish to cater to their interests. However, the very coexistence of these actors and their relations leads them to be constrained by one another(Ibid, 91). In essence, the structure they unwillingly create by their coexistence simultaneously constrains them. This characteristic of a system is consistent with the definition provided by Robert Jervis(1997, 6), who argued that we could talk of a system when the "entire system exhibits properties and behaviours that are different from those of the parts".

According to Waltz(1979), political systems are defined by the answers to three questions. First, what is the ordering principle of the system, how do units of the system relate to one another? This relationship can be hierarchical akin to the one within states where a head of government sits at the top, and other actors are in lower positions of power, often sharing power based on constitutional arrangements. In the international realm, however, no government orders states to do one thing or the other. Hence, the ordering principle of the international system is anarchic. Second, how different are the units existing within the political system? As mentioned earlier, for Waltz and realists of all stripes, the conflict group is the primary actor in international politics across time. That group in the present international system is the state. Third, what is the relative distribution of capabilities among the units? Namely, how much power do states hold that can then be used to pursue their interests in the international arena and to extract outcomes vis-à-vis other states? An examination of that distribution of capabilities will lead us to define the international system as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar based on how many system-defining states exist at a given point in time.

Power

The distribution of capabilities is interlinked with the question of power in international affairs. Power is central to realism since realists self-describe themselves as the theorists of power politics. For realists, power is primarily linked to what Baldwin(2016, 77) describes as

the “elements of national power approach”, which understands power as the possession of certain material, quantifiable and tangible capabilities in the “form of population, natural resource, industrial capacity, weaponry, navies and so on”.²⁵ This approach contradicts the relational approach espoused by Laswell, Kaplan, Dahl and others (Baldwin 2016, 129-130; Schmidt & Juneau 2012). According to Dahl (1957), power should be conceptualised based on its outcome, namely, on the capacity of actor A to make actor B do something that they would otherwise not do. Some realists – especially classical and neoclassical realists – acknowledge some of this approach's insights but reject it as a whole (Schmidt & Juneau 2012, 62-63). Wohlforth (1994, 3) argued that such an approach would lead to tautologies, thus, of “little use for international political theory”. Mearsheimer (2001, 57-60) stressed that the relational approach is problematic because it equates power with outcomes. However, history, he argues, is filled with examples where the most powerful state in material terms could not prevail due to non-material factors. In this respect, outcomes, and power ought to be distinguished. Despite the commonalities in power's nature, classical and structural realists have conceptualised its usage and effects in different ways. NeR builds on the insights of both approaches while offering some important nuances on utilising the concept within realism.

Classical and structural realists have divergent views on where the drive towards power accumulation stems. For classical realists, states and those who act on their behalf seek power because power-seeking is an inherent characteristic of human nature.²⁶ According to Niebuhr, survival is a natural human instinct. Hence, power is sought because survival can be achieved through it. The “will-to-live becomes the will-to-power” (Niebuhr 1932, 18). Human nature is also central to Morgenthau's theory of international politics. According to his first law of political realism, “politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (Morgenthau 1978, 4). Morgenthau and Niebuhr, like Thucydides and

²⁵ Baldwin is critical of this approach. Drawing from Dahl's relational approach, Baldwin (2016, 77) argues that while an actor might possess resources that does not mean that the actor in question is either skilled or motivated to use those resources.

²⁶ The exception here is Carr. Within Carr's account human nature is front and centre just like in the accounts of Morgenthau, Niebuhr, Machiavelli and Thucydides. However, his view of human nature is not monolithic. Although Carr famously attacks the utopian politicians and academics, who in the interwar years paid no attention to the factor of power in the conduct of international politics, he is by no means an advocate of a cynical, static and pessimistic view of human nature. Instead, his theory is progressive – believing in change – and dialectical with utopianism being contrasted to the cynical realism described by Niebuhr. These conflicting human natures exist within societies creating dynamics that lead to particular definitions of the national interest and to political action, both domestic and international. In his words, “The utopian who dreams that it is possible to eliminate self-assertion from politics and to base a political system on morality alone is just as wide of the mark as the Realist who believes that altruism is an illusion and that all political action is based on self-seeking” (Carr 1946, 97). See the works of Babik (2013), and Molloy (2006, 51-74).

Machiavelli, viewed humans as self-serving beings that sought to influence and control their environment and others continuously.²⁷ Thus, power for classical realists is a confluence of many different factors that can be used to gain control and influence. In Niebuhr's words, man could “create an endless variety of types and combinations of power, from pure reason to pure physical force”(Niebuhr et al. 2007, 92). Based on this reading, it is tough to distinguish the role of the divergent elements in the conceptualisations of power by classical realists.

Morgenthau(1978, 80-108) argued that power comprises static and dynamic elements contributing to the nation's overall power. The stable elements are quantitative and include geography, natural resources, military capability, demography, and industry and are akin to the national power approach defined by Baldwin. The changeable elements are qualitative and non-fungible national morale, quality of government, influence, leadership, and diplomacy.

Morgenthau argued that a leader could use material and immaterial power to effect desired outcomes. This explains the centrality and importance of statecraft, diplomacy, and leadership in his understanding of power. As Schmidt and Juneau(2012, 64) point out, “Morgenthau is ambiguous in that he appears to endorse both aspects of the relational and the elements of national power approach”.

Similarly, Carr argued that while power is not divisible, there are three main elements to it;(1) military power, which he viewed as the most important element; (2) economic power, both because of its association with military power but also because of its capacity to coerce in its own right. Carr points to the coercive economic measures and trade wars that defined 18th and 19th-century mercantilism in Europe; (3) “power over the opinion of others”. In this latter facet of power, Carr argues that the capacity to influence the masses through rhetoric and propaganda is vital because it enhances and ensures military and popular mobilisation, which is key to both military and economic power(Carr 1946, 14-15, 32-33, 108). Although understanding the first two facets of power relates to quantifiable static characteristics, the third is dynamic, non-fungible and qualitative, thus closer to relational understandings of power.

Structural realism diverges in considerable ways from classical realism's understanding of the source and rationale for power accumulation in international politics. Structural realists argue that states seek power because the structure of the international system pushes and shoves them to act in that way. Scholars like Waltz(1979) and Mearsheimer(2001) argued that the

²⁷ In the case of Niebuhr, humans are not individually malevolent, egotistical beings. However, their need to interact, survive and thrive within societies leads them to immoral and egotistical behaviors (Niebuhr 1932; Schmidt 2005).

pervasive insecurity brought about by the lack of a global government meant that states would be driven towards building up their internal capabilities. For structural realists, the need to accumulate power is not related to an innate human desire but to the necessity of survival within an anarchic international system. The argument goes that a state's ability to survive in this anarchic self-help system is pertinent to how much power a state possesses. Power is understood in terms of material capabilities. These material capabilities are connected to a state's military, economy and industrial capacity, geography, and population(Ibid, 55).

Although structural realists adopt similar understandings of power, they disagree on the optimal target based on the structure of the international system. For Waltz(1989, 40) and defensive realists, states ought to be security-maximisers, meaning they should accumulate enough power to ensure their security. The accumulation of excessive power would be detrimental because it would create a counter-balancing coalition that could disrupt the balance of power, lead to war, and possibly infringe on the state's sovereignty and existence(Ibid). On the other hand, offensive realists like John Mearsheimer(2001) argue that it is impossible ever to know how much power is enough to ensure a state's security. Therefore, a state needs to look for ways to increase its power constantly(Ibid, 61). Mearsheimer reaches the same conclusion as classical realists.²⁸ However, in his account, this behaviour is the result of systemic pressures and not of human nature or other reasons related to domestic politics.

Although central to his argument, Waltz does not properly define power and spends few words on the subject. What is highly problematic with Waltz's account is that he assumes that states can easily transform one source of power into another to suit the state's needs and interests. As Guzzini(2004) argues, it seems that for Waltz, power is as fungible as money. However, the reality is far from it. Mearsheimer's offensive realism, on the other hand, attempts to remedy this fault. Using the same phrase as Carr(1946, 109), Mearsheimer(2001, 56) views military capabilities as “the ultima ratio” of international relations. The size and strength of a state's military forces are the most crucial aspect of the state's overall power, while states with a powerful land army are in an advantageous position. According to Mearsheimer(2001, 51) other sources of material capabilities like the economy, population, and natural resources as “latent” power, which can be transformed into military power. Mearsheimer, unlike Waltz, does not assume a high level of fungibility of power, citing many instances in the past where states

²⁸ The classical realist whose prescriptions are closer to Mearsheimer(2021, 21-22) is Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson(2015).

could not transform the economic and demographic prowess into a military force. The problem is that Mearsheimer does not care to answer why this is the case.

In many respects, NcR has looked into answering this question and other questions related to foreign policy and grand strategy. NcR accepts the importance of international anarchy and the distribution of capabilities at the systemic level but does not ascribe causal power to those elements. Instead, it utilises structural realist insights to explain and understand the constraints placed upon a state's FPE. Structural realism, in this respect, moves away from being a theory of causality in international politics and becomes a theory of constraints(Rathbun 2008). Most NcR scholarship can be seen as supplementary to structural realism because it moves away from the macro-historical level of international politics – the focus of structural realism - towards the short and medium level of foreign policy decision-making and seeks to answer questions that structural realism is not fit to answer(Ibid). In doing so, NcR accepts that material capabilities are foundational and determine the bandwidth of available foreign policy options to the FPE. Finally, even if the FPE follows the optimal pathway according to structural realist prescriptions, the particular way in which this has happened is determined by domestic factors.

However, the understanding of power within NcR does not remain at the international analysis level but can also be located at national and individual levels of analysis(Schmidt & Juneau 2012, 67-8). As we shall see below in the section covering the intervening variables, NcR has dealt with questions of fungibility of power. For instance, Zakaria's(1998) work differentiated between the total power of a nation and the power that the state can extract and turn into military power. Additionally, Wohlforth(1993), Byman and Pollack(2001) argue that leaders often make calculations and act based on their perceptions, idiosyncrasies, and belief systems. In those cases, the perception of power rather than power itself plays a greater role. Some actors might be viewed as more or less powerful than they are. Apart from the fact that perceptions matter, one can also conclude that who leads the state matters. Different leaders might have chosen different pathways. In short, understanding power and foreign policy is not as parsimonious as structural realists would have liked. To understand and interpret their machinations and outcomes, one cannot get the full picture based on the bird-eye-view of the international system.

Structural Modifiers

Building on the structural realist conception of the international system, scholars have identified several non-structural systemic factors that modify the effect of the system's structure. These 'structural modifiers' modify the system's structure by alternating the effects of anarchy and the relative power distribution, thus influencing the international system's external behaviour (Ripsman et al. 2016, 39-41). This section provides an overview of the literature on structural modifiers and defines them as material in nature and not necessarily system-wide in effect.

Structural modifiers responded to the abstract notions of anarchy and distribution of capabilities that characterised Waltz's conception of the international system's structure. Nye (1988) and Buzan (1993) were the first to open the discussion as a critique of Waltz. They argued that there were elements that Waltz attributed to the unit level that belonged to the system level and had nothing to do with anarchy or polarity. Nye (1988, 250) identified two categories of non-structural systemic causal variables that “alter the calculation of national interests without necessarily affecting the distribution of power among actors”. The first category, “non-power incentives,” includes global economic activity, technological innovation, patterns of transnational interactions and alterations in norms and institutions. The second category is related to the international system's actors' ability to communicate and cooperate. Buzan (1993) made similar claims with the concept “interaction capacity”. Buzan (1993, 72) argued that these non-structural systemic factors affect states' ability and willingness to interact and “determine what types and levels of interaction are possible and desired”. He categorises these factors as “technology” and “shared norms and organisations” (Ibid, 1993, 72). These factors are system-wide, providing meaning to the system and interaction. Buzan, unlike Nye, argued that these variables are not interaction or process by themselves but affect the depth and quality of the interaction.

Snyder (1996) was the first realist to respond to these theoretical developments by acknowledging that the elements to which Buzan and Nye referred were rightly thought of as systemic rather than unit-level. He described them as “structural modifiers.” These systemic variables “modify the effects of the more basic structural elements on the interaction process, but they are not interaction itself” (Ibid). For Snyder (1996, 169), these structural modifiers are external and systemic but not normative, thus, rejecting Nye's claim for international institutions. Structural modifiers are, therefore, material, and systemic, affecting states similarly whilst being distinct from the number of units and the distribution of capabilities that

define Waltz's structure. Snyder gives the example of military technology as a structural modifier. He notes that the diffusion of military technology is not a unit characteristic but a systemic variable because technological change can potentially affect all great powers(Ibid, 170-171).

Similar points are advanced by Van Evera(1999), who argued that the likelihood of interstate conflict is increased primarily by the distribution of particular types of military power. In contrast, the aggregate structure of power or polarity is not as important. He focuses on four systemic but non-structural variables that intensify the security dilemma; i) the offence-defence balance, ii) the magnitude and frequency of power fluctuations that provide relative periods of either vulnerability or opportunity, iii) the size of first-move advantages, and iv) the ability of states to translate territorial conquest into further gains through the exploitation of newly acquired resources(Ibid, 10). Like Snyder, Van Evera's systemic variables affect the whole system.

Building upon these insights, Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell(2016, 38-43) argue that the rates of technological diffusion, the offence-defence balance and geography are structural modifiers. These non-structural systemic elements modify the effect of the system's structure on the "parameters of strategic interactions and the likely external behaviours of individual units"(Ibid,41). Nonetheless, they do not accept that structural modifiers have a uniform effect across the system affecting the behaviour of all states in an even manner. Some structural modifiers only affect certain dyads of states, regions, or states with similar power capabilities. For instance, the offence-defence balance is not a modifier that affects the whole system, but, in most cases, it affects the intensity of the security dilemma within a certain group of states or a certain geographic region. Similarly, geography operates as a structural modifier because it creates constraints and provides opportunities for some units, determining patterns of interaction, as Walt(1987) has showcased. However, these constraints and opportunities rarely pertain to the whole system. Physical distance leads to the loss-of-strength gradient, and the existence or lack of topographical barriers -making borders indefensible - affects the regional security environment not the whole system(Ibid, 23-4, Mearsheimer 2001, 114-28; Mouritzen & Olesen 2010; Ripsman et al. 2016. 41-3).

3.2. Intervening Variables: The Domestic Environment and the Foreign Policy Executive

The second level in NcR's causal chain opens the black box of the state. This set of variables is used to conceptualise the "transmission belt" through which the systemic signals linked to threats and opportunities are filtered, leading to the dependent variable: the foreign policy outcome. Neoclassical realists have identified four sub-groups of intervening variables; (1) domestic institutions, (2) state-society relations, (3) ideas and strategic culture and (4) leader's images.²⁹ These variables are not mutually exclusive; for instance, the nature of the state's institutions affects state-society relations, in turn, its ability to harness economic power. At the same time, the cognitive environment of a leader and her personal bias might result from a prevalent identity within society or within the social class or region the leader originates from. This section builds on the discussion on power in the previous section, highlighting that to understand power in international affairs, one should open the black box of the state. At that level, the fungibility of power can be assessed, as well as the understanding leaders have about its distribution in the international system at a particular historical period.

At this point, the state's FPE plays a critical role, which is the closed circle of individuals entrusted with strategizing and enacting foreign policy and grand strategy. The FPE sits at the "junction of the state and the international system" and has access to privileged information regarding the international system but also the capabilities of the state (Taliaferro et al. 2009, 25). The capacity of the FPE to act autonomously differs from state to state. The FPE often has to bargain with other state institutions or powerful political and economic groups. Additionally, who gets to be a member of the FPE can tremendously impact policy based on their psychological makeup, belief system, and ideas. Within this perplexing process of bargaining and perception, the national interest comes into being, with the FPE having the critical role of navigating the state through the international system.

Although most scholarship within NcR uses the term "intervening variables" to refer to these factors operating at the state level, Elias Götz (2021) rightly argues that the role of intervening variables is not the same in every NcR work. Götz (2021) identifies three types of intervening variables: i) moderating factors, ii) complementary factors and iii) primary causes.

²⁹ Not all neoclassical realists agree on the nomenclature, however, most point to the same reasons. Ripsman, Lobell and Taliaferro (2016) use the nomenclature I use above. Similarly, Foulon (2017, 6-9) talks of policy maker's cognitive filters, domestic ideology, interest group pressure and the extractive capacity of the state. Juneau on the other hand refers to ideas, identity, individuals and institutions. Juneau's (2007) conceptualisation is problematic because it omits the pressure emanating from interest groups based on economic reasons. As Narizny (2007), Trubowitz (2011), Lenin (2010), and Anievas (2011) and others have indicated the economic interests of powerful domestic groups are capable of influencing the FPE and consequently the foreign policy strategy of the state, in spite of, the pressures of the international system.

Moderating factors condition the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and specify whether states can effectively respond to systemic stimuli(Ibid, 3). The treatment of intervening variables in the works of Zakaria(1998), Christensen(1996) and Schweller(1998) falls into this category (Götz 2021, 4). Complementary factors are less powerful than moderating factors since they account for the “residual variance” not accounted for by the independent variable. In this case, the system pushes the FPE to adopt a certain strategy, but the tools and ways in which this strategy is adopted result from domestic factors(Götz 2021, 5).

The third group that uses intervening variables as primary causes is arguably trickier(Götz 2021, 6). Neoclassical realists like Ripsman, Lobell, Talliafero(2016, 43-57) and Rathbun(2008) argue that in many cases, the independent variable is not determinant of the foreign policy pathway a state should follow. Depending on the state's strategic environment, the FPE might be more or less constrained to act in a specific manner. According to Ripsman(2009), if there is a high threat level, then the state will act like a rational unitary actor; however, if the level of threat is low, then there will be a greater array of options available to the FPE, and the choice of strategy will be pertinent on the domestic variables. In these indeterminate cases, the intervening variables become the primary causes of foreign policy. Nonetheless, within some scholars' research designs, intervening variables are, in reality, independent variables in disguise, making the heavy explanatory lifting. In those cases, the work is not neoclassical realist because its causal chain is bottom-up akin to analytical liberalism and not top-down.

3.2.1. Domestic Institutions

Domestic institutions are key in the foreign policy decision-making of the state. A state's institutions, laws, rules, and regulations based on constitutional provisions establishes the domestic environment where actors battle over policy. Furthermore, the actors that can play a role and their place in foreign policy decision-making are determined based on the aforementioned factors. Additionally, and connected to the discussion on power, institutions are key in the capacity of the state to transform latent power sources located in the industrial capacity, the population, and the national resources of the state into military power. The point of departure in understanding foreign-policy decision-making processes starts with the state's regime type in question. Based on the state's regime and on the constitutional make-out of that state, the executive will have more or less space to enact foreign policy.

In some cases, important veto players exist within foreign policy.³⁰ As Ripsman(2009) argues, within democratic states, the FPE's autonomy is pertinent to the independence from the legislative body and from the opposition. On the other hand, in autocratic regimes, domestic institutions determine the scope the ruling elite has to enact its authority and the extent to which it should consider the interests of powerful business groups, the military and other societal interests(Ripsman et al. 2016, 77).

In addition, different institutions involved in foreign and security policy might have different views and preferences on what strategy should be pursued. This divergence in views could result from different ideas and understandings of the situation and the state's necessities.³¹ However, different institutions could place their personal and organisational interest above national and collective interests(Hudson 2005, 8). Within this competitive domestic environment, the foreign policy agreed upon will result from bargaining between the interests of different institutions and actors. Since these parochial views are neither expert nor rational but self-serving, the foreign policy outcome will not reflect the ideal choice based on the national interest, thus leading to suboptimal foreign policy choices(Allison 1971; Allison & Halperin 1972; Welch 1992). Instead, it will reflect the distribution of political power within and among institutions. In his seminal work on the Cuban Missile Crisis, Graham Alisson(1971) challenges the rational unitary actor assumption in foreign policy, arguing that an examination of both the US and the Soviet actions during the crisis cannot be explained via the rational unitary actor approach but rather by an examination of organisational processes and the bargains between competing institutions.

Institutions also offer the backbone and the tool via which the state can extract resources and turn them into tangible coercive power in the form of military force. Zakaria(1998) argues that efficient extraction is based on suitable state structures and institutions that enable the FPE to extract as much wealth as possible for its purposes. Zakaria builds upon the insights of Mastanduno, Lake and Ikenberry(1989, 462-463), who argued that a state could either have resource extraction models based on centralised economic planning and nationalisation or promote and facilitate social wealth with the government extracting wealth through taxation. In the case of the US in the late 19th and early 20th century, the state's federal structures were strengthened, with institutions like the civil service and the military enjoying greater cohesion. The state also increased its scope of responsibility, creating revenue through taxation and its

³⁰ On veto players in the context of this work see section in Chapter 4.

³¹ On the role of ideas within institutions see the section on ideas and strategic culture below.

autonomy from society. The US FPE was now able to mobilise resources more effectively. The result was increased state power, allowing a successful shift from isolationism to a more assertive and expansionary international posture. Generally, when in need of power, states choose strategies based not only on the state's extractive capacity but also on the transformation rate from one power source to the others(Brawley 2009b). Again, the role of state's institutions will determine, along with other factors, whether internal balancing is feasible or whether other strategies like bandwagoning or external balancing should be considered.

Institutions also matter in ensuring mobilisation and the creation of mass armies. The mass army is pertinent to the state's capacity to extract wealth, thus investing in more military equipment. Additionally, a vital characteristic of the mass army is its ability to maintain its form and fighting capacity despite the adversities of prolonged warfare(Posen 1993). To achieve this, apart from the state's ability to innovate or imitate cutting-edge military innovation, it requires soldiers to be trained fast and organised quickly. For training and organisation to happen, the indoctrination to the standard narrative of state identity is vital. In Posen's words, "two aspects of nationalism-literacy and ideology-are subject to state action through schools, media, and indoctrination within the military"(Ibid, 84). States promote compulsory primary education to spread literacy in a standard version of the spoken language to enhance the technical military utility of their soldiers. In doing so, they spread the "culture" and the interpretation of history central to the national identity" (Ibid, 84-85).

3.2.2. State-Society Relations

Within the NcR tradition, scholars have drawn attention to the relationship between the state and society(Schweller 2006; Taliaferro 2006; Brawley 2009a; 2009b). To conceptualise this intervening variable, I will also draw from the non-Realist tradition of *Innenpolitik*.³² The rationale for this is that insights from that tradition have already been considered useful by NcR scholars(Taliaferro et al. 2009). NcR scholars like Zakaria(1998), Taliaferro(2006), Schweller(2006) and Brawley(2009a; 2009b) focused on the extractive capabilities of the FPE, i.e. the capacity of the FPE to extract wealth from the economy and transform that wealth into military power. In this respect, these scholars criticize the mechanical way structural realists

³² In using the term *Innenpolitik* I agree with Trubowitz(2011, 23) that the *Innenpolitik* tradition is a wide ranging one, consisting of a family of theories rather than a single lineage as in the case of realism. In many cases these theories have considerably different underlying assumptions and scope. For example, Lenin's(2010) Marxist theory of imperialism and capital accumulation, the diversionary war theory(Levy 1989) and Trubowitz's(1998) work on how regional diversity and competition affects the formation of the national interest and FP belong to the *Innenpolitik* tradition.

expect the state to mobilise resources seamlessly and transform them from latent power into military force to serve defensive or offensive goals. To this end, Zakaria(1998, 17-18) made the important distinction between state power – the power that the government can extract and use for a sufficient military buildup to achieve its international ends – and national power – the nation's whole power.

Dealing with the question of underbalancing, Schweller(2006, 48, 54) postulates that the mobilisation of the state's extractive capacity is pertinent to the institutional structure of the state and the existence of elite consensus regarding the nature of the threat. In the case of elite fragmentation- i.e. leaders, bureaucrats, and elite societal groups disagree either on the nature of the threat or on the appropriate response- the state will be unable to mobilise resources effectively and efficiently, thus, leading to a suboptimal response. For this reason, a harmony of interests between society and the state is also vital(Ibid; Lobell 2009).

Nonetheless, for such harmony to exist, the preferences of domestic groups and actors need to align as much as possible. Scholars working on the political economy of grand strategy have argued that the differing interests of key economic groups can push foreign policy towards specific pathways to meet the interests of these groups. Brawley(2009a; 2009b) argues that the nature of the external threat, the internal necessities of a state's economy, and the perception among elites on the transformation rate from economic resources to military power will dictate the grand strategies chosen by the FPE. Within this context, Brawley(2009a, 91-94) argues that the British government understood the need to balance against the German threat by investing in anti-air and anti-naval capabilities because the attack would come from the air and the sea. It did not invest in creating a vast continental force able to counter the Nazis in continental Europe because it lacked the economic capacity to do so, especially when it did not coordinate appropriately with the USSR(Ibid). Furthermore, the lack of coordination with the USSR and France led all three states to choose strategies that aligned with their economic conditions. However, they were ineffective in halting the Nazis during the early stages of WWII.

On the other hand, *Innenpolitik's* approaches to political economy's role reject the importance of the international system's structure and argue that foreign policy results from preferences aggregation of key domestic groups which can influence the state. Moravscik's(1997) analytical liberalism identifies the preferences of domestic groups as the most important variable in interpreting and predicting foreign policy. Building on Moravscik's work, Narizny(2007) argues that the grand strategic choices of Great Britain and the US between the 1860s to the eve of WWII resulted from the preferences of important economic

groups that could sway elections in both states. Similarly, Trubowitz(1998) illustrated that the voting patterns of Senators and Representative in the US Congress on matters of foreign policy correlated highly with the preferences and interests of their constituents.

From a Marxist perspective, the focus on key business elites and their capacity to influence the government and its foreign policy has been prevalent in the writings of Lenin(2010). Building on these insights, Alexander Anievas(2011) has argued that the policy of appeasement against Nazi Germany was partly tied to the economic interests and preferences of British financial elites of the City and the Bank of England. These elites pressed the government to limit rearmament and favour appeasement vis-à-vis Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan because extensive rearmament would disrupt free-trade and global supply chains(Ibid, 611-614). Anievas's(2011, 611) account builds on the Marxist literature on the encroachment of capital and state, arguing that state managers were “imbued state managers with a specific conception of political economy”. Accounts by David Harvey(2006) and Toby Dodge(2006) have also explained the US invasion of Iraq based on the oil industry's interests, the necessity of opening Iraq’s market to the global economy and allowing capitalism’s expansion.

The difference between NcR and *Innenpolitik* on state-society relations and the political economy’s role in grand strategic formation is that the former argues that there is an optimal foreign policy pathway that should be pursued based on international conditions. At the same time, the other does not question what ideal foreign policy should look like. For instance, the *Innenpolitik* approach espoused by Narizny(2007) interprets and offers some predictive capacity of what foreign policy would look like based on the economic interests of the supporters of ruling coalitions but does not tell us whether that was the right foreign policy pathway. In the case of NcR, using structural realism’s dictates at the independent variable level creates a conceptual yardstick for assessing foreign policy. Ultimately, NcR is a top-down approach, while *Innenpolitik* remains a bottom-up approach.

3.2.3. The perception of the FPE

Leaders can misperceive systemic signals or miscalculate the eventual impact of their policies, thus, leading to FP blunders(Jervis 1976, 14-5; Khong 1992). Like all humans, leaders have been psychologically conditioned by their upbringing, life experiences and education, among other factors. Consequently, the aforementioned provide them with a core set of beliefs, values and ideas that shape their world and how they understand and perceive the international system and interpret systemic stimuli. Building upon these insights, realists have sought to

distinguish between the actual power at the disposal of leaders and what they perceive is at their disposal. Wohlforth(1993, 26-8) argues that the balance of power should be understood through how leaders perceive power and its balance. What IR theorists have outlined as the balance of power has four distinct components; i) what people understand as power, ii) what is the actual distribution of power within the international system, iii) how the balance of power works and iv) prestige of the state's international status and its ability to influence international politics(Ibid, 1993, 26-8). Wohlforth(1993) illustrates that to understand the Soviet grand strategy during the Cold War, one should not merely examine the material distribution of power between the two superpowers and their blocs but should seek to understand the worldviews and perceptions of Soviet policymakers. In the end, those perceptions led the USSR to favour military growth at the expense of economic growth, leading to its demise.

Similarly, Leffler(1992) and Brands(2014) argued that US grand strategy in the Cold War was primarily dictated by US policymakers' perception of the distribution of power rather than the actual distribution of power. Brands' approach, which combined perception with groupthink theory, highlighted that these FP makers often neglected contradictory information or mispresent it to suit their worldviews. Taliaferro(2006) has also argued that elites usually do not accept the idea of sunk costs in their state's status, wealth, and relative power after international blunders. Consequently, they seek to recoup their losses by supporting failed FP endeavours, particularly international interventions. Aaron Friedberg(1988) critiques neorealists' mechanical way in which changes in international power distribution are supposed to be immediately interpreted and acknowledged by policymakers at the state level. Friedberg argues that usually, there is a "delay" effect with FP makers being slow in shifting their policies under the novel power distribution. Consequently, this slow reaction could lead to suboptimal FP and military decisions. Finally, Zakaria's(1998, 45) central hypothesis is that leaders seek expansion when they perceive a relative increase in state power.

From a political economy perspective, leader's images and perceptions are also vital. According to Brawley(2009b), leaders might falsely understand how long it would take them to extract enough wealth from their state's economy to build up military strength to counter an international threat. Furthermore, Brawley's(2009b) conceptualisation contains a threat perception element in conjunction with a timeframe. Leaders ought to correctly perceive the time they need to mobilise their resources and when an external actor will become a threat.

Finally, the personality traits, beliefs, and characteristics of the members of the FPE are vital. Byman and Pollack(2001) argued that, in many cases, the idiosyncrasies and

personalities of leaders matter in international relations. The nature and psychological condition of the leader become crucial in cases where she is allowed to wield a great deal of power due to the lack of constitutional and institutional constraints on their power, particularly in matters of military and FP decision-making. This point is illustrated by the fact that all the individuals they chose as case studies were authoritarian leaders. In these cases, the “operational codes” of leaders and the ways they affect FP decision-making need to be considered (Leites 1951; Holsti 1967; George 1969).

We need to understand leaders' instrumental and political beliefs, how they view themselves and the enemy, and their ideas on strategy and tactics. These operational codes and “master beliefs” can affect how leaders “process systemic stimuli” (Ripsman et al., 64). A recent contribution by Meibauer (2023) has also made the argument that this variable can benefit from utilising history as a “knowledge structure” which in turn gives rise and explains the worldviews of leaders. The FPE, according to Meibauer (2023, 355) “interprets history or taps into existing, collective historical narratives per [its] own predilections, experiences, beliefs and socio-cultural background”.

3.2.4. Ideas and Strategic Culture

Ideas and the state's strategic culture can affect the way a state understands and responds to systemic pressures. An important caveat regarding this set of variables is to differentiate it from the perception of the FPE. Importantly, as Meibauer (2020) suggests “integrating ideational factors in positivist and materialist approaches to state behaviour requires: (1) distinguishing conceptually between interests and ideation as well as between individual beliefs and social ideas; and (2) addressing challenges of operationalisation and measurability”.

According to Nicholas Kitchen (2010; 2012), ideas can play an important part in the foreign policy decision-making process at three levels; (1) individual, (2) institutional and (3) societal. In this section, the latter two will be covered as the individual level has been covered in the section covering the leader's images. The distinction between organisational culture within bureaucratic institutions like the military or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and strategic culture in broader societal terms is vital to understanding the role of ideas and strategic culture (Ripsman et al. 66). The latter relates to the norms and ideas embedded within society (Kupchan, 1994). In this sense, the understanding of strategic culture used here encompasses Snyder's (1977, 8) definition of strategic culture being “the sum of ideas,

conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community share". However, it moves further from it to include considerations pertinent to society.

Whether at the institutional or societal levels, strategic culture implies the existence of assumptions, ideas, and norms on how the state should act in international politics. The expectations are created to constrain the state's FPE because some policies are deemed acceptable while others are, in some cases, vehemently rejected. Therefore, even if the FPE has read and understood systemic signals correctly, thus, understanding which is the optimal foreign policy choice, it might be unable to choose the right policy because powerful institutional actors reject it due to the embedded institutional culture or because they would be viewed as unacceptable by the general public.

Constructivists have emphasised the importance of ideas within institutions, scholars working on epistemic communities and others (Checkel 1997; Finnenmore 1996; Haas 1992; Hall 1993; Drezner 2000). Scholars have interrogated the role of ideas within the military to determine their effects on the state's military doctrine. In contrast, others have interrogated the impact of institutions with a rigid ideational framework on foreign policy (Drezner 2000). Building on the insights from the literature on bureaucratic politics, competition between state institutions might arise not only from parochial interests but because of fundamentally different ideas on policy. Additionally, institutions with established cultures have important socialising propensities capable of altering new members' views towards conformity with the norm.

The case of the Iraq war is, in some ways, illustrative of both points. Within the second Bush administration, divergent views existed on whether regime change in Iraq would benefit US Foreign Policy (Smith 2008). This could be seen at the level of individuals but also at an institutional level. On the one hand, the State Department, led by Collin Powell, was sceptical of the invasion, while the Pentagon under Donald Rumsfeld was pushing for it (Ibid, 99-101). The State Department had a long-standing tradition of being sceptical on the use of hard power, which seemed to rub on Richard Armitage, the State Department's no. 2. Armitage, before his position in government, was in favour of regime change in Iraq (Ibid, 100). However, upon taking up his position, Armitage mellowed his position, and in the runup to the invasion, he was closer to the view of Powell than those of Rumsfeld or Cheney.

At the level of national strategic culture, dominant ideologies can have the restrictive capacities mentioned earlier at all of the three levels identified by Kitchen. For instance,

nationalism is useful in mobilising the state's workforce and extraction capacity because it increases social cohesion and threat perception (Posen 1993; Lobell 2009). This capacity-building becomes extremely useful in multipolar power distributions when there are multiple threats, and the possibility of conflict increases (Kitchen 2012). Schweller (2004, 185-186) noted that fascism, an ultra-nationalist ideology, allowed Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy to maximise war mobilisation. On the other hand, nationalism will make certain options unavailable to the FPE, like bandwagoning with the perennial enemy, even if based on the distribution of power in the international system, which would be the most suitable grand strategic choice.

In a similar vein, Mallet, and Kitchen (2023) have argued for the inclusion of policy paradigms *a la* Kuhn (1962) as a potential variable within the broader set of ideas and strategic culture. Policy paradigms are understood as "institutionalised frameworks of ideas" that "govern processes of learning and debate within a particular policy community" (Ibid,). The existence of a policy paradigm can restrict conceivable strategic choices. In this way, the existence of policy paradigms can explain the persistence of a prolonged and counterproductive foreign policy as the case of US foreign policy towards Cuba, which is chosen by Mallet and Kitchen as their case study.

3.3. The Dependent Variable: Foreign Policy and Influence Maximisation

Foreign policy and grand strategic outcomes are the third level of NcR's causal chain and its dependent variable. Both classical and structural realists had predetermined ideas about what an ideal foreign policy should look like. The other important point that NcR makes on the issue of power is that power is not an end in itself, as classical and offensive realists would have it. At the same time, it is not necessarily a tool for security maximisation, as defensive realists would argue. Instead, power is used towards influence maximization (Juneau 2015, 49-54). NcR, like classical realism, builds from the assumption that capabilities shape intentions. The stronger a state gets, the more likely it is to try to shape its external environment according to its interests. The nature of those interests is not simply a result of the pressures of the international system's structure but also of the domestic processes through which those interests are formulated and subsequently pursued. In this respect, influence maximisation will mean different things for different states at different times. For some, it might be security maximisation, while for others, it might be hegemony. The critical thing to remember is that a state might choose any foreign policy pathway it wishes. The extent to which that pathway will be rewarded or punished is based on the threats and opportunities emanating from the

international system. Failure to defend against threats will be punished, and the ability to grasp opportunities will be rewarded.

An ideal strategy of influence maximisation would “adopt and implement policies seeking the alignment of the international environment with national interests”(Rathbun 2008). Based on Rathbun’s approach, structural realism can be used to deduct what a state’s foreign policy should be and use that yardstick to measure whether a state has lived up to expectations. A successful strategy of influence maximisation would aim to increase the options available to the FPE(Juneau 2015, 49-54).

Those options could be security-maximising strategies like balancing or bandwagoning, but they could also be strategies to alter the nature of the regional or international order. For instance, the creation of regional organisations, the establishment of trade regimes or the agreement of new treaties altering prevalent norms and aspects of international law are also part of possible foreign policy strategies. At the international level, when there is a low threat level and consequently a low level of restriction on the FPE, such options become available(Ibid, 53). Of course, to enforce them, one needs power or at least the tacit or vocal enablement of the actors who wield it.

Schweller identifies eleven strategies in his study of tripolarity based on whether international conditions favour threats or opportunities. Six of the strategies are in response to threats (balancing, bandwagoning, binding, distancing, buck-passing, and engagement), while five are in response to opportunities (jackal bandwagoning, piling on, wave of the future, contagion, and holding the balance)(Schweller 1998, 65-83). Juneau(2015, 53-4), whose application of NcR on Iranian foreign policy is closer to the theory of mistakes approach, argues that there are five possible ways in which intentions and capabilities might diverge, which correspond to “policies of over-reach (ambitions outweigh capabilities), understretch (capabilities exceed ambitions), refusing to let go (capabilities and ambitions are declining, but capabilities are declining faster), accelerated retrenchment (capabilities and ambitions are declining, but ambitions are declining faster), or Hail Mary (capabilities are declining, but ambitions suddenly spike)”.

3.4. Criticisms and Response

This section will seek to answer some of the most important criticisms raised against realism and NcR. Those primarily are concerned with either the non-scientific nature of the realist research program or with the introduction of non-realist variables within realist works

that essentially render them non-realist. The first part is devoted to the critiques mounted against realism by Vasquez, Legro and Moravcsik. Subsequently, a response to those critiques will be provided while outlining the three tenets of realism to which all realist strands adhere.

The end of the Cold War and the inability of the dominant structural realist paradigm to predict the downfall of the USSR brought the realist tradition under fire. The first important critique was made by John Vasquez, who argued that realism was a “degenerate” research program. Using Imre Lakatos’ work on the distinction between “degenerate” and “progressive” research programs, Vasquez(1997) argues that the realist paradigm is “degenerate” lacking scientific status. Lakatos(1970) argued that the real test was to examine a series of interconnected theories because no theory can ever be falsified since auxiliary statements and propositions can be introduced. These theories are what one would call a paradigm. The new theories introduced in the lineage of the paradigm – named “problemshifts” by Lakatos – can be considered progressive if the new theories can predict “some novel, hitherto unexpected fact” and can empirically corroborate those new facts(Ibid, 118). Suppose the new theory does not do any of those two and tries to explain away “discrepant evidence,” as Vasquez puts it. In that case, the theory is degenerative, making the paradigm unfalsifiable and thus not scientific(Vasquez 1997, 901).³³ In any other case, it is simply an ideological construct with no scientific status.

Vasquez argues that in the case of structural realism, we witness the usage of such linguistic devices. Initially, Vasquez identifies the balance of power concept as a central proposition of realism. He returns to the concept's centrality in Hans Morgenthau’s work before moving to Kenneth Waltz’s structural realism. In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz argued that the creation of balances of power is a recurring phenomenon in international politics across time.³⁴ Unlike Morgenthau, who viewed the creation of balances of power as a result of statecraft, which required prudent and able leaders to take the right decisions for balancing to occur, Waltz argues that the anarchic international system itself pushes and shoves states towards the formation of balances of power because unless they do so, they will be risking their survival. Based on Lakatos’ standards, Vasquez argued that this was a successful “problemshift” or theoryshift as he calls it, since Waltz differentiates the function of balancing

³³ The criterion of falsifiability as the threshold of what is science and what is non-science is proposed by Karl Popper(2002).

³⁴ Balancing can happen in three ways according to Waltz(1979, 118);1) Internally by the buildup of a nation’s military forces, 2) externally by the creation of alliances between states against a common enemy and 3) a combination of the two.

from Morgenthau and argues that balancing behaviour does not always lead to peace; wars sometimes have to be fought for a new balance to occur. This is in direct contrast to the view of Morgenthau that balancing will *de facto* lead to peace. If the war had occurred, one of the belligerents did not balance.

Waltz's work gave rise to the structural realist tradition. This tradition, Vasquez argues, is degenerative and fails to meet scientific status. Vasquez takes issue with the work of scholars like Waltz, Walt, and Schweller. Walt's balance of threat fails to pass the test because Walt argues that states do not balance power but balance threat (Vasquez, 1997, 904-905). For Vasquez, this falsifies both Waltz's and Morgenthau's argument because Walt essentially contends that a power differential between two states does not necessarily mean that the weaker of those two states would be threatened. Other factors, along with power, ought to be considered. However, instead of differentiating himself from realism, as Vasquez would expect since his findings are consistent with other research, Walt views himself as a continuer of the realist tradition. Expanding on this argument, Vasquez argues that by naming his theory "balance of threat," Walt is attempting to illustrate continuity with the realist paradigm while its findings, in reality, discredit previous work within realism. In this respect, the linguistic "veneer" is used to hide away the inability of realism to account for residual evidence (Vasquez 1997, 904). Similarly, Vasquez (1997, 905-907) argues that the balance of interest theory of Schweller and the work of Christensen and Snyder are also degenerative.

Vasquez says that balancing behaviour is a pillar, or a key tenet of realist thought and if it cannot be corroborated as a common state behaviour then the realist paradigm is in trouble. Many classical, structural, and neoclassical realists have indeed viewed balancing as common. However, realism is not dependent on balancing being the most frequent strategy states utilise. Therefore, if it cannot be corroborated, it is not necessarily a problem for realism. As we shall see below, balancing is not one of the pillars that makes realism 'realist.' It is quite plausible that based on those pillars, scholars might develop theories predicting differing outcomes or suggesting different causes of actions. No one would argue that Leninism is not a Marxist theory, even though it took a different view on how to reach socialism from Orthodox Marxism. Legro and Moravscik (1999, 5) argue that "research programs advance, after all, by the refinement and improvement of previous theories and to account for anomalies" and as such. Furthermore, Schweller (2003) has also indicated that NcR should not strive to become a paradigm

For Legro and Moravcsik(1999), the main issue with realism is not its lack of scientific status. In their view, it remains a scientific theory. However, the issue for them is that few self-described realist writers adhere to their version of realism. Instead, they argue that scholars like Wohlforth, Schweller, Christensen, and Snyder are not realists since realist variables like the distribution of material capabilities in the international system do not do explanatory work. Instead, explanations depend on factors central to other competing schools of thought within IR, like the nature of domestic politics, the perception of a state's leadership of the international system, or the influence of a particular ideology on foreign policy decision-making.

Additionally, many of the works reviewed in their piece cannot be considered realist, according to Legro and Moravcsik(1999, 13-15), because they do not pass the threshold of rationality, a crucial characteristic of realism. In remedying these shortcomings, propose a reformulation of realism. Their reformulation is based on three key assumptions. Firstly, states are rational unitary actors in a world of like-minded units that pursue "distinctive goals"(Lergo & Moravcsik 1999). Secondly, state preferences are fixed, unchanging and conflictual.³⁵ Thirdly, within the anarchic international system, the distribution of material capabilities is vital because, for realists, international relations are a zero-sum game.

A similar line of critique to Legro and Moravcsik is advanced by Narizny(2017). Narizny(2017, 156) argues that NcR challenges realist assumptions regarding state preferences arguing that ultimately the paradigm should be abandoned because it lacks scientific rigour. Narizny argues that for realists states are functionally the same and their main motivation is survival in the anarchic international system. In his words "To qualify as realist, however, a theory must assume(1)that all states have the same motive, (2) that this motive is derived from a desire for survival, and (3) that changes in state behaviour are determined by changes in the international environment, not a change in underlying preferences. A theory that departs from anyone of these rules is not part of the realist paradigm."

The aforementioned view has come under criticism because realist scholars argue that the reformulations of realism proposed by Legro and Moravcsik(1999) and Narizny is narrow and does not correspond to the richness of the realist tradition(Rathbun 2008, Fiammenghi et al. 2018). Rathbun(2008) argues that NcR forms the natural outgrowing of structural realism. Thus, it is not an *ad hoc* strand of theories that introduce domestic-level variables borrowed from constructivism and liberalism to explain the inability of Waltzian structural realism to

³⁵ In formulating this assumption, Legro and Moravcsik(1999) acknowledge that realists do not agree on what the nature of those preferences should be.

predict foreign policy outcomes. Furthermore, despite the prominence of domestic politics and ideas in the liberalist and constructivist theories of IR, domestic politics and ideas are not exclusive to those theories. Those theories ascribe greater importance to these variables than other theories, but they do not have exclusivity. NcR would argue that when these variables become more critical in the state's foreign policy, the state will follow suboptimal foreign policies. In essence, when a state's national interest is incompatible with its position within the international system and distribution of power, the state in question will risk either not fulfilling its potential or endangering its survival and sovereignty. The accounts of Schweller and Juneau on underbalancing and Iran's foreign policy illustrate such incompatibilities and their results.

Moreover, Rathbun(2008) criticises Moravcsik and Legro for lumping cognitivist and constructivist theories into one group. Cognitivism has a long-standing tradition within realism. Morgenthau's view on the leader's mindset and Jervis' work on perception and misperception are exemplary, and while it is related to it, it is not identical with constructivism(Ibid, 300). Generally, different theories may use different types of variables to explain outcomes and processes. The critical issue is how one orders them in methodological terms clearly and concisely. In the case of NcR, the starting point is the international system, and domestic-level variables play a particular role in particular circumstances. They form the transmission belt through which systemic stimuli are interpreted, often devising a notion of the national interest that leads the FPE to certain foreign policy outcomes. Those outcomes may not be considered an optimal policy under a structural realist theory.

Legro and Moravcsik(1999, 13-15) make the same mistake with Keohane(1989, 38-39) when they state that rationality on the part of the state and statespeople is a key characteristic of realism. Although Waltz's theory is rational, rationality is not expected by the actors but by the international system. States can choose any foreign policy pathway they see fit at any point. However, when the domestic-level variables outlined above play a greater role than they should, impeding the FPE from either correctly understanding systemic stimuli or properly responding to them, the result would be a suboptimal foreign policy. At that point, the system would rationally punish this suboptimal foreign policy. The system constraints, but at the end of the day, it cannot choose the executive responsible for Foreign Policy decision-making. As Waltz(1996) himself ascertained, "a state can choose to die".

In the case of Narizny, his piece has been criticised by realists and neoclassical realists in various ways(Fiammenghi et al. 2018). The most important critique pertinent to neoclassical realism concerns Narizny's reading of Waltz, which is fundamental to his critique on his

successors. Fiammenghi(Ibid, 192-194) argues that Waltz in *Theory of International Politics* offers many more hypotheses than just the three identified by Narizny, therefore the list of potential state preferences that Waltz assumes for states are far greater than the three hypotheses outlined by Narizny.³⁶ This point is also reiterated by Ripsman, Lobell and Taliaferro(Ibid, 197) who argue that for FPEs the security is the most important but not the only motivator in their foreign policy and depending on the permissiveness of the international environment states and their leaders can also choose to maintain their power position or “safeguard all other ideological, religious, political, and economic goals they may possess”(Ibid, 198).

Furthermore, as Sterling-Folker(1997) argued that realism is better suited than liberalism to incorporate domestic level variables. The primacy attributed to the systemic environment within structural realism means that the internal processes affecting foreign policy making at the domestic level are not “an end in themselves” as in liberalism. The international environment provides certain incentives to states and their leaders, most notably survival in an anarchic self-help system, but whether the FPE will heed to these incentives and how they will choose to go about and achieve is not determined by the international environment(Ibid, 18-20). Therefore, causality in realism exists both at the international and at the domestic level.

NcR remains a realist framework because it adheres to three foundational tenets for realists of all stripes. Firstly, NcR views the international system as an anarchic realm. No supranational government will enforce its will upon states and guarantee that international law will be adhered to and that states should not worry about their survival or infringements on their sovereignty. Therefore, states are the only ones who can help ensure their survival. Structural realists like Mearsheimer(2001) and Waltz(1979) argue that self-help and quest for survival is the most important foreign policy objective within international relations since conflict is possible at any point. Others like Stephen Brooks(1997) and Thomas Juneau(2015) argue that conflict should be viewed in terms of probability, not possibility. When conflict is more probable, self-help becomes the prime goal of a state’s foreign policy and grand strategy. However, when conflict is not viewed as probable, states prioritize other goals that are not security maximizing.

Secondly, the fundamental actor in international affairs is the conflict group. At times that could be a city-state, an empire, a tribe, or a state. The importance of tribalism can be explained by referencing the Hobbesian state of nature to which realists subscribe. According

³⁶ Narizny(2017, 159) argued that Waltz “offers only three hypotheses: balances form; successful innovations are emulated; and bipolarity is more stable than multipolarity”.

to Hobbes(1996, 62), “life is nasty, brutish and short” in the state of nature. Hence, people form groups to ensure their survival at the very least. Once formed, the group finds itself in the anarchic international environment described in the previous paragraph; it must accumulate material power to survive.

Thirdly, material power and the need for its accumulation is central for realists. Of course, there are differentiations in the conceptualization of power among realists. However, they all argue in favour of the centrality of military and economic capabilities. These capabilities allow the state and its executive to pursue their interests in the international arena, which are, at a minimum, survival and at most global hegemony. Critically, states should not be interested in absolute gains but relative gains. Simply put, they worry whether their accumulated power is enough to achieve their interests vis-à-vis other international states, especially when they have to compete over limited resources. Based on these three tenets, NcR falls within the realist paradigm and tradition, and as such, the works produced based on its top-down methodology should be acknowledged and viewed as realist works.

3.5. Realism, NcR and Small States

This final section serves as a literature review of realist scholarship on small states that highlights a key gap in the thinking of realists on small states; there is no engagement with the economic vulnerability of small states and how small states might overcome it. Instead, all the focus is placed on military security and strategies, leaving an essential gap in their thinking. Scholars that have employed NcR on small states have also not filled this gap despite the potential provided by the framework, which, as I illustrate in Chapter 4 can help.

3.5.1. Realism, Grand Strategy and Small States

Classical and structural realist account place great powers at the centre of their accounts. Little to no space is devoted to small states viewed as weak and inconsequential powers with limited room for manoeuvre, struggling to survive. As Raeymaker (1974, 18) argues, “the foreign policy of small states, therefore, aims at withstanding pressure from the great powers at safeguarding their territorial integrity and independence and at ensuring the continued adhesion to national values and ideals is a state on the defensive, a state that thirsts for security”. When dealing with small states, realists debate appropriate strategies for survival that, in most cases, boil down to external balancing or bandwagoning. Therefore, small states are weak and vulnerable powers struggling to survive in a world dominated by great powers. The question of the most appropriate strategy for small states within the realist school of

thought is linked to their relative vulnerability, which is paramount to the quest for survival. The debate is framed on whether external balancing or bandwagoning is optimal (Aron 1966; Rothstein 1966; 1968).

Classical realists working on small states and alliances viewed external balancing or alliance building as a viable option under certain circumstances. Small states can never hope to influence the international system if they act unilaterally and can rarely ensure their survival on their own. Small states can increase their survival chances by building alliances to deter potential aggressors. Raymond Aron (1966) argued that small states should have a “defensive mindset” due to limited capabilities. At the same time, Rothstein (1968) claimed that entering an alliance is necessary for small powers to ensure survival while also pointing to the benefits of multilateral organisation participation. Rothstein (1968, 170) argued that alliances between small states are inconsequential given the limited power capabilities of small states. Hence, it would be beneficial for small states to be part of multilateral alliances rather than bilateral alliances because they would have greater flexibility and capacity to influence collective decisions (Ibid, 177). Bilateral alliances should be only considered if no other options exist or there is a fear of imminent attack. In agreement with Rothstein on the futility of alliances between small states, Liska (1968) and Osgood (1968) favour alliances between small and middle, or as they term them, “secondary”, powers.

Structural realists painted a dimmer picture for small states. According to Waltz (1979), states can either balance by building their military capabilities and build alliances or bandwagon at any given point within the international system. Building upon Waltz’s insights, Walt (1987, 29) and Schweller (1994) argue that small states should opt for bandwagoning strategies because they would have little to offer in military terms to an alliance. Consequently, they would make unattractive allies and, as such, be faced with the futile task of defending themselves. Schweller adds the dimension of profit by claiming that a bandwagoning strategy would allow the smaller power to share the “spoils of victory” once the revisionist state manages to alter the status quo to its liking (Ibid). At the same time, other strategic choices like buck-passing, appeasement and neutrality would have minimal impact when faced with a revisionist power that is bent on altering the regional order to its liking. The lack of material power creates an even more pressing decision-making environment for the leaderships of small states due to the limited timeframes to act, and any mistake would be costlier compared to great powers (Jervis 1978, 172-173; Snyder 1991; 317-318).

This view is shared by most scholars working on grand strategy, a field of history and IR that has dealt almost exclusively with great powers.³⁷ Essentially, the international system's structure, limited capabilities, and inherent vulnerability do not allow the development of grand strategic ideas due to the need to strive for survival constantly (Murray 2011, 8).³⁸ Grand strategy is only afforded to great powers with “wobble room” to think about more than one possible foreign policy pathway at any given time (Ibid). Therefore, for most realists and scholars of grand strategy, small state foreign policy is highly determined by international conditions and characterised by a perennial insecurity to the extent that there is very little room for agency.

All of these accounts deal exclusively with security in the military sense. There is little engagement with political economy or economic considerations that are a source of inherent vulnerability for small states. As I explain in Chapter 4, the two grand strategic theories that move beyond these limitations – Peter Trubowitz's (2011) and Kevin Narizny's (2007) works have not been written with small states in mind. Notably, both of these works are not Realist works but either offer a synthesis of *Realpolitik* with *Innenpolitik* in the case of Trubowitz or are a purely *Innenpolitik* theory that pays little to structural factors like the balance of power. As I explain in Chapter 4, despite their merits when applied to small states, both works have important shortcomings.

Overall, there is a lack of engagement with the economic facet of small state's vulnerability with the overt focus on military security by classical realists. Structural realists have paid little to no attention to small states altogether, while most scholars working on grand strategy have argued that small states cannot have a grand strategy because military security necessities restrict them from pursuing other objectives. In short, the foreign policy of small states is reduced to military security concerns without paying attention to important financial and economic needs.

3.5.2. NcR and Small States

NcR as a theoretical framework has been primarily applied to explain the grand strategic choices of great and regional powers in different historical periods (Juneau 2015; Tziarras 2014; Brawley 2009a; 2009b; Schweller 2006; Sterling-Folker 2009). Neoclassical realist accounts of small state foreign policies have dealt with Iceland, Georgia, Denmark, and

³⁷ For an overview of the literature on grand strategy see the bibliography offered by Paul van Hooft (2019).

³⁸ A notable exception is the work of Briffa (2020).

Cyprus(Gvalia et al. 2019, Tziarras 2019; Zachariades & Petrikkos 2020; Wivel 2013; Steinsson 2017). These accounts begin by looking at the material structure of the international environment before illustrating that without considering elite consensus and the perception of the FPE, one cannot account for certain foreign policy choices and strategies of these small states. Foreign policy choice is the dependent variable that needs to be explained using both the structure of the international system but also domestic variables. This literature also reiterates an observation made by small state scholarship; small states have primarily regional security concerns rather than interests that pertain to the whole international system unlike great powers that play a role in multiple regions(Fox 1959; Wivel 2005; Zahariadis 1994; Toje 2011; Kassimeris 2009).

The only account in this line of thought not dealing with regional interests is Wivel's treatment of Danish militarism. Wivel shows that Denmark's place as a NATO member and the Western Cold War victory allowed the Danish FPE to shift from a “security-first approach” to “active internationalism” in the absence of an international threat(Wivel 2013, 309-310). The prevalence of a liberal egalitarian ideology at home strengthened this shift. This work also indicates that small state foreign policies are not necessarily determined by vulnerability but can escape the notion of vulnerability and the quest for survival under certain international conditions, namely membership in an alliance.

In many respects, the utility, and the limits of NcR as a theoretical framework for the foreign policy of small states remain unexplored. Important questions arise; Can NcR provide compelling foreign policy analyses of small states' conduct in the international system? Are there any limitations to NcR's utility? If so, what are the limitations? Furthermore, like their realist counterparts, NcR scholars working on small states have failed to address the importance of the economic facet of small state foreign policy, a key source of vulnerability. Finally, the theory-building potential, a crucial advantage of the NcR framework, has remained underexplored in the case of small state studies.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key components of NcR. NcR is a top-down theory utilising structural realism's conception of the international system as its independent variable that provides stimuli to the FPE. These stimuli are filtered through domestic intervening variables producing foreign policy outcomes, the dependent variable. To NcR has the potential to fill the gaps outlined in the literature review on realist scholarship and small states. The

literature review has outlined gaps in realist thought that NcR can potentially fill. Applying NcR's theory-building capacity on small states is important for NcR because it will test the theory on a new universe of cases. Ultimately, to determine NcR's utility its explanatory limits on small state's need to be tested and determined. The theory outlined in Chapter 4 seeks to achieve this task by outlining an NcR-inspired framework fit to explain small state foreign policy.

CHAPTER 4: A MODEL FOR SMALL STATE FOREIGN POLICY: NEOCLASSICAL REALISM AND ITS LIMITS

The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework for small state foreign policy proposed by this thesis. I argue that this framework, based on NcR, contributes to the literature in three ways: 1) It is a theoretical framework fit for encapsulating the challenges in formulating foreign policy by the FPEs of small states; 2) By applying NcR to small state foreign policy, the explanatory limits of NcR can be tested, and thus, it will offer a fruitful exercise in NcR's scope conditioning; 3) This framework goes beyond illustrating when NcR stops working and proposes which variables should be considered when that happens to explain small state foreign policy.

My framework builds on scholarship both within and outside the NcR canon. The first building block is NcR's top-down methodology that takes the international system as its starting point. NcR's logic is specific, testable and has a scope of applicability. Therefore, the second component is the work on NcR's scope conditions, i.e., when we should expect NcR to work and when not. Like all social science frameworks, Ripsman, Lobell, and Taliaferro(2016, 121-123) argue that NcR cannot work across all times and spaces. NcR theories set up scope conditions based on the phenomenon they seek to explain and have a certain universe of cases they can explain. In this case, the theoretical framework developed here is designed with the necessities of small states in mind. By doing so, I argue that this can help us understand the limits of NcR's explanatory power in a wide-ranging universe of cases, that of small states.

This framework also builds on the work of two non-NcR theorists, Peter Trubowitz(2011) and Kevin Narizny(2007). Their insights can help us understand how foreign policymaking should function when NcR's top-down logic stops working. Trubowitz's executive choice theory focuses on the study of leaders and argues that leaders may pursue different grand strategies under different structural conditions. A key determinant for Trubowitz in the choice of strategy is whether leaders benefit domestically by investing in "guns," i.e., the aggrandisement of the state's military capabilities, or by investing in "butter," i.e., investing in non-military areas of the domestic economy. Trubowitz(2011, 17-22) outlines four possible ideal-type scenarios that a leader needs to choose from. In all of them, the choice of strategy is based on the interplay between *Realpolitik* and *Innenpolitik* factors. Trubowitz's work is impressive in reconciling the insights of both traditions. He argues that to grasp the choice of a leader fully, you need to focus on international security and whether there is "geopolitical

slack” available for the leader and also on the domestic interests he needs to cater to so that he can ensure his hold on power.

My first point of divergence with Trubowitz is my focus on geography. The starting point of Trubowitz’s(2011, 17-22) executive choice theory is determining how much “geopolitical slack” a leader has in a given situation. When a leader is faced by an unambiguous external threat his geopolitical slack is low and we should expect a *Realpolitik* response. Conversely, when there is greater geopolitical slack i.e. no external threats and “security is plentiful,” leaders can pursue grand strategies that prioritise domestic political consideration like economic aggrandizement or idealistic goals (Ibid, 19-20).

Although this fundamental principle is the same in the theory, I am proposing I make a further distinction. I argue that geographic distance plays an important role for a small state because it will pursue different foreign policies in different regions. Unlike a great power like the US, Trubowitz’s case study, for a small state, power distributions at the regional and sub-regional level are more important than power distributions at the international level because it rare for a small state to face security threats outside its immediate geographic environment. Great powers like the US and the Soviet Union, however, often have security interests outside their immediate geographic environments and threats to their dominance arised in multiple regions during the Cold War. In the case of the US, this becomes clear when it intervned in both World Wars in Europe to ensure that Germany does not become a peer competitor.

Therefore, in the immediate geographic environment we would expect a small state to follow NcR’s top-down logic. Moreover, I argue that while strategic priorities are paramount, a state must deal with other geographic spaces even when faced with an aggressor to attract investments, increase trade, seek status, and gather international support for its position in international forums, among other factors. In those spaces, the strategy pursued must correspond to the realities of the region or sub-region in question. As I will illustrate below, it is plausible that a state is pursuing a realpolitik strategy in one region while following an *Innenpolitik* strategy in another. The second point of divergence is that my starting point and theoretical reference is NcR and its top-down methodology. I only revert to *Innenpolitik* if that methodology collapses, whereas Trubowitz's theory is not predicated on an NcR model.

In *Political Economy of Grand Strategy*, Kevin Narizny's(2007) highlights this nuance regarding foreign policy priorities when dealing with different regions. Narizny argues that both the US in the period 1865-1941 and the UK in the period 1868-1939 followed different

strategies when dealing with the Western core and different strategies when dealing with the global periphery. Nonetheless, Narizny's theory is firmly grounded in *Innenpolitik* since he dismisses claims that the international balance of power shaped any aspect of the grand strategies of the US and the UK in the period he examines. Instead, the determinants of grand strategy, according to Narizny, are the economic interests of the main interest groups for the governing political parties in both states. I will not challenge Narizny's thinking on the US and the UK since this is not my goal.

Despite the importance of domestic politics, the balance of power and the existence of external threats in its immediate geographic environment is the most important element in a small state's foreign policy. Therefore, not all aspects of small state foreign policy can be boiled down to the domestic interests of ruling governmental coalitions. As Baldachino(2009) points out that despite the exceptions for small states, the "logic of Thucydides still holds". Therefore, for a small state and its FPE, the structural conditions and the regional distributions of power matter greatly, especially in its near geographic environment.

The chapter will begin with a section on the formulation of the two competing hypotheses. The next section focuses on the independent variable - the regional and sub-regional power distributions. Moving on, the sections on the intervening and dependent variables will be presented. The intervening variables are the leader's images and the political economy of the state, while the dependent variables are the foreign policy strategies at the disposal of small states FPEs.

4.1. Hypotheses

The framework I propose contradicts the logic of many realist scholars working on grand strategy and foreign policy, who argue that small states have little or no "wiggle room" to formulate their foreign policy because of limited material and military capabilities (as illustrated in Chapter 3)(Williamson 2011, 8; Showalter 2016; Walt 1987, 29). Despite the primacy of security and survival within an anarchic international system, small states, and their leaderships (as illustrated in Chapter 2), must develop resilience to tackle their economic as well as their security vulnerabilities. A resilient and robust economy is vital for FPEs from both democratic and authoritarian regimes to maintain their domestic approval and their hold on power.

In this respect, the FPEs of small states need to be playing a two-level game. On the one hand, they must devise security strategies to safeguard their sovereignty and survival. On

the other hand, they need to cater to domestic concerns linked to the political economy of the state. Based on the hypotheses outlined below, a small state will more likely face threats from its immediate geographic environment. It has little wiggle room in that space, and its strategic responses will vary from hard balancing on the one side of the spectrum to bandwagoning on the other. The other strategic options between these two extremes are soft balancing and hedging. The choice of strategy is primarily influenced by the international system and the power distribution within the small state's immediate strategic environment. By immediate geographic environment, I mean their sub-regional space and, more importantly, bordering states. Given the greater difficulty of power projection across large distances, the most likely threats for small states will come from their sub-region and, most probably, from their bordering states.³⁹

Rarely are small states threatened by powers outside their sub-region. In these cases, the threat comes from revisionist great powers seeking to change the international or regional system. Consequently, the small state is not the only actor faced with this threat. Even in these cases, the most likely targets for the revisionist Great Power would be its bordering states first. Revisionist great powers cannot become superpowers unless they dominate their region first (Mearshimer 2001). Hence, the threat for a small state further away is smaller. For example, Russia's aggression in Ukraine has elevated threat perceptions among European states. However, the threat perception in Portugal and Belgium, which are geographically far from Russia, is not as high as in Finland or Georgia, which share a land border with Russia.⁴⁰

An examination of wars since 1946 illustrates that the vast majority of conflicts were either civil wars, decolonial conflicts or interstate wars between bordering states.⁴¹ The cases where we have a state attacking another state outside its region are rare, and the attacking power was always a Great Power, in some cases leading a coalition. Examples of such interventions include the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia, the US-Iraq wars of 1991 and 2003, and the US intervention in Haiti in 1995.

Therefore, we would expect the small state's foreign policy decision-making in its immediate geographic logic to follow the top-down logic of NcR:

³⁹ By bordering states I include states that share land borders as well as maritime boundaries.

⁴⁰ There are of course other factors beyond geographic distance but the closer you are to the revisionist great power the easier it would be to become a target.

⁴¹ I accept that the lines between these definitions are blurry, however, the spark of this conflicts was local, although influenced by international developments and the regional and international balances of power during the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras.

H1: Systemic threats and opportunities act as the independent variable. They prescribe optimal foreign policy choices and the limits the FPE has to operate within. Domestic variables – the FPE's perception and the political economy - act as intervening variables filtering systemic inputs into foreign policy outcomes. The foreign policy outcome will be suboptimal if domestic variables take the driving seat.

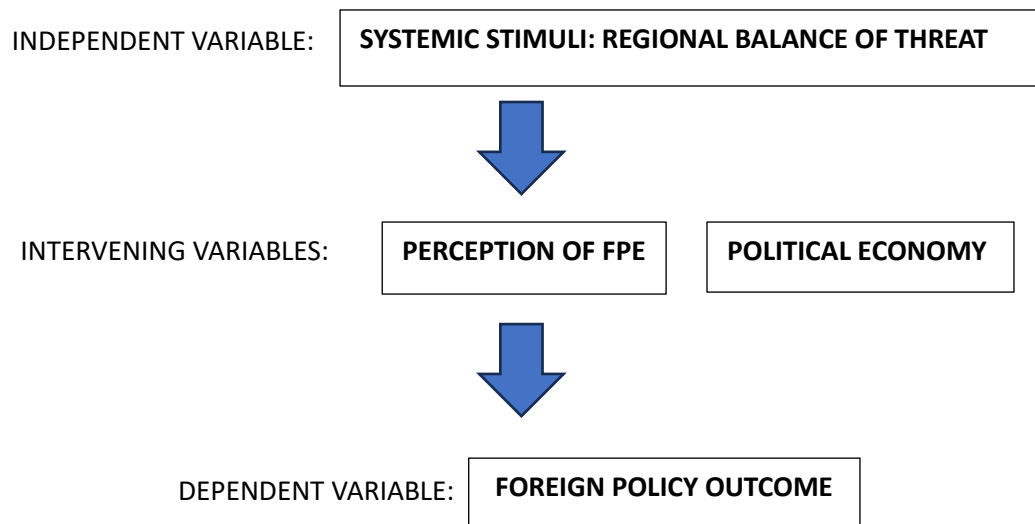


Figure 1: Foreign Policy Process according to Hypothesis 1

When the FPE devises and conducts its foreign policy towards other geographical areas outside its immediate strategic environment, it can pursue various foreign policy goals. The absence of a systemic threat gives the FPE greater leeway than in its immediate geographic environment. Foreign policy is driven, in this case, by domestic variables that now act as independent variables. The FPE's foreign policy response cannot be explained via NcR since the theory's top-down logic ceases. The international system's capacity to influence foreign policy outcomes is limited. Instead, an *Innenpolitik* approach is more adept at explaining foreign policy. There is a variety of variables one could choose from but for reasons explained in section 4.3. I focus on the FPE's perception and the political economy of the state.

Although Ripsman Lobell and Taliaferro argue that there are cases where we could expect an *Innenpolitik* approach to take over from NcR, in their view, these cases are rare and primarily relate to the FPE's capacity to hold power domestically. If a foreign policy decision would aid in clinging onto power, domestic considerations would take precedence over the system (Ripsman et al. 2016, 3-5). The examples they refer to, concern regional or great powers but not small states. In the case of small states, because of the lack of systemic stimuli in areas apart from their immediate geographic environment, we would expect domestic, instead of

systemic, variables to carry the explanatory weight. In this respect, H2 follows an *Innenpolitik* rationale:

H2: NcR's top-down logic does not apply in other geographic spaces because systemic threats and opportunities are absent. In these cases, domestic variables drive foreign policy and act as independent variables.

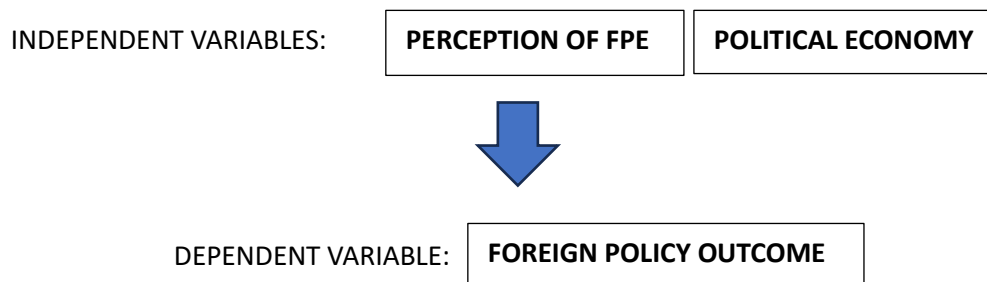


Figure 2: Foreign Policy Process according to Hypothesis 2

4.2. Independent Variable: Balance of threat at the regional and sub-regional level

Neoclassical and structural realists argue that the starting point of analysis is the international system characterised by the relative distribution of power. The system should dictate the strategic behaviour of states, setting the parameters in which states can contemplate alternative strategies. Before proceeding, defining what we mean by region and sub-region is crucial. Regions are formed by systems of states which share political, economic, and cultural ties between them enabled by geographic proximity.⁴² Geographic proximity leads one state's military and strategic choices to affect the strategic calculus of other regional states.⁴³ Simultaneously, no regional state can act without considering the reactions of other regional states. Moreover, geographic proximity reduces travelling and business costs, thus, increasing the prospects for cultural and economic interactions.

Based on the above and Jervis'(1997, 6) definition of a system, we would, thus, expect that in a regional system a change in some units or relationships between units within the system would result in changes in other units and relationships within the system.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the regional system itself would exhibit characteristics different from the features

⁴² My definition borrows from the extensive work conducted on regions within International Relations(Buzan & Wæver 2003; Buzan 1983; Paul 2012; Thompson 1973).

⁴³ This argument has been made in different forms by scholars taking a regional perspective(Ripsman 2016; Buzan and Wæver 2003; Taliaferro 2019)

⁴⁴ Robert Jervis, *System effects : complexity in political and social life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 6.

of the states within it. Depending on the size of a region, we should also expect the existence of two or more subsystems. Subsystems are systems located within regions in which some states are interconnected so that they become a distinct but interconnected part of the whole. Arguably an easy way to acknowledge the existence of regional subsystems is the extent of their institutionalisation. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC) highlights the presence of a Gulf subsystem within the Middle East region. It is important to note that regions are part of an international system and are influenced by structure of the international system. However, the international system's structure is not enough to understand regional dynamics. The region's history, economy and international relations need to be accounted in their own right.

Taliaferro(2019, 38-42) argues that a global hegemon has interests in multiple geographical regions. A global hegemon should not only look at international power distribution when dealing with those regions(Taliaferro 2012; 2019). Of course, the international distribution of power matters, but what matters most is the regional distribution of power, according to Talliaferro(2019, 38). Regional power distribution is the basis of a state's strategic environment. Within that strategic environment, Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell(2016) argue that threats and opportunities emanate that the FPE needs to cater to. The greater the threat or opportunity for the FPE, the more restrictive the strategic environment for the state. On the contrary, if there are no clear threats or opportunities, the FPE has more flexibility in choosing strategies. Similarly, Mohamed Ayoob(2002) argued that the regional environment is more critical for Third World states than the international one.

Taliaferro's argument is important and forms the starting point of our independent variable. Nonetheless, he is writing from the perspective of the hegemon. When contemplating foreign policy strategies, for the small state's FPE, on the contrary, the strategic environment is not necessarily the regional level but, in many cases, the sub-regional level. From the perspective of a small state, although the regional distribution of power is vital, what matters most is the distribution of power at the sub-regional level, which forms its immediate strategic environment. From that environment, threats and opportunities are more likely to emanate. Therefore, staying at the regional level might not provide the complete picture. Instead, I argue that we need to zero in on the sub-regions with which the small state's FPE interacts and determine the extent of threats and opportunities in those sub-regions as well.

Importantly, what is determined as a threat needs to be provided. To do so, I utilise Stephen Walt's(1987) conceptualisation of threat which is based on four factors:

- Aggregate power.
- Offensive power.
- Offensive intentions.
- Geographical proximity

The first factor is aggregate power. Here power is conceptualised in a structural realist manner. Hence, power equals capabilities. According to structural realists, including Walt(1987, 22-23), the sources of power are the country's overall population, the size of the economy, the state's industrial capacity, the technological innovation within the state and, of course, the size of the state's armed forces. Nonetheless, Walt argues that these factors alone cannot determine whether a state is a threat. Still, they do form a prerequisite for an actor to be deemed a threat, i.e. without a comparative advantage in aggregate power, a state cannot mount a successful challenge to alter the status quo in regional or international politics. For example, if Mexico threatened the US with an expansionary war, the US would not take its threat seriously because Mexico lacks the power capabilities to prevail in such a conflict. Simultaneously, Canada does not feel threatened by the presence of a superpower on its borders and takes no action against the US because there are no offensive intentions on the part of the US leaders. Aggregate power alone cannot explain the formation of alliances or balancing behaviour.

The second factor is offensive power. A state might be strong regarding aggregate power; however, it might not have devoted considerable effort to develop offensive military capabilities that would allow it to threaten other states credibly. Furthermore, certain technological innovations favouring offensive power can play a critical role in whether a state is deemed a threat. For instance, the continued technological advancements in offensive military capabilities, the growing expenditure on defence despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and China's military-industrial capabilities have alarmed the US and their allies(Office of the Secretary of Defence 2021; CNBC 2020; Kuo 2021).

The third factor is geographical proximity. It is more likely for two bordering states to fight a conflict with one because it is much harder for a state to mount an attack against a state far away because the farther away, the less impactful and the costlier the deployment of most weapons(Walt 1987, 23-24). For example, the inability of the European Great Powers to check the US's rise, especially after the end of the American Civil War and before the onset of WWI, is owed to the inability of European powers to project their power across the Atlantic(Ripsman

et al. 2016; Mearsheimer 2001). Furthermore, US officials did not view European powers as a threat during this period. This example also shows the linkage between offensive power and geographical proximity. Most arms and weapon systems will lose power over distance while deploying armies in far-flung places is costly.

Certainly, there are exceptions to these rules posed by leading regional powers and extra-regional Great Powers. The interventions of the US in the Middle East in 1991 or 2003 or interventions across the globe during the heyday of European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries illustrate this point. In these interventions, the Great Powers targeted states that either had the potential to harm their interests or were vital from an economic point of view. States that become the target of such interventions are usually either regional powers that can upset the interests of the Great Power aggressor in the region or states where domestic order has collapsed, and a civil conflict is ongoing. In the latter case, Great Powers often do not intervene directly but instead engage via proxies. The recent conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen are illustrative (Hoffman & Ormer 2021). The experience of Western imperialism has also shown that states can become targets of formal or informal imperialism; they control essential trade routes or are home to vital natural resources.⁴⁵

The final factor is aggressive intentions. As the example of the US relationship with Canada shows, even if all the previous three factors were satisfied, the UK would still not consider the US a threat because it does not perceive it as aggressive against it. Therefore, as Walt (1987, 25-26) points out, the perception of aggression matters even in “modest capabilities” cases. Constructivists have criticised Walt that this last factor they understand as a firmly ideational one is doing the heavy lifting for his theory (Barnett 1996). The reality, I argue, is midway. A threat is non-existent without aggressive intentions, but an actor cannot be considered a threat without the material capacity to back those aggressive intentions. Furthermore, I seek to clarify that the way I conceptualise this variable at the structural level aggressive intentions is based on the existence of objective aggressive intentions rather than on the perception of aggression of the FPE at the domestic level.⁴⁶ In this respect, there is a slight differentiation in the conceptualisation of this component of the independent variable from Walt’s original conceptualisation.

⁴⁵ The bibliography on western imperialism and colonialism is extensive (see Lenin 2010; Johnson 2002; Schumpeter 1955; Semmel 1970; Gallagher & Robinson 1953; Harvey 2003).

⁴⁶ I thank Dr Nicholas Kitchen for his comments that pushed me to make this important clarification.

4.3. Intervening Variables

The second section deals with intervening variables. As the previous chapter shows, NcR scholars have used various intervening variables in their theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, as Götz(2021) has argued, intervening variables do not always carry the same weight. He argues that within the designs of NcR scholars, they broadly play three factors: i) moderating factors, ii) complementary factors and iii) primary causes(Ibid). Within my theoretical framework, the function of the two intervening variables utilised shifts based on the chosen case study and the geographic region with which the FPE interacts. In the immediate geographic environment where the independent variable takes precedence, these variables can be moderating or complementary factors. However, when the FPE conducts foreign policy in a geographic area without threat, the *intervening variables become independent variables*. In these cases, they become primary causes and do the heavy explanatory lifting since the NcR's top-down logic no longer works.

The two variables I have chosen are the FPE's perception and the political economy of the state. The first sub-section defines the FPE via Tsebelis' veto players' approach and explains the importance of its perception in foreign policy decision-making. The second sub-section conceptualises the political economy intervening variable. Both of them are conceptualised based on insights from the literature on small states in IR, political science and economics, as well as the literature on NcR and Foreign Policy Analysis.

4.3.1 The FPE: Veto players and perception

The first step is to identify which actors constitute the FPE. The definition offered by Ripsman et. al., includes “the president, prime minister, or dictator, and key cabinet members, ministers, and advisors charged with the conduct of foreign and defence policies”(Ripsman et al. 2016, 61-62). The FPE is distinct from the Cabinet and the wider public administration because it possesses “private information and has a monopoly on intelligence about foreign countries; therefore, it is the most important actor to focus on when seeking to explain foreign policy and grand strategic adjustment”(Ibid, 61-62). Small states are not uniform and come with different political systems, constitutions, and traditions. Therefore, their FPEs will differ based on each state's political and constitutional arrangements. This definition is satisfactory for describing small states' FPEs.

After identifying the actors involved in the FPE, the next step would be to identify the veto players within the FPE, i.e., the most influential actors. I follow the work of Tsebelis(1995;

2002) in identifying veto players. According to Tsebelis(1995, 293), a veto player is “an actor whose agreement is necessary to change the status quo”. Veto players can be individuals like the president or a prime minister or collective like a parliament, senate, or a coalition political party. The key is to examine constitutional arrangements within the historical context to identify veto players. For instance, Greece had a single veto player, the majority party, and its prime minister, between 1993 and 2011. During the economic crisis, the number of veto players increased because elections failed to produce a one-party government, despite the Greek electoral law’s design to favour absolute majorities, leading to coalition governments. The conditions created by the economic crisis altered the political landscape.

Tsebelis(1995, 293-301) argues that a higher number of veto players will decrease the capacity for change within the system. The difference in preferences and the capacity to use a veto if policy change occurs against their preferences makes change difficult. Opperman and Brumer(2017, 2) note that “the configuration of veto players is specific to particular policy areas”. Foreign policy is a distinct policy area; thus, we need to identify veto players within the FPE based on the small state's constitutional, legal, and political environment. This is the first step in Tsebelis’ three-step approach.

The second step is to establish the veto player’s preferences. We need to examine their perceptions, ideas and understanding of their country’s international environment to establish their preferences. The public administration literature also indicates that “small size blurs the line between politics and administration leading to concerns about bureaucratic performance, conflicts of interest, patron-client linkages and corruption,” and to “hyper-personalism and power concentration”(Corbett et al. 2020, 107; Farrugia 1993; Sutton & Payne 1993; Baldacchino 2012). The main takeaway for our purpose here is that the smaller executive, characteristic of small states, comes part and parcel with increased power and capacity for its veto players to dominate the state and government. This is why understanding the FPE’s perception, following the theory outlined in Chapter 3, needs to be considered as an intervening variable within this model.

The FPE also needs to take into consideration of the state’s political economy in the formulation of its preferences. As outlined in Chapter 2, small states are champions of an open global economy that allows them to trade freely and enables FDI, among other advantages. However, this places them at a disproportionately disadvantageous position, compared to larger states, during periods of economic crisis. The FPEs of small states need to take into

consideration their position of economic vulnerability along with their position of military vulnerability.

Beyond the purely economic aspect, the political economy matters because of its state-society relations aspect. The political leadership of the FPE needs to form coalitions of economic and societal interest groups to rise to a position of power and to remain there. Both Lobell(2009) and Narizny(2011) have highlighted the effect such coalitions can have on foreign policy decision-making if the members of these groups have a material interest in foreign policy.⁴⁷ Because of these two aspects, political economy is chosen as the second intervening variable. The following sub-section will conceptualise the variable in depth.

The final step zeroes in on the cohesiveness of veto players. Cohesiveness is key because “not all veto players will be equally able and willing to block policy change all of the time”(Opperman & Brummer 2017, 7). Cohesive and strong veto players will be more likely and able to use their veto than veto players lacking internal cohesion. For instance, a political party that lacks discipline will not be able to use its veto compared to a political party that is disciplined and follows the will of its leader. The literature has also indicated that we should distinguish between cooperative veto players, such as coalition partners in a parliamentary system that have an incentive to remain in government, and non-cooperative “strategic” veto players that might use their veto power to even block proposals aligned to their preferences if they wish to undermine and potentially bring down the government(Zohlnhöfer 2009).

4.3.2. Political Economy

The second intervening variable is the small state's political economy. As mentioned above, the variable has a purely economic side which looks at the structure and condition of the country's economy. The second aspect builds on the work of political economists specialising in small states and scholars, highlighting the influence economic interest groups can exert on the FPE, affecting its foreign policy choices. The FPE needs to consider both aspects to remain in power and maintain a resilient economy. In the case of some small states, patron-client networks, and the utilisation of the state as a wealth aggrandisement machine for members of the FPE can also play a key role.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Similar arguments have been advanced by Snyder(1991) regarding the rise of imperialist states from an NcR perspective and Marxists like Anievas(2011).

⁴⁸ There is an emerging literature linking clientelist practices in small states across different geographic regions(Veenendaal & Corbett 2020; Corbett et al. 2021; Kamrava 2017; Sonan 2014).

Due to their lack of size, small states need to retain open economies, envisaging an open global economic order allowing them to trade freely with the world. As Alesina and Spolaore(2003) point out, a small state's viability depends on the level of openness in the global economy. A global economy that is characterised by protective trade regimes and tariff barriers is damning for small states since they lack the domestic markets to create economies of scale or the capacity to be economically autarkic in most or all sectors of the economy(Ibid). It is indicative that trade is comparatively a larger economic sector in small states rather than large ones(Weatherhead 2006; Easterly & Kraay 2000; Alcalá & Ciccone 2004; Frankel & Romer 1999). By "tying themselves into international markets" small states can boost their "efficiency and innovation in ways that a reliance on a small domestic market would fail to foster"(Thorhallson & Steinsson 2017, 5; Eaton & Kortum 2002; Keller 2004).

Nonetheless, maintaining open economies is a double-edged sword, as outlined in Chapter 2, because when the global economy is engulfed in crisis, small states are more likely to face greater financial instability than large states. At this point, the resilience of a small state to these shocks is critical. Briguglio(1995) defined economic resilience as "the ability of an economy to withstand or bounce back from the negative effects of external shocks and associate such ability with policy measures". Briguglio et al.(1995) constructed a resilience index based on macroeconomic stability, prudent market efficiency and sound political and social governance. The variables used by the authors are influenced mainly by "policy and are associated with the ability of an economy to absorb or counteract the harmful effects of external shocks" caused by globalisation(Ibid). Hence, globalisation might present dangers, but it also presents opportunities. Small states can achieve economic growth and a high standard of living by thinking innovatively about addressing globalisation's challenges.

Small states can increase their resilience by exploiting globalisation through non-mainstream approaches to economic growth. These approaches mainly focus on tourism, providing financial services to foreign firms and individuals, establishing offshore centres offering favourable tax regimes, postal and logistics services and an unusually high percentage of remittances in GDP per capita(Prasad 2009). In most of these states, promoting the country as a foreign direct investment(FDI) destination becomes vital to increase GDP, bolster innovation, open up new sectors and diversify the economy and is often linked with these unorthodox pathways to economic growth(Read 2008).

Regarding the state-society aspect of the variable, FPEs in small states as outlined above need to maintain the support of economic interest groups to increase their electability

and capacity to remain in power. The support of economic interest groups is connected to establishing societal coalitions in a similar fashion to that outlined by scholars as diverse as Moravcsik(1997), Narizny(2007), Anievas(2011) and Lobell(2009), but at a smaller size.⁴⁹ Furthermore, establishing and increasing patron-client networks and entangling the most powerful economic interests with the government is much easier in small states(Veenendaal & Corbett 2020; Corbett et al. 2021). If powerful economic interests can play a role or dominate foreign policy decision-making and the grand strategy of great powers when there are potentially several competing interests then this is a factor worth examining in small and specialised economies where a few sectors, like finance, tourism and real estate could benefit from particular foreign policies(Ibid).

Cambell and Hall(2009) have also pointed out that the capacity of small states to exploit globalisation in their favour rests on their institutional capacity. In their view, this institutional capacity is more likely to exist and be developed in small states that share a strong national identity. Building on Gellner(1983), they argue that small states that are “deeply divided culturally...often cannot cooperate” cannot coordinate policy to achieve industrialisation, achieve societal cohesion and “coordinate decision-making”(Cambell and Hall 2009, 552). Therefore, within multiethnic states we should also consider the economic interests of different ethnic groups and how their interplay can shape foreign policy.

Overall, based on this reading, we need to focus on two areas. The first is the *structure of the economy*. The vital questions that need to be answered are:

- i. Which sectors dominate the economy?
- ii. Do they benefit from a particular type of foreign policy?
- iii. How could foreign policy help aggrandise GDP, trade volume, and attract FDI based on the state’s economic structure?

A government will need to cater to the well-being of the most important sectors of the economy. The second aspect pertains to societal and economic elites. The main questions here are:

- i. Who are the elites within the leading sectors of the economy?
- ii. What is their relationship with the FPE and the government?

⁴⁹ Societal coalitions do not necessarily correspond to multi-party coalitions. (For a an overview of party coalitions and their effects on foreign policy see Oppermann et al. 2017)

- iii. Can they influence the FPE's decision-making, and if yes, in what way?

Therefore, these questions need to be answered to apply this intervening variable to a case study.

4.4. Dependent Variable: Foreign Policy Strategy

The FPE will follow different strategies based on whether it faces a systemic threat. One of the critical arguments this chapter makes is the importance of geography in determining whether the top-down logic of NcR works in the foreign policy of small states. We should expect different foreign policy strategies based on the region and sub-region the FPE interacts with. Security is emphasised in the near geographic environment where threats are more likely to emerge. In contrast, the perception of the FPE and the state's political economy in other geographic regions will influence foreign policy decision-making.

The strategies outlined in the second part of the sub-section can also be used in the near-geographic environment under two caveats. If a threat does not exist in the near geographic environment, then we would expect the small state, given the structural leeway available, to prioritise strategies outlined in the second part of the sub-section. If a threat exists, these strategies, if used, then they should be subordinate to one of the four defensive strategies outlined in the first part of the subsection. If they are not, the FPE has miscalculated, and its foreign policy is suboptimal.

4.4.1. *Strategies in the immediate geographic environment*

Broadly, four different strategic choices are available to the FPE of small states in their immediate geographic environment when faced with a systemic threat or risk; i) hard balancing, ii) bandwagoning, iii) soft balancing, and iv) hedging.⁵⁰ The strategic choice is pertinent to the nature of the regional system and the impact of the intervening variables on foreign policymaking.

⁵⁰ The four options outlined above are not exhaustive as there yet even more strategic options available to the FPE. Trubowitz(2011), Schweller(1998) Juneau(2015) ,Thorhallson and Steinsson(2017) have outlined a range of possible strategic options beyond these four. Labs(1992) argues that small and weak states prefer above all to remain non-aligned. While that maybe true non-alignment is truly a viable option only in the absence of a threat. If that threat exists and it is formidable then non-alignment will not aid in the survival of the small state. The Melian dialogue and the destruction of Melos in the hands of Athens is telling of the results of a non-alignment strategy in the face of a threat for a small state. Another strategic option, free-riding, can only become viable if the weak state is geographically further from the threatening state, however, due to the regional outlook taken here small states are rarely away from danger if there is a threatening actor within their region.

Hard Balancing

Hard balancing entails two components; *internal balancing* and *external balancing*. As outlined in Chapter 3, considerable debate exists on the viability of a balancing strategy for small states. The argument in favour of external balancing or alliance building in the case of small states is predicated upon the fact that small states can never hope to influence the system if they act alone. Rothstein claimed that entering an alliance is necessary for small powers to ensure their survival while pointing to multilateral organisation participation's benefits (Aron 1966; Rothstein 1966; 1968). Therefore, they can do very little to ensure their survival on their own. Small states can better their chance of surviving if they build alliances that will deter potential aggressors. Rothstein argued that alliances between small states are inconsequential given the limited power capabilities that small states could muster.

Moreover, it would be beneficial for small states to be part of multilateral alliances rather than bilateral alliances because small states would have the flexibility and capacity to influence collective decisions (Rothstein 1968, 177). Bilateral alliances should be only considered if no other options exist or there is a fear of imminent attack. In agreement with Rothstein on the futility of alliances between small states, Liska (1968) and Osgood (1968) favour alliances between small and middle, or as they term them, "secondary", powers. However, there are considerable limitations in following a hard balancing strategy for small states. Given their limited resources in many cases, they make for unattractive allies.

Schweller (1994) and Walt (1987) have argued that a larger state allying with a small state could be considered a liability because the small state will have very little to offer in case of hostilities. While the larger state will deplete resources defending a small state with nothing to offer to its defence. The ability of the small state to construct an alliance will depend on the power disparity between the threat and the context. If there are enough states with a similar threat perception vis-à-vis the threat, then the small state's chances to construct an alliance increase. The small state's chances to become a viable ally depend on the power disparity between the threat and the states threatened. Suppose the power disparity is too great, then the small state's addition to the alliance would add little and create further complications for the other members. In that case, we can expect dynamics similar to those outlined by Schweller and Walt. Suppose the power disparity is at a level where the small state's addition can tip the balance of power or can offer benefits via its geographic location or through the provision of natural resources in favour of the alliance. In that case, the small state can position itself as a helpful ally.

A powerful tool that could create vested interests by larger states in securing smaller ones is geography, especially in terms of natural resources. Suppose such resources are located within the vicinity of a smaller state. In that case, the state can utilise them by offering rights of exploitation to foreign companies hoping that those companies will persuade their governments to protect the small state in question. This is amplified by the involvement of state-owned firms in the energy industry, and there are indications that such firms have been used for strategic rather than economic purposes by their states.⁵¹ Similarly, the small state can provide a stable energy supply in exchange for security, similar to the US-Saudi pact in the aftermath of WWII. This could create a “balancing for profit” dynamic where a small state with no other option apart from bandwagoning could entice a powerful actor to ally with it in exchange for access to energy or other natural resources (Zachariades & Petrikos 2020). As Handel (1981) notes, resource-rich small states have weaponised natural resources, as the 1973 oil crisis illustrated. However, one should always keep in mind that the interconnectedness goes both ways, and the small states with such power will most likely be hurt at some point since they depend on imports from industrialised states for goods (Ibid).

Bandwagoning

If hard balancing is located at one end of the spectrum, then bandwagoning is at the other. Bandwagoning is a strategy of alignment with the threat rather than confronting it and can be understood as a form of appeasement. For instance, Jordan’s decision to stay out of the 1973 October War was a form of tacit bandwagoning with Israel, seeking to appease its neighbour. According to most realists and theorists of grand strategy, bandwagoning is the strategy of choice for small states because, in most cases, small states lack the capabilities to defend themselves (Walt 1987, 172-178). Consequently, they make unattractive allies, and as such, they face the futile task of defending themselves.

A bandwagoning strategy could also serve other motives besides ensuring security and survival. Specifically, Schweller (1994) adds the dimension of profit to the calculation by claiming that a bandwagoning strategy would also allow the weaker power to share the “spoils of victory” once the threatening revisionist state alters the status quo to fit its interests. In this respect, even when there is a possibility of balancing, the FPE might opt for a bandwagoning strategy instead if it deems it less costly and ultimately more profitable. Schweller (1994, 91-92, 95-96) points to the 1807 pact between Napoleon and the Tsar which increasingly favoured

⁵¹ This is a key insight derived by the literature on geoeconomics (Scholvin & Wigell 2018; Blackwill & Harris 2016; Mattlin & Wigell 2016)

France in Europe as an example of bandwagoning as well as Japan's decision to come out of neutrality and ally with Germany in 1940 due to the impressive Nazi victories in Europe.

At the same time, other strategic choices like buck-passing, appeasement and neutrality would have minimal impact when faced with a revisionist power that is bent on altering the regional order to its liking. Finally, the lack of military and economic power creates an even more pressing decision-making environment for the leaderships of small states due to the limited timeframes to act, whilst any mistake could prove more costly compared to great powers (Jervis 1978; Snyder 1991). In this respect, bandwagoning should be an attractive strategic option for the small state's FPE, given that it minimises the costs of a balancing strategy that could prove inadequate while also providing the possibility of security and material benefits. However, even if it is, in many cases, an optimal response, it is not often the strategy of choice, according to Labs (1992).

Soft balancing

Like hard balancing, soft balancing aims at incurring costs to the target state to balance "the odds between the weak and the strong" through non-military means (Pape 2005, 36). Soft balancing can take various shapes and forms defined by the means employed by the FPE against the target state. These tools include economic statecraft and diplomatic means like constructing "strategic partnerships" and diplomacy through international institutions.⁵² As with most concepts in the social sciences, soft balancing is a contested concept. The definition adopted here follows T.V. Paul's (2018, 20) formulation of soft balancing as "restraining the power or aggressive policies of a state through international institutions, concerted diplomacy via limited, informal ententes, and economic sanctions to make its aggressive actions less legitimate in the eyes of the world and hence its strategic goals more difficult to obtain".

Economic statecraft is defined as "all of the economic means by which foreign policy actors might influence other international actors" (Baldwin 1985, 40). Economic statecraft can take both punitive and non-punitive forms. Economic sanctions are one of the most often employed punitive measures. Sanctions of this kind have negative implications for the target state. They most often take the form of sanctions towards the targeted state's economy or certain persons or entities linked to or within the targeted state. Sanctions also indicate the resolve and

⁵² Apart from these three broad categories Pape (2005, 36) has also pointed out to elements of geography like denying territorial access to Great Powers without elaborating much on this deliberation.

intentions against the target state to the international community. Despite the inefficacy of sanctions in achieving their targets, they are preferential to war or doing nothing in many cases.

Additionally, trade embargoes and tariffs, among other measures, can weaken the target state's economy (Ibid, 40-42). On the other end of the spectrum, non-punitive forms of economic statecraft like financial aid, tariff discrimination and favourable financial treatment can also become a part of a soft balancing strategy if they provide economic help to regional adversaries or competitors of the soft balancing target. Given the relative material weakness of small states, economic measures of this kind could be futile unless taken in conjunction with other similar-minded states or within the context of international organisations.

Soft balancing also involves “tacit balancing short of formal alliances” against a common threat or a rising power that often involves a limited arms buildup, a common understanding in certain areas of security and diplomatic cooperation in international organisations on issues regarding the threatening state (Paul 2018). These relationships could be defined as alignments, ententes, or strategic partnerships. In this respect, such a relationship is not a formal alliance since it does not include alliance agreements, common military command structures and extensive military cooperation (Ibid, 26). A strategic partnership is not a simple trade relationship since it has a security element. This element involves periodic meetings, joint exercises and some equipment transfer that is not at the scale of a fully-fledged alliance.

Moreover, international institutions have played an important role in soft-balancing arguments. International organisations and their resolutions add an important layer of legitimacy to the actions of Great Powers. For instance, the position of Cyprus within the EU has allowed it to frustrate Türkiye's ambitions of becoming an EU member state without a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus Problem. Ikenberry (1988) has argued that institutions allow the dominant power to exercise “strategic binding” vis-à-vis lesser powers. However, in equal terms, institutions can provide the same opportunity to weaker powers, especially if they have veto powers.

A key aim of soft balancing is to deny legitimacy to the actions of the target state, particularly through the employment of diplomacy and international institutions (Paul 2018). Although legitimacy denial will not hinder, in most cases, the target state since it would have the material capabilities to go ahead with its intention, it will harm the target's status as a benevolent power or hegemon. Soft balancing is an appealing strategy to small states which

are seen as lovers of international law, since it can provide them with a tool, albeit limited, to resist the will of more powerful actors(Toje 2011). Small states view international law as a tool to protect their interests. In this regard, a soft balancing strategy seeks to use such a tool.

Hedging

Another alternative to bandwagoning and balancing explanations is hedging. There is no single conceptualisation for hedging. Jürgen Haacke(2019) identified four broad ways in which scholars have conceptualised the strategy. The first approach deals with measures related to a perceived risk regarding certain economic, financial and energy security vulnerabilities(Tessman & Wolfe 2011; Salman & Geeraerts 2015; Crociari 2019). Within this understanding, accounts have focused on how best to cope with risks concerning disruptions in international markets. The second understanding views hedging as a form of alignment followed by small and medium powers vis-à-vis greater powers(Denny 2005). Proponents of this approach argue that it is a distinct form of alignment forming a middle ground between bandwagoning and balancing(Goh 2005).

The third understanding is a risk management strategy with different alignment strategies towards great powers. Limited forms of alignment that fall short of formal alliances have been described as hedging by scholars like Ciorciari(2009) and Koga(2017). In this respect, hedging is seen as an alignment choice that is more flexible than bandwagoning or balancing and allows the smaller power to address challenges concerning its relations with more than one Great Power. By pursuing this limited alignment, the weaker state can avoid commitments with one great power that would turn another great power from a risk to a threat. The fourth conceptualisation is that hedging is an umbrella term for employing mixed policies vis-à-vis another power(Medeiros 2005). So, a state at the same time could be moderately deterring another power while also cooperating in other areas. An example used to support this argument is that of Japan and Australia cooperating with China economically but are also part of balancing coalitions that seek to limit China's influence in Southeast Asia.

The conceptualisation of hedging I employ argues that hedging is a mixed strategy using both competitive and cooperative measures. The critical point is the level of threat. If there is a lack of systemic clarity regarding a state's intentions meaning that the FPE's is not certain whether a state is threatening, we should expect a hedging response. If a state is a threat, we should expect a bandwagoning, a soft or hard balancing response. Korolev(2019) argues that the capacity to hedge for a "smaller power" decreases when there is an increase in great

power competition. Hedging is, in his words, “a ‘luxury’ that is inversely related to great power balancing”(Ibid, 425). If two regional powers struggle for control, then at some point, the small state would be forced to side with one of the two. Prolonged hedging in such a situation could carry grave consequences. Suppose the FPE chooses to hedge in the face of a clear threat or during heightened regional competition. In that case, this will be a suboptimal foreign policy response, and the small state could face substantial challenges to its sovereignty.

A hedging response would entail cooperative measures, especially in the economic field. Therefore, we should not expect the small state's imposition of unfavourable trade regimes or sanctions. In fact, the small state would even attempt to pursue favourable policies that would increase the volume of trade and attract FDI, like signing double taxation treaties or establishing joint business associations between the two states. Furthermore, we could expect cooperation in regional or international organisations on matters of common interest. At the same time, the small state would seek to increase its security cooperation with other neighbouring states. This could be the basis of a future alliance if international competition increases. Finally, the small state would reference international law, international organisation, and diplomacy to resolve any issues with the target state rather than resort to a balancing strategy.

4.4.2.Policies outside the near geographic environment

I argue that outside the immediate geographic zone and without a systemic threat or risk, the perceptions, and images of the FPE and the state's political economy are the key drivers of foreign policy and policymaking. In this realm, small states might pursue a set of different policies. Their policies would aim at i) economic gains, ii) status-seeking or iii) diplomatic support. As I illustrate below, these aims are not mutually exclusive but can be part of a broader foreign policy agenda as interconnected parts.

Foreign Economic Policy strategies

As outlined above, economic vulnerabilities exist in small states, and the FPE can use domestic and foreign policies to build resilience. From a foreign policy perspective, there is a range of strategies the FPE could employ to aid the state's economic development, increasing trade, tourism and FDI. These measures can take precedence over security outside the state's near geographic environment due to the lack of threats.

A small state's FPE could opt to negotiate double taxation treaties with states it deems potential investors in its economy. Double taxation agreements(DTA) reduce business costs by

setting tax rules and allocating “taxing rights between the two signatory states”(Braun & Zagler 2018, 1478). The aim is to avoid double taxation or non-taxation for cross-border economic activities between firms from the agreeing parties(Ibid). The benefit for small states is that DTAs set a regulatory framework favourable to firms from the agreeing party, reducing their business costs; in turn, enticing FDI and increased trade.

Another policy that the small state’s FPE can pursue to nurture economic relations with another state is the establishment of joint business associations. Joint business associations will increase the capacity of firms and entrepreneurs from the two states to contact each other via regular communication. Establishing such an association can prove crucial for the small state because most firms in small state economies are small and medium enterprises with limited capacity to conduct business diplomacy(Kesteleyn et al. 2014). The small state can utilise its chambers of industry and commerce or other business associations to set up the joint business association.

Small states can also pursue unorthodox strategies to develop their economies, employing economic and political tools(Prasad & Lal 2003). Small states would use their sovereignty to set up favourable regulatory frameworks and advanced offshore services sectors to entice FDI. They could offer incentives to build up their tourist sector capacity if they have the right environment. These are domestic policies with an international outlook. Therefore, we would expect the small state’s FPE, diplomats and relevant state officers to promote these qualities abroad. Importantly, small states can set up state agencies responsible for their suitability as an FDI destination, offering advice and guidance to potential investors and undertaking international and regional branding and marketing campaigns(Varga 2013).

Status-seeking policies

Beyond economic activities, a small state can use their foreign policy to engage in status-seeking(De Carvalho & Neumann 2014; Mohammadzadeh 2017; Crandall & Varov 2016). Status seeking, although most often attributed to great or middle powers, is also a strategy employed by small states. De Carvalho and Neumann(2014, 2) argued that small states want to gain “status through making themselves *useful* to greater powers”, gaining their approval for their contribution to international peace and security issues. They note that status-seeking allows small states to gain a “good power” status(Ibid, 16-17). They define a good power as being recognised regionally and internationally as a moral and reliable actor(Ibid).

Status seeking by small states can take a variety of forms. Smallness benefits from not being considered a threatening power to great powers. Instead, they are often viewed as trustworthy and credible actors suitable for mediators or “honest brokers” in conflicts or international issues(Smed & Wivel 2017; Baxter et al. 2018). An example is the Oslo peace process, where Norway mediated between the Palestinians and the Israelis(Skånland 2010; Shlaim 2016). Qatar has also been involved in mediation efforts in Yemen and Lebanon, seeking to promote itself as a mediator in the Middle East(Kamrava 2011). Based on these characteristics, small states can act as norm entrepreneurs(Corbett et al. 2019; Adamson 2019). Estonia’s spearheading the establishment of international cybersecurity norms within the UN or Denmark’s leading role in the development of anti-piracy norms through the Contact Group off the Coast of Somalia(Crandall & Varov 2016; Crandall & Allan 2015; Smed & Wivel 2017). These efforts occur within international organisations, allowing small states to exercise multilateral diplomacy, highlighting their adherence to international law, which feeds into their narrative of being good powers.

Membership in certain international organisations will also aid a small state’s status-seeking efforts. International organisations like the EU and NATO and groupings like the UNSC are considered prestigious international clubs. Therefore, the participation of small states within those clubs elevates their status. Membership allows small states to punch above their weight diplomatically. Small states can engage greater powers level terms via their status as members of these elite clubs. Critically, they can offer diplomatic support within these elite clubs to greater powers that are outsiders in exchange for these outsiders' promotion of their interests.

These interests could relate to sovereignty issues in the immediate geographic environment, like border or maritime zone disputes or as part of a counter-secessionist foreign policy. Small states would seek to elevate their status to gather diplomatic support for their position on a bilateral or multilateral level within international and regional organisations(Pedi & ChingLiu 2022). Such diplomatic efforts could strengthen the small state’s foreign economic policy initiatives outlined above. A reliable and useful state would have easier access to economic aid. Political merits often trump economics from the perspective of the greater power, especially when the potential investor in the small state is a state capitalist firm.

Gathering diplomatic support

Small states often seek to gather diplomatic support for their positions without necessarily seeking to elevate their status. The first is via international organisations, while the second is by linking their interests to the interests of greater powers. International Organisations are critical to small-state diplomacy. Thorhallson and Steinsson(2017) argue that small states prefer to join and operate within multilateral organisations since their participation decreases the costs of diplomacy and restrains the power of larger states. Classic works like those of Fox(1959) and Rothstein(1968) attribute importance to diplomatic statecraft for small states, a nuance echoed by contemporary scholarship. Small states are supporters of multilateralism because it allows them to increase their influence(Kassimeris 2009; Thorhallson & Steinsson 2017). Corbett et al.(2019) argue that small states can frame themselves as useful actors “when leaders of IOs seek election, secretariats seek clients, and NGOs seek to draw attention to their agenda at IOs”.

Membership in international organisations allows small states to use the framework these bodies provide to strategically articulate themselves as vulnerable and small(Lee & Smith, 654). Unlike status-seeking, where small states seek to gain a seat at the table with greater power, this strategic choice emphasises their weaknesses. By doing so, small states bundle together in blocs within international organisations, promoting a collective and “competent performance of vulnerability,” highlighting their “unique position” that needs to be acknowledged(Ibid; Corbett et al. 2019). The “Small Island Developing States”(SIDS) and “Small and Vulnerable Economies”(SVEs) groupings in the UN and WTO have successfully pushed their agenda on many occasions. Through the Alliance of Small Island States(AOSIS), SIDS adopted a joint strategy and discourse that successfully promoted their climate change positions during COP21 and the Paris Climate Agreement(Ourbak & Magnan 2018). SVEs working together during the WTO’s Doha Ministerial round in 2001 used the threat of their veto to gain a dedicated work programme(Corbett et al. 2019, 663).

Conducting foreign policy through International Organisations provides important legal tools to challenge greater powers. An illustrative example was the ability of Antigua to take the US to the WTO’s Dispute Settlement Mechanism over the issue of internet gambling. The Antiguan case was built on a discourse of trade liberalisation and smallness, another performance of vulnerability. Antigua managed to win the case in 2004, and a 2005 US appeal was rejected. The capacity of small states to use international organisations to their advantage

has limitations. Small states benefit as long as the great powers that safeguard the rule-based international system are willing to uphold it and abide by its rules.

A revitalisation of nationalism across the globe has shown that multilateralism does not necessarily move linearly towards a worldwide international society. Antigua was able to challenge a powerful adversary because the US was ready to accept the norm established within its hegemonic system. This could change if the international system is embroiled in new nationalistic antagonisms that lead to disruptions of global trade, protectionism, and the emergence of new and competing multilateral structures.

A small state could also gather diplomatic support if it portrays its issues and interests as similar to those faced by greater power or a group of states. Cyprus and Greece were partly able to build support for their positions on the Cyprus Problem within the Arab World by portraying their struggle as common and in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinians. This enabled Greek and Cypriot diplomacy to gather support for their positions in the UN General Assembly.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has achieved two tasks. The first was to set out two competing and testable hypotheses (be tested in the two case studies in Chapters 7 and 8). They aim to assess the scope of NcR's explanatory power and examine the limits of the theory when utilised on small states. The second task of the chapter was to set out an NcR-inspired theory capable of explaining small-state foreign policy based on these two hypotheses. The theory's starting point is Walt's balance of threat, which acts as the theory's independent variable. The two intervening variables at the domestic level are the FPE's perceptions and the political economy of the state. As per H2, these intervening variables become independent variables without a systemic threat, i.e. when there is no input from the independent variable. H2 postulates this will happen when the small state's foreign policy is directed outside its immediate geographic zone. Geographic distance acts as a structural modifier that minimises the possibility of threats to the FPE. Finally, the dependent variable is the small state's foreign policy with two sets of strategies. The first foreign policy strategy is in the immediate geographic environment, while the second deals with foreign policy strategies outside the immediate geographic environment.

CHAPTER 5: GREECE, CYPRUS, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

This chapter aims to set out the historical context for analysing the two chosen case studies in Chapters 7 and 8. The first step is to apply the small state definition outlined in Chapter 2 on Cyprus and Greece. Then a definition of the Middle East will be offered based on the goal of this thesis. The final step is a historical overview of the foreign policies of both states in the Middle East, which is necessary to facilitate the reader with the trajectory these two states have followed. This section will also seek to explain why the turn of both states towards the Middle East in the 2000s could be seen as puzzling, given the foreign policy orientation of both states since the 1990s. The chapter will proceed in three sections based on the above outline.

5.1. Greece and Cyprus as small states

This section seeks to define Greece and Cyprus as small states following the framework introduced in Chapter 2. A small state has four characteristics – i) dependence, ii) variable geometry, iii) defensive posture and iv) a tendency to follow international law and join international organisations. The definition of smallness employed here differs from Toje because it does not only focus on the security aspect of smallness but also takes into account financial and economic considerations, especially in terms of dependence. Furthermore, I disagree with Toje's assertion that small states are necessarily status quo powers. Instead, small states are not always satisfied with their position within the international system and sometimes try and even succeed in altering aspects of international law, introducing new norms, and showing resilience and resistance to the will of greater powers. Critically, they do not seek to achieve this using arms and military power as this would be a self-defeating strategy. Greece and Cyprus exhibit all the characteristics to be understood as small states under the above definition.

5.1.1. Dependence

Both states exhibit dependence in economic and security terms. As the Eurozone crisis illustrated, Greece and Cyprus are highly dependent on their European partners financially (Pagoulatos 2018; Demetriades 2017; Clerides 2014). During the crisis, none of the two states could avoid bankruptcy without the aid of European creditors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). Furthermore, during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic both Greece and Cyprus were supporters of the creation of a common EU bond to tackle the effects of the crisis (Dendrinou & Chrysoloras

2020). Greece supported the idea during the Eurozone crisis(Mackenzie 2011). Both states favoured a multilateral approach which in turn highlighted their dependency on the EU in economic and financial terms.

In security terms, Cyprus's eagerness to join the EU is linked to its quest for security. EU accession was seen by Greek Cypriots as a vital step in the solution of the Cyprus Problem which is inherently linked with the view of the Turkish threat(Christodoulides 2018; Demetriou 2022; Tocci 2003). Despite the failure of the EU to prove catalytical to a solution of the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus is one of the most adamant supporters deepening the EU's 'strategic autonomy'(Christodoulides 2018; EUPARL 2022). Additionally, Cyprus has been reliant on Greece for security in terms of arms provision, training and even leadership(Moisi & Zachariades 2021). One should not forget that the Cypriot National Guard(CNG) is still headed by a retired Greek army general since 1967.

In turn, Greece has traditionally sought shelter under an alliance with the US and Britain since the end of WWII.⁵³ Eventually it became a NATO member in 1952. As a result, Greece became highly dependent on the alliance for armaments and the provision of security against the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact states in the Balkans. Furthermore, NATO membership was in later years seen as a guarantee against Türkiye which is also a NATO ally. The rationale is that operating within a common alliance framework with Türkiye would deter the two states from going to war against each other.(Dempsey 2020). Nonetheless, the recurrent crises with Türkiye since the 1950s and especially after 1974 illustrate that although an all-out war between the two allies has been averted the threat in the eyes of Greek and Turkish foreign policy makers has not subsided.

Greece's decision to apply for accession in the European Economic Community(EEC) in the immediate aftermath of the restoration of democracy in 1974 was also linked to security concerns. According to Eirini Karamouzi, it was an attempt to move away from being exclusively dependent on the United States (Karamouzi 2014). After all, the United States were viewed by the Greek public and much of the political elite of the country as culprits for the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and for the establishment of the military junta(Kirtsoglou &

⁵³ British involvement begins during WWII initially in support of resistance organisations against German, Italian and Bulgarian forces occupying the country but also siding with the right wing resistance organisation EDES against the Communist Party backed EAM. As the Axis occupation was coming to an end and the infighting among the Greek resistance organisations intensified eventually leading to the spark of the Greek Civil War. The US officially intervened through the Truman doctrine in 1947 on the side of EDES which eventually came out victorious in 1949.

Theodossopoulos 2010). Moreover, joining the EEC was in the view of Konstantinos Karamanlis a vital step in safeguarding Greek democracy and diversifying Greece's dependence on the United States for defence(Karamouzi 2014). Like Cyprus, Greece is a key supporter of furthering the EU's defensive capabilities and the EU's strategic autonomy. Greece has been supportive of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy(CSDP) as well as measures geared to enhance defensive cooperation and interoperability among EU member states' armed forces like the Permanent Structured Cooperation(PESCO) and the European Defence Fund(EDF).

5.1.2. Variable Geometry

Regarding the second component, variable geometry, Greece, and Cyprus cannot project power on a global stage for two reasons. Firstly, both states lack the military and economic resources to do so. Secondly, they find themselves in a volatile and threatening regional environment where regional matters are at the top of the hierarchy regarding foreign policy priorities. For Greece, these threats have historically stemmed from the Aegean, the Balkans and more recently the Eastern Mediterranean. Since 1974, Greek threat perception has zeroed in on Türkiye which is seen in many ways as the *raison d'être* of Greek foreign policy makers. In the case of Cyprus, the presence of thousands of Turkish troops on its soil and the geographical adjacency to Türkiye itself illustrate the hostile environment in which Greek Cypriot foreign policy makers have to deal with.

Given their position of relative military and economic inferiority both states have sought to internationalise their disputes with Türkiye seeking the involvement of international courts and international organisations like the EU, the ICJ and the UN. This was true for Greece even in the case of the Macedonian name dispute where Greece enjoyed a vast material advantage over the then Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia(FYROM), eventually reaching an UN-brokered diplomatic solution to the disputes. In the case of Türkiye and the Cyprus Problem, both states highlight the legality of their claims focusing on instruments provided by international law like UNSC Resolutions and UN Convention on the Law of the Sea(UNCLOS III).⁵⁴ Greece, in particular, has at different time suggested that its maritime through the International Court of Justice(ICJ) and has continuously argued that an international court should determine the outcome of its issues with Türkiye(Heraclides 2010). Concerning the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus has historically sought to internationalise the conflict

⁵⁴ That is not to say that Greek and Greek Cypriot positions are beyond any legal challenge.

throughout its different phases. Upon the declaration of Cypriot independence in 1960 UN involvement was sought after in all subsequent crises on the island. This was also true of the EU upon Cyprus's accession in 2004 with Greek Cypriot politicians seeking to operationalise their membership in their favour in the Cyprus Problem negotiations.

5.1.3. Defensive posture

An examination of the military posture of both countries illustrates the defensive nature of their strategy against the Turkish armed forces. In the case of Cyprus, the state's small GDP, the presence of thousands of Turkish troops on the island since 1974 and the geographic proximity to Türkiye leave no other option to the Greek Cypriot leadership but to adopt a defensive posture. A clear example is the fact that the CNG Airforce does not field a single fighter jet and the response to Turkish air superiority comes in the form of dated Soviet-era anti-aircraft systems.⁵⁵ A similar case is played out in the Navy where the main capabilities are again defensive in nature. In the words of Samokhvalov, Cyprus's willingness to use military force is characterised by the motto "militant pacificism"(Samokhvalov 2013, 62). Cyprus has not deployed troops in internationally apart from a few officers in certain EU and UN task forces.

In the case of Greece, the country's national defence strategy has been historically grounded on the preservation of a balance of military power across the Aegean which would act as a deterrent against Türkiye(Economides 2013; Ploumis 2019). The existence of this balance in recent years has come under threat for two reasons. Firstly, due to the consequences of the economic crisis there were severe constraints on the ability of the Greek armed forces to procure new equipment, maintain available equipment and offer sufficient payment to its members. Secondly, Türkiye has also been proactive in acquiring new weapons systems and advancing its own military industry.(Kurç 2017; see graph 3) In conjunction to these developments, Türkiye under the leadership of President Erdogan has been growing more assertive in its claims over the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean in general, thus, increasing the pressure on the Greek government and its armed forces(Pittel & Sheppard 2020).

5.1.4. Lovers of international law

Both Greece and Cyprus are supporters of international law while favouring membership of multilateral institutions; the fourth component of smallness under the adopted

⁵⁵ See Chapter 8 for an in-depth comparison between Cypriot and Turkish armed forces.

definition. Their membership of the EU and the importance they ascribe to it is clear proof of the later point. Both states viewed accession to the European community as a key foreign policy objective. Ever since their accession their foreign policies have been largely Europeanised(Ioakimidis 2000; Economides 2005; Stavridis et al. 2015;Christou & Kyris 2017). In the case of Cyprus this process continued even when the state was led by the Eurosceptic left-wing administration of Demetris Christofias(Christou & Kyris 2017). The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy(CFSP) and CSDP form the framework through which the foreign policies of both states operate in.

Nonetheless, Greece and Cyprus should not be necessarily seen as status quo powers. Greece and Cyprus are not content with the status quo regarding the Cyprus Problem and their maritime disputes with Türkiye. The official position of both states in Cyprus is that they seek a solution based on UNSC resolutions. In their maritime zone disputes, they emphasise the importance of negotiations and in the case of Greece reverting to the ICJ has been a long-standing position of most Greek administrations. However, they do not seek to alter this status quo using military means but through the instruments provided by international law.⁵⁶ This evident in the way Greece solved the Macedonian Name dispute and how Cyprus seeks to solve the Cyprus Problem.

5.2. Conceptualising the Middle East

Since the end of the Cold War, IR scholarship has increasingly focused on regions, regionalisation and regionalism(Buzan & Weaver 2003; Acharya 2010; Paul 2012; Hoshiro 2009).⁵⁷ The rationale among this burgeoning scholarship was that US hegemony would eventually give way to a more multipolar, decentred international order without necessarily affecting global interconnectedness(Buzan 2011; Acharya 2011; 2014; Cooley 2012; Garzón 2017). A “decentred globalism” was nascent, and in this novel global environment, the focus

⁵⁶ The official Greek Cypriot position is that the status quo on Cyprus is unacceptable. Nonetheless, as Gregoris Ioannou(2020) has argued there is increasingly a consensus within a large part of Greek Cypriot society and the political elite that the status quo on the island is not only acceptable but beneficial to their interests.

⁵⁷ It is key here to distinguish between regionalism and regionalization. The former is a top-down process where government of geographically adjacent and proximate states agree to enhance their cooperation and coordination on a range of issues. Regionalist policies often solidify these agreements through the formation and creation of regional institutions. Examples of successful regionalist policies include the European Union or the Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC). Regionalization, however, is a bottom-up process where the creation of the region is driven by spontaneous actions of non-governmental actors stemming from markets, businesses, investment processes, tourism etc. Notably, the two processes are not mutually exclusive(On the distinction of the two processes see Hoshiro 2019).

by policymakers and academics was increasingly placed on the regional rather than the global level(Buzan 2011).

The Middle East was elevated in this new literature but most notably in the context of US' regional power projection in the post-Cold War era. Area studies experts would agree that there are no clear-cut boundaries for most regional spaces in geographical, ideational, political, or economic terms. In this respect, the Middle East is not different. The term “Middle East” is fundamentally an invented term that entered the popular vocabulary in the 20th century(Bilgin 2004; Renton 2007). In the past, other names had been utilised to refer to what we now call the Middle East—for example, the terms Near East, Mesopotamia, the Levant or the Holy Land. In many cases, these terms were devised and used by people outside the region to suit their own worldviews and strategic interests(Danforth 2016). Today, there is still considerable debate about which countries are actually in it.⁵⁸

The goal of this work and this chapter is not to enter and contribute to this debate. Instead, I offer a conceptualisation of the Middle East fit for this work. My conceptualisation follows the one offered by Beverley Milton Edwards(2011, 5) which essentially excludes the African states west and south of Egypt. I argue that the Middle East comprises three sub-regions: the Maghreb, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. Since the main focus of this work is the foreign policies of Greece and Cyprus toward the Middle East, we should consider the Middle East based on the viewpoint and actions of these two states. Precisely, for this reason, I have argued in favour of this division of the Middle East because Greek and Cypriot policy officials and policymakers understand the region in this particular way.

Without disputing the importance of the Maghreb for the politics, economics and international relations of the Middle East, this dissertation will focus on the subregions of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf which form the focal points of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy in the region.⁵⁹ Cyprus has not established embassies in the Maghreb while Greece, despite having embassies in those states, rarely engages with them in the examined period. Critically, when Greek officials periodically engage with their counterparts in those states, this results from developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. A clear example of this tendency is Greek Foreign Minister Dendias' trips to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in early 2020 which aimed at gathering regional support against the memorandum for the delimitation of maritime

⁵⁸ See the different definitions in two widely used textbooks on the region(Edward, 2011, 5; Fawcett 2019, 3)

⁵⁹ The Maghreb includes Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

boundaries signed between Türkiye and the Libyan Government of National Accord(GNA) in November 2019(CNN Greece 2019).

5.3. Greece and Cyprus in the Middle East: A Historical Overview

Greece and Cyprus share several parallels in their relationship with the Middle East. Firstly, at times both states were viewed as parts of the region itself even though both are currently considered members of the West.⁶⁰ Secondly, Greece and Cyprus are post-Ottoman states, like most Middle Eastern States, and have an intertwined past with Türkiye, the successor state to the Ottoman Empire. This fact is important in understanding the international and regional outlook, of Greece and Cyprus. Both countries, as we shall see, view their foreign policy via the lens of their rivalry with Türkiye. Their Middle Eastern foreign policy in the region builds on the mantra of historic bonds with the Arab world(Athanassopoulou 2010, 233; Ker-Lindsay 2010).

Thirdly, beyond Türkiye, their engagement with the Middle East before 2004 fluctuated and paid lip service to a Third Worldist narrative.⁶¹ This policy choice helped Greece and Cyprus to gain support within the Arab World and the OIC for the Cyprus Problem, the UN General Assembly both for the Cyprus and during the negotiations on UNCLOS. In the case of Greece, this was especially true under the premiership of Andreas Papandreu in the 1980s. In the case of Cyprus, membership of NAM prior to the country's EU accession in 2004 placed Cyprus firmly in the so-called 'Third World'.

Fourthly, in the 1990s and up to 2004, their engagement with the region had subsided, except for their relationship with Türkiye, which retained its position as the focal point of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy. For Greece, much of the focus was placed on the developments in the Balkans due to the breakup of Yugoslavia(Larrabee 2005; Voskopoulos 2006). Yugoslavia's breakup led to the creation of a new "national issue"(εθνικό θέμα) for Greece in the context of

⁶⁰ Scholars working on the Middle East have often included Greece as part of the region during the 19th century and up until the onset of the Cold War(Davison 1959; Earle 1928; Kuinholm 1980). Cyprus was considered a part of the Middle East up until the 1990s when the country chose to follow the path of EU accession(Ker-Lindsay 2008). There is also a rare viewpoint that Greece and Cyprus are part of a Greater Middle East(Frantzman 2020).

⁶¹ Third Worldism refers to the internationalist movement between the 1950s and the 1980s that sought to form a distinction between the advanced capitalist world, the Communist camp and the newly decolonised spaces in Africa, Asia and the Middle East(Nash 2003). Ideologically, it was seen as "a space in which the oppressed (colonized and poor) were able to reappropriate precious means of discourse and of action. Key here is dignity, the yearning of equal status and worth that both was impelled by and grew out of decolonialization"(Malley 1996, 232-3)(On Greece and the Third World see Athanassopoulou 2010, 222-5; on Cyprus' participation in the non-Aligned Movement see Ker-Lindsay 2010; Karyos 2022, 26-8)

the Macedonian name dispute(Tziampiris 2000; Nimetz 2020; Kotzias 2020).⁶² In the case of Cyprus, much more focus was placed on the task of EU accession, which was seen as vital to the solution of the Cyprus Problem(Theophanous 2004, Ker-Lindsay 2005).

5.3.1. Greece in the Middle East

Although Greece is not considered part of the Middle East, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, analysts viewed it as part of the Near East.⁶³ Conceptualisations of the Near East during that time often included the Balkan peninsula due to its domination by the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states which gained their independence from the Ottomans during the 19th century.⁶⁴ Of those states, Greece was the first to achieve that feat in 1830 after the Greek Wars of Independence(1821-27). The successful revolt of the Greeks, which came on the backbone of French, British and Russian military intervention, signalled a new phase in the Eastern Question regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire. The Empire had to face the danger of nationalism and revolt from within along with its already weakened international stature. In this respect, the fates of Greece and the Middle East have been at critical junctures intertwined.

Eventually, the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of WWI. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire led to the imposition of a mandate system in the Middle East that gave its place to an array of new states immediately after the end of WWII. Facing this new state system, from the end of WWII to the end of the Cold War, Greece's policy towards the region was dictated at two levels; i) countering Türkiye and ii) maintaining friendly relations with Arab states for political and financial reasons outlined below.

Greece and Türkiye

Greece has shared a turbulent history with its Aegean neighbour(Aydun & Ifantis 2004; Heraclides 2010; Heraclides & Çakmak 2019). In the national consciousness of Greeks and Turks, their modern nation-states were born out of conflicts against each other(Millas 2004; 2005; Heraclides 2010, 5-30; Aktar et al. 2010). Although Greece's relations with Türkiye post-1949 were not immediately hostile given their NATO membership and what they perceived as

⁶² The dispute arose when the then Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia(FYROM), now Northern Macedonia, declared itself as the Republic of Macedonia. From Greece's perspective, the name Macedonia was a purely Greek name with claims going back to classical antiquity. The dispute was finally solved with the Prespes agreement in 2018.

⁶³ As mentioned above the terms Near East and Middle East have been used interchangeably in many cases and often denote to the same region.

⁶⁴ In the late 19th century and early 20th century the term "Near East" came to encompass both the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire(see Hichens & Guérin 1913; Norman 1896).

the common threat of communism, this would soon change. Gradually after the end of WWII and the Greek Civil War, Greece's relations with Türkiye formed Greek foreign policy's *raison d'être*. Greco-Turkish relations "set the framework of Greek foreign policy," to use the words of Vasilis Nedos(2022) and Minister Dimitrios Keridis(2022). Of those issues two stand out and persist to this day. The first is the Cyprus Problem, and the second is the Aegean dispute.

The first significant thorn in Greco-Turkish relations after the Turkish Wars of Independence(1919-1922) concerned the Cyprus Problem. Greece and Türkiye have clashed in Cyprus since the 1950s. In the summer of 1974 when Turkish troops invaded Cyprus following a Greek-sponsored coup d'état against the Cypriot President Archbishop Makarios, Greek soldiers of the ELDYK contingent initially participated in the coup d'état and subsequently fought against the Turkish forces.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, for purposes related to NATO, neither side has recognised that they had fought against each other during the conflict.

The Aegean Sea dispute is a more recent issue. Essentially, the issue emerged in 1973 due to claims for oil exploration rights in the Aegean. Subsequently, the Aegean dispute has taken many twists and turns, bringing the two countries close to war in 1976, 1987, 1996 and in 2020. Today the Aegean dispute has several facets with the main issues being the delimitations of the i) continental shelf, ii) territorial sea, iii) Exclusive Economic Zone(EEZ) and iv) airspace between the two sides, as well as the questions of the v) demilitarisation of certain Greek Aegean islands, vi) FIR jurisdiction over the Aegean, vii) NATO' jurisdictional command in the area and viii) the "grey zone" dispute.⁶⁶ For its part, Greece claims that the only issue between the two sides is the delimitation of the continental shelf. On the contrary, Türkiye argues that the issues outlined above should be part of a negotiation and not just the maritime zone disputes.

The last time a solution towards many of the issues facing Greece and Türkiye seemed attainable due to the so-called "Helsinki process", which was kickstarted in the late 1990s in

⁶⁵ According to the Treaty of Guarantee which came part and parcel with the Cypriot Constitutions drafted by the three Guarantor powers of the Republic of Cyprus- Greece, the UK and Türkiye – a Turkish and a Greek military contingent were placed in Cyprus with the task of safeguarding the newly established independent state.

⁶⁶ The so called grey zones dispute concerns a dispute over the sovereignty of some islets that Greece and Türkiye. The issue came to the forefront in the Imia/Kardak dispute in January 1996 saw both states deploying significant military forces against each other. During the dispute a Greek helicopter crashed under unclear circumstances with both pilots losing their lives(Heraclides 2010, 167-222).

the aftermath of the Imia/Kardak crisis in January 1996.⁶⁷ As Economides(2005) argues, in this context, the Simitis administration gradually shifted the rhetoric from the usual discussions around “rights” to talk of Greek “interests”. This was aided by the so-called “earthquake diplomacy” of Foreign Ministers George Papandreou and Ismail Cem which emerged after two devastating earthquakes hit both sides of the Aegean in 1998 and 1999 and the subsequent provision of aid by both sides(Ker-Lindsay 2000).

The process sought to Europeanise the Greco-Turkish relations. Greece attempted to project its dispute with Türkiye to an EU level. Greek diplomats argued that the dispute should be seen not merely as a Greco-Turkish affair but as another issue in the broader EU-Türkiye relationship, especially in the context of Türkiye’s EU accession talks(Economides 2005; Tsakonas 2021a). This strategy was not vindictive but opened up the path of Türkiye’s accession to the EU for a while. Greece removed its veto and even urged its counterparts in the European Council in Helsinki in December 1999 to set a date for Türkiye’s upgrade to a candidate member status. On its part, Türkiye had to solve its disputes with Greece by December 2004.⁶⁸ In the words of Panayiotis Tsakonas(2021b), it was a strategy that sought to “socialize” Türkiye as an actor fit for EU membership and consequently able to solve its disputes with Greece diplomatically and legally rather than through military altercation.

This development achieved two things. Firstly, the pressure was now on the EU and the other member states to push Türkiye’s accession forward. Secondly, resolving Greece’s outstanding disputes became a precondition for EU accession(Economides 2005). From the perspective of Greek policymakers, Greece was proactive, illustrated its good faith to Türkiye and wielded the card of Türkiye’s EU accession thus hoping for a favourable agreement with Türkiye on the Aegean Sea dispute. In the following years and especially between 2002 to 2003, Greece and Türkiye came close to hammering a solution(Heraclides 2010, 151-4).

However, by the end of 2004, the rapprochement peaked, and it was increasingly becoming clear that the Helsinki strategy could not yield any positive results for three reasons.

⁶⁷ This chapter of Greco-Turkish relations at least in Greek parlance bears the name of Helsinki because it was at the 1999 Helsinki Council that Greece removed its veto and objections to Turkish membership of the EU and urged its counterparts to move forward with Türkiye’s accession process into the EU(Economides 2005, 482-487; Tsakonas 2021a).

⁶⁸ The dispute resolution mechanism was a combination of the preferred resolution mechanisms of both sides. Greece traditionally favoured a resolution of the dispute in the International Court in Hague while Türkiye favored a resolution after bilateral negotiations. The Helsinki Council’s decision was to initially begin with bilateral negotiations and if that did not bear any fruits the two sides would then revert to the Hague(Tsakonas 2010; 2021b).

The first was linked to the Cyprus Problem, whose resolution was a crucial part of the Helsinki process. Negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, under the auspices of the UN, in the early 2000s picked up steam culminating in the UN Annan Plan for Cyprus(Dodd 2010). The Plan was put forward in separate referendums in Cyprus with Greeks and Turkish Cypriots voting in April 2004. By resolving the Cyprus Problem, a thorn in Greco-Turkish relations would be eliminated and the whole island would join the EU reunified. Türkiye would diplomatically recognise the new federal state in Cyprus.

The Greek and Turkish governments supported the plan. However, the Greek Cypriots rejected the UN Plan and despite its approval by the Turkish Cypriots, the Plan was rejected. Consequently, the Cyprus Problem remained unresolved, and Türkiye continued to not recognise Cyprus, by then an EU member state. Recognition could only come after a resolution. Hence, as long as the Cyprus Problem remains unresolved, Türkiye cannot become an EU member.

The second issue was linked to reversals in the internal political scene of Greece and Türkiye. In Greece, the electoral loss of PASOK and Simitis in the 2004 parliamentary elections brought Kostas Karamanlis to power. Kostas Karamanlis allowed Türkiye to begin accession negotiations in 2005 without resolving their bilateral dispute under the process set out in Helsinki. Karamanlis' premiership was highlighted by a continued détente but with no substantial negotiations on the challenging issues facing Greek-Turkish relations. There was hesitancy from his government to deal with the intricacies of Greek-Turkish relations despite the positive climate between the two countries at the time.

In Türkiye, the rise of Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party(AKP) in 2002 was met with increased optimism in Brussels. Erdogan was seen as the person that would take the necessary steps towards EU membership. The democratic reforms and the liberal economic policies of the AKP in the 2000s substantiated these hopes(Stelzenmüller 2005). As years went by, however, the AKP was becoming disenchanted with the prospects of EU membership while internally, it was becoming more and more authoritarian. The 2013 Gezi Park Protests and the 2016 coup d'état signified Türkiye's authoritarian turn(Baser & Öztürk 2017). Türkiye's democratic backsliding was solidified by a constitutional referendum in 2017 that gave the Turkish President considerable powers and diminished adequate checks and balances. Since 2013 the AKP regime has overseen thousands of politically motivated arrests, and the curtailment of press freedom and court independence means that Türkiye cannot meet the Copenhagen criteria necessary for EU accession(Commission 2022).

A third issue with the Helsinki strategy would have been the willingness of EU member states to allow Türkiye in, even if it fulfilled EU accession conditionality. There are different reasons outlined by different actors based on their interests (Grigoriadis 2006; Tocci 2007). Turkish accession to the EU would mean a strong presence of Türkiye in EU institutions due to the sheer size of the country, limiting the role of major powers like France or Germany. Former French President Nicholas Sarkozy stated that “Türkiye does not belong to Europe (France 24 2011)”. His position has been echoed within the German Christian Democratic Party (Bilefsky 2007). Federalist forces, like the French liberals, have also argued that Türkiye’s addition to the EU would create such cultural diversity that the vision of a federal EU would become impossible (Tocci 2007). Additionally, Turkish accession would enlarge EU borders to conflict-prone regions like the Caucasus and the Middle East, creating unnecessary security risks for the EU (Grigoriadis 2006).

After 2004 Greece slowly had to come to terms with the fact that it needed a new strategy vis-à-vis Türkiye. Furthermore, in the next few years, it became evident that both Greece and Türkiye would undergo momentous internal changes while the landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the broader Middle East was about to change drastically and signalling significant shifts in Greek foreign policy.

Greece and the broader Middle East

Greek foreign policy was eager to engage with the Middle East which it saw as an area that could help Greece further its national interests by cultivating friendly relationships with the Arab states. To do so, successive Greek governments sought to deepen economic linkages with Arab states, paid lip service to support their interests within the EEC and supported Arab positions on the Palestinian issue (Athanasopoulou 2010; Rossis 2010; Grigoriadis & Tsourapas 2022). Furthermore, Greek politicians, diplomats and members of the intelligentsia believed Greece was in a unique position to act as a link between the Middle East and Europe (Athanasopoulou 2010; Katrougkalos 2022; Interviewee 2 2022). As a result, Greek governments during this period provided only a *de facto* recognition of the state of Israel and it was not until 1990 when the New Democracy government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis came to power and established full diplomatic relations with Israel. Nonetheless, even at that point the limits of Greece’s relationship with Israel became clear of Greece’s continued support towards Palestine and the establishment of closer military and economic ties between Türkiye and Israel (Athanasopoulou 2010; Tziampiris 2014).

The necessity of maintaining friendly relationships with Arab states and regimes during this period can be explained by several factors. Firstly, throughout the Middle East, there were sizeable Greek and Greek Orthodox minorities in states like Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria (Chrysocheri 2017; Hatzivasiliou 1992; 2021). The Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Alexandria are also seen as beacons of Hellenism in the region by Greek governments (Vatikiotis 1994; Roussos 2005). By maintaining friendly relationships with Arab states, it was believed that the Greek government would be able to cater to the interests of the Greek diaspora in the region. This driver, nonetheless, became secondary after the decision of Gamal Abdel Nasser to nationalise key parts of the Egyptian economy in 1956, which in turn pushed numerous Greeks living in Egypt to move to mainland Greece, thus, drastically shrinking the Greek diaspora in the region (Hatzivassiliou 1992).

The second factor was related to Cyprus and the objectives of Greek foreign policy on the island. The Cyprus issue took various twists and turns with Greek objectives differentiating based on the situation on the ground. During the 1950s, Greek governments wished to gain the support of Arab governments in the UN General Assembly for their goal of *Enosis* i.e. unification of Cyprus with Greece.⁶⁹ *Enosis* did not come to fruition and the island was declared an independent state in 1960. After a turbulent period, Türkiye invaded the island in 1974 following a Greek coup d'état against Archbishop Makarios. The Turkish Cypriot leadership under Raouf Denktash essentially created a *de facto* state in the north of the island which declared its independence in November 1983.⁷⁰ For Greece, it was pivotal to gain the support of the Arab states and make sure that none of them would recognise the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”). This necessitated active Greek diplomacy not only in bilateral terms but also in forums where Türkiye was seen as influential like the OIC and the Arab League.

Apart from the two aforementioned objectives Greek foreign policy in the region up until the end of the Cold War was also driven by the necessity of maintaining friendly relations with oil-producing states primarily in the Gulf, to ensure a stable oil supply. The oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 illustrated the vital nature of the Middle East for stable energy supplies and prices, hence, the cultivation of amicable relations with the states of the region contributed to the maintenance of a steady flow of oil and energy to the Greek economy. In fact, Greece was

⁶⁹ The Greek government resorted to the UN General Assembly five times over Cyprus, between 1954 and 1958 (Xydis 1968).

⁷⁰ To this day that the “TRNC” is not recognised by any other state apart from Türkiye.

exempt from the oil embargo imposed on Western nations by Arab states because it did not allow planes sending military aid to Israel to use Greek airspace(Kallivretakis 2014). Since the 1980s, a sizeable portion of Greece's gas and oil imports is coming from the region and particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran while at times, imports from Egypt, Libya and Iraq were sizeable(Roinioti & Stampolis 2013, 14).

Although there were no significant breaks in the policies of successive Greek governments between 1949 and 1989, arguably, the Middle East took a central role in the PASOK governments of Andreas Papandreou(1981-1989). PASOK came into power in 1981 on an anti-Western platform bound to challenge Greece's membership in NATO and the EEC. Eventually, Papandreou did neither. However, he counterbalanced the choice not to break away from the West with a foreign policy in the Middle East characterised by a Third Worldist attitude.

PASOK's Third Worldism was exhibited in its support of the Palestinian leadership and the PLO. During his first government, Papandreou elevated the PLO's diplomatic mission to that of an embassy and he also welcomed Yasser Arafat to Athens on an official visit(Athanassopoulou 2010). Simultaneously, Papandreou cultivated friendly relations with what US and European foreign policymakers considered renegade regimes in the region like Qaddafi's Libya and Assad's Syria. As a consequence, Greece's allies in NATO and the EEC which viewed the Palestine Liberation Organisation(PLO) and these regimes as agents of international terrorism, viewed Papandreou's twists and turns in a negative light and often led to periods of tension(Kaminaris 1999). Nonetheless, Greece's western orientation was unwavering, and Papandreou did not pivot away from the West towards a more independent foreign policy. Essentially, there was a performance of independence from the "imperialist West" in speeches but not an actual shift away from either NATO or the EEC and the Middle East was no different. Papandreou's actions played into the vibrant anti-Americanism in a large part of the Greek electorate in the early years of the Metapolitefsi.⁷¹

The 1990s signified a slight change in Greece's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first change point was the normalisation of Greek-Israeli diplomatic relations under PM Konstantinos Mitsotakis in 1990. This was a significant shift that even the return of PASOK and Andreas Papandreou did not reverse. Furthermore, the change of leadership in PASOK and

⁷¹ Metapolitefsi was the process of transition from the military junta(1967-1974) to democracy. The roots of anti-Americanism in the period can be found in the perception of the Greek public that the junta was US supported and that the Turkish invasion of Cyprus was enabled by the US(Lialiouti 2015)

the Greek government with the departure of Andreas Papandreou and the arrival of Costas Simitis led to a softer stance by PASOK on a range of international issues including the approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, under the stewardship of Giannos Kranidiotis, then Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, there was an attempt for Greece to act as a mediator between Palestinians and Israeli MPs between 1998 and 1999. Nonetheless, the so-called “Dialogue of Athens” did not bear any fruits(HMFA 2009). Finally, the relationship with Israel, despite the breakthroughs under Mitsotakis, remained underdeveloped in light of the close military relationship with Türkiye.

Greece was not a target of international terrorism emanating from the region, despite, being a NATO and EEC/EU member state, because of its friendly relations with the PLO(Kaminaris 1999). The two exceptions to this rule concerned two incidents during the 1980s – the attack on the ship “City of Poros” in 1988 and the hijacking of an Egypt Air flight in 1985 departing from Ellinikon airport(Rossis 2020, 412-413).⁷²

Overall, Greek foreign policy in the Middle East focused on the Cyprus Problem and the Aegean dispute. This was the case on the Greek-Turkish level and in Greek foreign policy towards the rest of the Middle East. Additionally, Greek energy needs and the belief among Greek policymakers that Greece could elevate its international status by becoming a bridge between the region and the West were also key drivers. This relationship and the “romantic” view of the Greek public and political elite towards the Middle East had little tangible results to show up to 2004(Papahellas 2022).

5.3.2 Cyprus in the Middle East

Although Greece’s position in the Middle East is considered adjacent to the region and not part of it, in the case of Cyprus, the island was considered a part of the region until very recently due to its geographical position, its historical and cultural ties to the region. Geographically, Cyprus sits in the heart of the Levant basin, surrounded by Middle Eastern states – Türkiye to the north, Syria, Lebanon, Israel to the east and Egypt to the South. Historically, the island was conquered by both the Abbasid and Umayyad empires while between 1571 and 1878, it was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. The presence of these great Muslim empires on the island left its imprint in political, cultural, and historical terms. About 20% of the island’s population are Turkish Cypriots of Sunni Muslim denomination.

⁷² The attack on the “City of Poros” was conducted not by the PLO or Fatah but by Abu Nidal Organisation which had split from Arafat’s Fatah and was, thus, not attributable to the pro-Greek Fatah.

Moreover, there is also a significant population of Turkish Muslim settlers which moved to the island in the years following the 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent military occupation.⁷³ For those people Turkish is their primary language and Sunni Islam their religion. Religiously, the island is also considered to be of high religious and historical significance for Muslims everywhere.⁷⁴ Finally, for most of its existence as an independent state as we shall see Cyprus' foreign policy was anchored to the non-Aligned Movement and not to European or Western international institutions.⁷⁵ This changed in May 2004 when Cyprus became a member of the European Union and from that point on, at least in nominal political terms, Cyprus is considered part of the European continent.⁷⁶

This sub-section on Cypriot Foreign Policy consists of two parts. The first part offers an overview of the history of Cyprus up to 2004, focusing on the transformations of the Cyprus Problem and the relationship between Cyprus, Greece, and Türkiye up to the rejection of the Annan Plan and the accession of Cyprus in the EU. The second part zeroes in on the relationship of Cyprus with the Middle East and the foreign policy of Cyprus towards the region.

Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, and the Cyprus Problem: From independence to EU accession

Cyprus was declared an independent state in August 1960. Cypriot independence from British colonial rule resulted from a multifaceted process which began with an anti-colonial struggle by the nationalist EOKA. The original goal of EOKA, which was led politically by Archbishop Makarios III and militarily by Georgios Grivas Digenis, was the unification of Cyprus with Greece which was also seen as a way to shield the island from the “threat” of communism.⁷⁷ During EOKA's struggle against the British, it soon became apparent that the

⁷³ The Turkish settlers are considered a major sticking point in the negotiations of the Cyprus Problem. The Greek Cypriot standpoint is that their settlement is an attempt by Türkiye to alter the demographic character of the island in its favour, exploiting its position as the military victor of the 1974 conflict. This stands against Article 49 paragraph 6 of the 1949 Geneva convention (RoC MFA 2023)

http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/Embassies/embassy_thehague.nsf/ecsw17_en/ecsw17_en?OpenDocument.

⁷⁴ The city of Larnaca is home to Hala Sultan Tekke which is the burial site of Umm Haram, the aunt and one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad. The site is considered to be of great significance to Muslims worldwide (Papalexandrou 2008).

⁷⁵ The main exception here is Cyprus's membership to the Council of Europe.

⁷⁶ Nonetheless, there are still exceptions to this norm. For instance the UN Statistical division still considers Cyprus as part of Western Asia along with states from the Levant, the Caucasus and the Gulf (UNSD 2022)

⁷⁷ The anticommunism of EOKA was not uniform throughout its members and the people that supported its cause. Nonetheless, the leadership of the organisation had anti-communist sentiments and Grivas was a known anti-communist who established the infamous organisation X, an anti-communist group established during the Nazi occupation of Greece. The arrival of Grivas to lead the fight alienated the leadership of AKEL, which viewed the military insurgence as the wrong course of action despite its anti-imperialist character and support to the cause of Enosis. During the course of its struggle EOKA did not limit its attacks on the British but

British and the Turks would not allow the unification of Cyprus with Greece. Turkish Cypriot nationalists mobilised with the help of Turkish nationalist organisations and the Turkish government organizing their own nationalist organisation TMT which envisaged *Taksim* i.e. the division of Cyprus between Greek and Turkish parts. The divisions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots were also stirred by the British themselves who chose to employ more Turkish Cypriots in the police, tasking them, thus pitting them against the Greek nationalist guerillas(Demetriou 2019). The outcome of this bloody process was to transform the goal of the struggle from Enosis to independence.

Cyprus's independence was formalised with the 1959 London-Zurich Agreements between Greece, Türkiye, the UK and the two Cypriot community leaders, Archbishop Makarios III and Dr Fazıl Küçük(Dodd 2010, 42-4). The constitution of the new Republic of Cyprus was essentially drafted by Greece, Türkiye and Britain in Zurich and then approved with minor changes by the Cypriot leaders in London who had little room for manoeuvre in changing what was presented to them. The character of the constitution was consociational, setting out that the President would be a Greek-Cypriot, while a Turkish-Cypriot would serve as Vice-President. Both of them had unilateral veto powers that enabled them to reject any legislation approved by the new parliament.⁷⁸ Along with the constitution, two treaties were also agreed; the Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance. According to the Treaty of Guarantee, Greece, Türkiye, and the UK “guaranteed” the territorial sovereignty of Cyprus granting them rights of intervention. The Treaty of Alliance allied the new state with Türkiye and Greece, allowing them to establish military bases and contingents on the island(Mallinson 2005).

Nonetheless, the status quo was short-lived, as bicomunal conflict erupted in December 1963, shortly after the Greek-Cypriot leader Makarios suggested constitutional reform to eliminate Turkish Cypriot veto powers. This was rejected by both Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots with Türkiye threatening military intervention(Ibid, 35). An incident between Greek-Cypriot police officers and Turkish-Cypriots in the capital Nicosia on 20 December 1963 left two Turkish Cypriots dead, sparking hostilities between the two communities(Dodd 2010, 52-4; Ker-Lindsay 2004). As very few militias had demobilised following Cyprus's creation in 1960, inter-communal fighting escalated quickly, with a Turkish invasion narrowly

also attacked and murdered members of AKEL along with other Greek Cypriots that it deemed as traitors.(Demetriou 2019, 148-170)

⁷⁸ It should be noted that this structure with a Greek Cypriot at the helm and the second in command being a Turkish Cypriot was repeated across the public sector. For instance, the Attorney General was Greek Cypriot and the Vice Attorney General Turkish Cypriot(RoC 1960)

averted by US President Lyndon B. Johnson (Johnson & Inonu 1964). Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the government and public service, fortifying themselves into eight enclaves outside the authority of the official government, now controlled exclusively by Greek Cypriots. From that point in Cyprus becomes a *de facto* Greek Cypriot state. This was also solidified by creating a Greek Cypriot military force interconnected with Greek military officers; the Cypriot National Guard (CNG) (Moisi & Zachariades 2021).

These developments led to a new phase in the Cyprus Problem where the Greek Cypriots had control of the state as well as the support of the Greek military brigade that was placed on the island after the 1964 events (Syrigos 2018). The rise of the Greek military junta in Athens in April 1967 was met by a lukewarm response by Makarios but the two governments continued to have a close collaboration, especially in military matters. It should be noted that the presence of General Digenis as the commander of all Greek and Greek Cypriot forces on the island played a crucial factor in maintaining these close links.⁷⁹ This was bound to change in November 1967 when Greek and Greek Cypriot forces were engaged in “Operation Gronthos” against the Turkish Cypriot enclave of Kofinou (Varnava 1974). Although the operation was initially praised in Greek and Greek Cypriot press, this euphoria was soon met by international condemnation over committed atrocities against Turkish Cypriot non-combatants and as a result Türkiye threatened military intervention in Cyprus. After US mediation, the Greeks accepted the removal of their brigade from the island and Grivas’ departure from the island (Güney 2004, 32; Syrigos 2018).

In military terms, the aftermath of Operation Gronthos reduced the capacity of Greek and Greek Cypriot forces to withstand a Turkish military operation in Cyprus due to the removal of the 10,000-strong Greek brigade (Syrigos 2018, 21-22). The relations between Makarios and the Greek junta soured quickly while the internal divisions between Greek Cypriots deepened. Two blocs were created, leading to polarisation between the supporters of Enosis and General Grivas on the one side and those favouring an independent republic under the leadership of Makarios on the other. The Greek military junta supported Grivas who had already established an anti-Makarios pro-Enosis paramilitary organisation named EOKA B in 1971 (Dodd 2010, 102-103; O’Malley 1999, 134-135). From 1970 until the 1974 coup d’état the struggle between paramilitaries from both sides in this internal Greek Cypriot conflict

⁷⁹ Grivas was commander of the Supreme Military Command for the Defence of Cyprus (ASDAK [ΑΣΔΑΚ]) which encompassed all Greek and Greek Cypriot military forces. ASDAK was essentially disbanded in the aftermath of Operation Gronthos.

intensified. Four attempts were made against Makarios' life, and numerous other murders and violent altercations between Greek Cypriots.⁸⁰ This antagonism peaked after the deposal of Papadopoulos by Ioannides who assumed the position of a "shadow dictator" at the head of the Greek government in November 1973 after anti-junta riots shocked Athens earlier that month led by Greek students(Papahellas 2021).

Furthermore, there was a series of crimes committed by members of the Turkish Cypriot community against the members of the Greek Cypriot community and vice versa on purely nationalistic motives. This set the stage for the tragic events of July 1974. Initially, Ioannides orchestrated a coup d'état on July 15 against Makarios who fled the country. This provided the pretext for a Turkish invasion of the island on July 20. After two phases of fighting by August 1974, the Turkish military occupied 37% of Cyprus's land and continues to do so. The status quo of 1974 was altered slightly by the proclamation of the "TRNC" in 1983 as an independent state.

There were numerous attempts to solve the Cyprus problem between 1974 and 2004.⁸¹ Most notably, these were the joint British, Canadian and US plan for a solution in 1978, the process initiated by the set of ideas presented by UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali between 1992-94 and finally, the process which culminated in the Annan Plan referendums in the two communities in April 2004(Christodoulides 2009; Bolukbasi 1995; UN General Secretary 1992). These proposals were based on the high-level agreements between Makarios and Rauf Denktash, leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, in 1977 and President Spyros Kyprianou and Denktash in 1979. These agreements set the framework of the solution as a federal bizonal and bicomunal state which was then infused by the concept of political equality between the two communities in 1990 following a report by the then UN General Secretary Boutros-Ghali(UN General Secretary 1990). The Cyprus Problem, however,

⁸⁰ There was infighting between Greek Cypriots before the rise of EOKA B but not to the level seen after the return of Grivas to the island. Arguably the most important opposition came from circles linked to the Greek junta and a key associate of Makarios, Polykarpos Yiorkadjis, who served as Minister of Interior and Minister of Defence in his government up to 1968. Yiorkadjis was forced to withdraw due to his collaboration with Alekos Panagoulis an anti-junta fighter who planned to assassinate the Greek PM in 1968. In 1970 Yiorkadjis was the alleged mastermind behind the assassination attempt against Makarios by two Greek officers who were part of Makarios' entourage. Yiorkadjis was shortly assassinated afterwards with all the evidence pointing to the officers that carried the assassination attempt(Papapolyviou 2018).

⁸¹ There is a wide ranging bibliography on the Cyprus Problem and its various facets(Ker-Lindsay 2011; Michael & Vural 2018; Theophanous 2004; Aktar et al 2010; Kızılyürek 2009; 2020; Moudouros 2020; Adamides 2020; Sonan, 2014)

remains without a solution. As a result, the military threat from the part of Türkiye has not subsided but is ever-present for the Greek Cypriot FPE.

The Foreign Policy of Cyprus: The Cyprus Problem and the Middle East

Cyprus's foreign policy towards the Middle East before it acceded to the EU has to be understood through three interconnected phases. The first is the question of Cyprus' international orientation which was put on the table as early as 1958 when Britain, Greece and Türkiye agreed on the solution of independence to end the conflict between EOKA and the British. The two options for the newborn state were either NATO membership or membership of the newly established NAM. Eventually, Cyprus was tied with the latter, becoming part of the so-called Third World with many prominent members in the Middle East with which Cyprus quickly established cordial relations. This formed the second phase of Cyprus's foreign policy. The final phase begins in the late 1980s and the election of President Giorgos Vasileiou. At that point, we witness an attempt by Cyprus to move away from its position in the NAM, especially after the end of the Cold War, and to seek security through EU membership. Once EU membership was made a reality, Cyprus ceased to be a member of NAM. These twists and turns should be read through the prism of the necessities created by the Cyprus Problem which was also evolving in the different ways indicated above.

Cyprus's foreign policy orientation was a matter of discussion from when it was agreed that the fighting between EOKA and the British would end with creating a new state. The obvious choice for Cyprus would be to attach itself to NATO and the West. All guarantor powers of the new state – Greece, Türkiye, and the UK - were NATO members and it made sense that Cyprus would follow that path. The Prime Ministers of Greece and Türkiye, Karamanlis, and Menderes, had reached an unwritten agreement to accept Cyprus into NATO (AKEL 2021). This move was initially supported by Archbishop Makarios, the leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community and by then NATO Secretary General Paul-Henri Spaak (Kyriakides 1992). Menderes and Karamanlis believed that with this move, the friction between them over the island would be eliminated once and for all, stabilising the newfound state. Furthermore, from the perspective of supporting NATO members it would aid the stabilisation of NATO's southeastern flank at the height of the Cold War.

Nonetheless, it soon became clear that the plan to make Cyprus a NATO member-state had severe complications. Firstly, the presence of the Communist AKEL, which had the support of about a third of the electorate, meant that there was a possibility down the line for

members from the party to have access to NATO confidential information that could then be easily passed to Moscow(Ibid, 59). Secondly, AKEL(2021) would itself vehemently oppose the accession of Cyprus into NATO. After all, it viewed and continues to view NATO as an imperialist alliance.

The third and most crucial factor was Makarios' stance on the matter. Despite his initial support to the plan, Makarios quickly backtracked. The rationale behind this reversal of policy was subject to speculation. The first possible factor was once again AKEL. Makarios knowing the vehement opposition of AKEL, opted to reject NATO and follow the path of the NAM(Karyos 2022, 32). According to one of Makarios' closer associates and former President Glafkos Clerides(1990), Makarios believed that even within NATO Türkiye would be strategically much more important to the alliance than Cyprus. Hence, it would leave little room for manoeuvre for Makarios who wanted to revise the provisions of the Zurich-London agreements.

Furthermore, Makarios was interconnected with the establishment of the NAM and even participated in the preparatory conference in Bandung in 1959(Reynolds 2017). Although unclear which or if all of these considerations played a part in his reversal, the fact is that despite having Greek, Turkish and possibly British and US support Cyprus never applied for NATO membership. A brief resurrection of the possibility of NATO membership in 1963 after the crisis caused by Makarios' "Thirteen Points" was quickly rejected by the British and Greeks(Karyos 2022, 32).

Cyprus's foreign policy was then increasingly linked with the twists and turns of the Cyprus Problem after new complications surfaced. Makarios sought to internationalise the problem based on two pillars – Cyprus's membership in the UN and the NAM. Cyprus became a UN member upon its independence and was a founding member of the NAM with Makarios attending the NAM's founding conference in Belgrade. Charalambos Tsardanidis(2006) argues that the NAM path offered six advantages for Makarios. Firstly, a foreign policy detached from either superpower would give Cyprus greater manoeuvrability and maintain the island's independence. Secondly, it would guarantee the support of non-aligned countries whose power in the UN was constantly growing(Ibid. 5). Thirdly, it allowed Makarios to gain greater international attention and the ability to promote his views on Cyprus(Ibid, 5). Fourthly, given the fact that NATO was against Cypriot membership, Makarios wanted to distance Cyprus from both Greece and especially Türkiye who were members of the organisation and insulate the Cypriot government from their influence(Ibid, 5; Nicolet 2001, 290). Fifthly, a non-aligned

foreign policy offered the Greek Cypriot side greater chances to achieve its goals of constitutional reform and self-determination, which in the minds of the Greek Cypriots meant unification with Greece (Tsardanidis 2006, 5). Finally, a non-Western foreign policy would allow the Cypriot government to gain Soviet support in succeeding its aforementioned goals. Such support would also secure President Makarios' government the backing of the Cypriot Communist Party, AKEL, arguably Cyprus' most significant and most organised political Party (Ibid, 5).

Via the NAM membership, Makarios and Cyprus through him came into contact with essential states and leaders in the Middle East, with which Cyprus quickly developed cordial relations. Makarios enjoyed solid personal relations with leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yasser Arafat. As Ker-Lindsay (2008), notes Makarios chose to visit Egypt for his first official international visit abroad upon his election as President in 1960 highlighting the importance of the Cypriot President placed on his relations with states of the region. As the NAM grew and encompassed more and more Middle East states it became a platform for Cyprus to engage with the region. The primary factor driving Cyprus's relationship with Middle Eastern states was the same principle that had driven Cyprus's foreign policy in general – securing support for the Greek Cypriot community's positions on the Cyprus Problem.

Especially after the 1974 invasion and the proclamation of the "TRNC" in 1983, Cyprus's critical foreign policy objective was to ensure that the "TRNC" was not recognised internationally by any other state apart from Türkiye. For Greek Cypriot foreign policymakers, the most significant threat towards recognising the "TRNC" emanated from the Muslim world and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Berham 2017; Ker-Lindsay 2012, 140-141). In collaboration with their Greek counterparts, Cypriot foreign policymakers sought to maintain Arab support for Cyprus's position that it is the only legitimate state on Cyprus in the OIC. It was only through Arab states that Greece and Cyprus could project their joint positions on the Cyprus Problem within the OIC, an organisation where Türkiye had a strong presence.

Additionally, both Makarios, the majority of the Greek Cypriot leadership and the Greek Cypriot populace for decades had a strong affinity towards the Palestinian cause expressing their solidarity with the plight of the Palestinians (Shaath 2016). As in the case of Greece, this affinity with the Palestinians was founded on a narrative of shared struggle and an anti-American and Third Worldist worldview. Archbishop Makarios enjoyed a personal relationship with the historic leader Yasser Arafat who was also a friend of one of Makarios' closer accolades, the leader of socialist EDEK, Vassos Lyssarides. Lyssarides connected

Andreas Papandreou and his pre-PASOK movement PAK with the PLO.⁸² Furthermore, Palestinians and Greek Cypriot publics had a close affinity with one another due to their belief in everyday struggles against Israeli and Turkish occupation after the 1974 invasion. In this respect, one can understand that the connections between Cyprus and the PLO run deep and penetrate not only the upper echelons of power in Cyprus but also the public in general.

As a consequence, Cyprus's relationships with the state of Israel had been problematic prior to 2004. The military alliance between Türkiye and Israel during the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s did very little to ameliorate this belief within large segments of the public and the political leadership in Cyprus (Ufuk 2010). To exemplify the strenuous relationship between Cyprus and Israel Cypriot First Lady Androulla Vasileiou was declared *persona non grata* in Israel when she led a delegation that tried to visit Yasser Arafat while under house arrest (Regev 2022). Despite a betterment in bilateral relations in 1993 and the signing of some bilateral treaties, the prominent thorns remained, namely, the strong ties between Cyprus and Palestine and the alliance between Türkiye and Israel.

In short, Cyprus's foreign policy towards the Middle East before 2004, like Greece, was dominated by the necessities of the Cyprus Problem. The NAM membership played a crucial role and served as a vehicle to cultivate Cyprus's relations with Middle Eastern states whose support was vital in international and regional fora against Turkish positions on the Cyprus Problem and the prevention of the "TRNC"'s diplomatic recognition.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has set the scene for the analysis presented in the following three chapters. Greece and Cyprus share a long and intertwined history with the Middle East. However, as we shall see the important yet peripheral role that the Middle East played in Greek and Cypriot foreign policy up to 2004 gradually became vital and central in the post-2004 period. The following three chapters will seek to account for this shift and how these two small states have changed their interaction with the Middle East.

⁸² It was through Lyssarides that the PAK was connected with the PLO (Palieraki 2018; Philenews 2021).

CHAPTER 6: THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE GULF

This chapter provides an overview of the international relations of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf since the turn of the century to facilitate the reader. It aims to facilitate the reader's understanding of the regional context in which the Middle East foreign policies of Cyprus and Greece operated. The chapter is broken down into two sub-sections. The first will focus on the Eastern Mediterranean, while the second zeroes in on the Gulf. At the end of each sub-section, the key takeaways necessary to understand the case study analysis in Chapters 7 and 8 will be laid out.

6.1 The Eastern Mediterranean

In recent years, the Eastern Mediterranean has been seen as a nascent regional space in geopolitical, security and economic terms (Litsas & Tziampiris 2019; Tziampiris & Asderaki 2022; Talbot 2021; Tziarras 2019a). The area had historical importance for British strategists in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with some scholars treating it as a region (Omissi 1992; Morewood 2013; Holland & Markides 2006; Tamkin 2009). In the following decades, however, the Eastern Mediterranean was primarily conceptualised as either a buffer between Europe and the Middle East or split between the Levant and Southeast Europe. In short, no geopolitical or economic importance existed to merit its reference as a distinct regional or sub-regional space.

Nonetheless, since the late 2000s, there has been a flurry of research which makes a case for the existence of an Eastern Mediterranean region or sub-region. Scholars have focused on both processes of regionalism and regionalization (Tziarras 2018). Moreover, others have focused on patterns of enmity and amity among regional states viewing the Eastern Mediterranean as a regional security complex (Adamides & Christou 2016; Goldthau et al. 2020). It should be noted that compared to the Gulf, the Eastern Mediterranean is considered a “weak” region, given the limited existence of regional institutions and institutionalised relationships among local states (Tziampiris 2019, 8).

In this thesis, the Eastern Mediterranean is viewed as a sub-region of the Middle East and connects it with Southeast Europe. The states considered part of the sub-region are Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye, and Greece (Ibid). The Eastern Mediterranean has been shaped and influenced by four critical developments over the past two decades. These were i) the scaling down of US involvement in the region; ii) the Arab Spring Uprisings, iii) the breakdown of long-standing partnerships and alliances in the region

and the creation of new ones; iv) the discovery of hydrocarbons in the region's seabed intensified existing maritime zone disputes and resulted in new ones.

6.1.1. The End of Pax Americana

The starting point of the analysis focuses on US foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. At the dawn of the 21st century and in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the US, under President George Bush, solidified its hegemony in the Middle East, including the Eastern Mediterranean creating a Pax Americana. The Iraq invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein highlighted the extent of the US's reach. It also highlighted the inability of any actor opposing the West to push back against the hegemon's will (Nye 2003; Dodge 2006; Hurst 2009, 153-181). Nonetheless, the failure of the Bush Administration to engage in effective state-building in Iraq, the fatigue of the US public with the insurgency in Iraq, as well as the strategic necessities in other parts of the globe led the subsequent Obama Administration to question and eventually decide to curtail US involvement in the Middle East drastically (Dodge 2013).

The most crucial policy which signified the lessening of the Middle East's importance in the eyes of US strategists was the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in late 2007, accelerated by President Obama and ending in 2011.⁸³ By withdrawing most of its troops from the Middle East, the US created a power vacuum that would soon threaten its hegemony in parts of the Middle East, allowing regional and extra-regional actors to challenge it (Walt 2015; Ayoob 2013).

6.1.2. The Arab Spring Uprisings and their outcomes

As the US scaled down its military presence in Iraq, the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East were embroiled in protests and uprisings against autocratic regimes (Gerges 2014; Ghanem 2016; Hinnebusch 2015). The uprisings began in December 2010 in Tunisia, sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor whose goods were confiscated by local authorities (Lageman 2020). The causes of the uprisings were multifaceted and rooted in the inability of the region's authoritarian regimes to deliver essential public goods in some of the most unequal societies on a global level (Gerges 2014a, 9-15; Ianchovichina et al. 2015; Arampatzi et al. 2018). The lack of any political and social accountability mechanism left no other choice for millions of people across the Middle East

⁸³ In 2007 the US had about 168000 troops in Iraq. By 2011 all US soldiers left the country with the exception of the military personnel in the embassy in Baghdad and in the consulates in other parts of the country.

other than protesting and seeking to oust their governments. In the Eastern Mediterranean, it is critical to zero in on the uprisings and their outcomes in Egypt, Syria, and Libya, which erupted in early 2011. The events that unfolded in these three states led to significant shifts and conflicts with lasting repercussions for the region.

In Egypt, the rule of Hosni Mubarak ended after a heterogeneous group of protestors managed to press him to step down on 11 February 2011(Chalcraft 2016, 515-516). In the following months, the Muslim Brotherhood, initially hesitant to participate in the protests, managed to elect its candidate, Mohamed Morsi, to the presidency(Kerchoue 2012). The Muslim Brotherhood signified a warming of Türkiye-Egypt relations. The Muslim Brotherhood viewed the AKP and Türkiye as models they could emulate(Taspinar 2014; Ibrahim 2013). Simultaneously, via Egypt, Turkish foreign policy sought to increase its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, but the Muslim Brotherhood's reign was short-lived. The army, headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, removed him from power in February 2013. Al-Sisi took the helm and remains at the country's leader, establishing a military autocracy once more in Egypt.

In Libya, Muammar Gaddafi's grip on power was challenged by nationwide protests in February 2011. The protests developed into a civil conflict, with the regime initially maintaining the upper hand. Gaddafi's removal from power came only after the involvement of the UN Security Council(UNSC) and NATO. The UNSC(2011) passed Resolution 1973, invoking the international community's Responsibility to Protect the Libyan people. The Resolution authorised willing states to establish a no-fly zone over the country, among other measures(Ibid). NATO took that responsibility, crippling the regime with its aerial superiority and support to anti-Gaddafi forces. By October 2011, Gaddafi was dead, and his regime was a historical relic.

Gaddafi's death and his regime's destruction created a fragile political order which collapsed in 2014, leading to a second civil war. The seeds of the second civil war can be found in the heterogeneous front which fought Gaddafi, where two main camps arose, one supported by Qatar and a second supported by the United Arab Emirates(UAE)(Megerisi 2020; Joffé 2016). This divide was evident in Libya's new parliament, the General National Congress(GNC), with the National Forces Alliance(NFA), supported by the UAE and the Justice and Construction Party(JCP), supported by Qatar, emerging as the two main political factions(Megerisi 2020).

In February 2014, General Khalifa Haftar, the head of the state's armed forces, moved against the GNC. Although he failed to take Tripoli, he was able to solidify his hold on Benghazi.⁸⁴ Soon after, elections for a new legislative body, the House of Representatives(HoR), occurred. The result of the elections was determined void by the Libyan supreme court, furthering the instability(Al-Jazeera 2014). The following year, while fighting continued, the UN pushed forward the establishment of a Government of National Accord(GNA) to end the violence. The GNA took form in December 2015, and in January 2016, Fayed al-Sarraj became Head of Government. However, the GNA's capacity to act as an interim government unifying all the warring factions had minimal chances of success as Khaftar and the HoR refused to cede power to the GNA or accept Sarraj's authority as Head of Government. Consequently, two governments were established: the GNA government in Tripoli and the HoR in Tobruk.

The conflict ensued, with more international actors supporting either of the two sides. The GNA maintained its status as the country's internationally recognised government, supported by Türkiye, Qatar, most of the EU, Iran, and the UK(Fitzgerald & Toalso 2016). The GNC and Khaftar's forces were supported militarily by the UAE, Egypt, and Syrian forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France, Greece, Syria and the Russian mercenary group Wagner(Ibid; African Insider 2022). In January 2021, an agreement was reached between warring parties under the auspices of the UN to establish a Government of National Unity(GNU). By March 2022, however, a second Government of National Stability(GNS) was set up in Sirte, leading to yet another situation of dual governance in the country(Al-Jazeera 2022).

As in the case of Libya, the protests connected to the Arab Spring Uprisings led to the outbreak of civil war in Syria with the involvement of regional and extra-regional actors. Unlike Gaddafi, however, Assad has been able to withstand the challenge, and while these words are written, his position is considered safe, controlling around 60% of the country. The protests in Syria began in March 2011(Hinnebusch & Lesch 2011, 270-271). The violent crackdown by the regime led to further opposition against President Assad, which escalated into armed conflict.⁸⁵ Although the requests in the initial protests were linked to socioeconomic

⁸⁴ Khaftar's forces managed to fully control Beghazi only in 2017, despite arising as the most powerful faction in the area in 2014.

⁸⁵ As Christopher Philips(2016, 50) argues although in most towns and cities the protesters emulated the demands expressed in other parts of the Middle East during the Arab Spring, there were nonetheless cases

issues, once the country descended into civil war, the conflict became increasingly sectarian(Phillips 2016).

This led to a splintered opposition. Throughout the conflict, rebel groups fighting in Syria were deeply divided due to divergent agendas. As a result, forces fighting Syria ranged from the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces(SNC), backed by several Western and Gulf Arab states, to Islamist organisations like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State(ISIS) and the ethnically diverse Syrian Democratic Forces(SDF)(Phillips 2016).

Nonetheless, the unwavering support of Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and other affiliated Shia militias allowed Assad to regain control of most of the country(Ibid; Allisson 2013). Unlike the approach taken by the US and its Western counterparts, Russia provided extensive aerial support and, along with Iran and Hezbollah, put boots on the ground to prop up the warring Syrian President(Grajewski 2021). On the other side, the Western actors in Syria were far more involved in the fight against ISIS rather than bringing down Assad or matching the military support provided to him by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah.⁸⁶ As a result, although the war is still raging on, President's Assad forces control most of the country. The SDF, Turkish troops and groups affiliated to the former FSA and the SNC are controlling small pockets of territory.

Critically, as the cases of the Libyan and Syrian civil wars illustrate, the US, despite being involved militarily at different stages of those conflicts, did not commit itself in the way it had in Afghanistan or Iraq. US military presence was limited compared with specific goals that did not include state building. After achieving those goals - the removal of Gaddafi and the defeat of ISIS - US military presence remained curtailed. In this respect, the US did not seek to force the fate of either the Libyan or Syrian civil wars. It was also challenged, especially in the case of Syria, by opposing states like Russia and Iran and even by its NATO ally, Türkiye.

6.1.3. Fluctuating alliances and alignments

The combination of the region's diminishing importance from the US's perspective, regime change in Egypt, and the civil conflicts in Libya and Syria, set the

were the protesters' demands were more focused on a local issues. This divergence and a lack of coordination on a national level played a key role in the subsequent fragmentation of the anti-Assad opposition during the civil war.

⁸⁶ For instance, take the issue of aerial support. In the case of ISIS the US, the UK and France conducted extensive airstrikes to support allied rebel groups and militias on the ground in their struggle against the jihadist organisation. However, when it came to supporting them against Assad airstrikes against the regime were only conducted from 2017 to 2020. Furthermore, they were limited in number and came at a point when the tide had already turned in favour of Assad.

framework in which important and long-standing strategic relationships ended and new partnerships were forged. Until the late 2000s, the Eastern Mediterranean was dominated by two important alliances between US allies: the Egypt-Türkiye alliance, and the Israel-Türkiye alliance(Zahariadis 2015). Apart from these alliances, the region's international relations were characterised by the Cyprus Problem, the Israeli-Palestine conflict and the Aegean dispute between Greece and Türkiye.

The Arab Spring Uprisings were critical in reordering the Eastern Mediterranean's international relations. Nonetheless, the Arab Spring Uprisings were only one part of the equation. Another critical factor was the foreign policy followed by Türkiye under the premiership of President Erdogan and the tutelage of Ahmet Davutoğlu(2001; 2010b), a key associate of Erdogan who rose to the position of Prime Minister before his removal in 2016. In a book published in 2001, Davutoğlu emphasised Türkiye's unique geographic position and its historical past as the heir of the Ottoman Empire(Ibid). According to Davutoğlu, the historical and geographical depth of Türkiye ought to be the guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy. Türkiye should move away from its fixation and dependency on the West and instead seek to play a more active and independent role in the area of the former Ottoman Empire, as well as in the Muslim World, more broadly(Ibid). The AKP's electoral victories and the continuous ascendancy of Davutoğlu allowed him to enact his foreign policy prescriptions which gave Turkish foreign policy a neo-Ottoman and Islamist aura.

By the late 2000s, Turkish foreign policy was centred on the Middle East, signifying a change to the minimalist approach of pre-AKP governments in the region. Initially, the motto of Turkish foreign policy was centred around the mantra of “zero problems with neighbours”(Davutoğlu 2010a). This was translated into a continuation of détente with Greece (up until the late 2000s), a reinvigorated relationship with Syria and a milder stance on the Cyprus Problem(Saab 2009; Özertem 2021, 17-19; Heraclides 2010). Arguably the high point of this policy was the cordial relationship with Egypt after the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohamed Morsi, who looked towards Türkiye and Erdogan as a model to emulate in Egypt. However, the aspirations of Turkish foreign policymakers would bring Türkiye into a confrontation with its long-time partner in the region, Israel.

Türkiye's relations with Israel went sour once Türkiye took a more active role in the Israel-Palestine conflict. A pro-Palestinian stance was needed for Türkiye to play a leading role in the Muslim World. As a consequence, not only did Türkiye begin to support the Palestinians, but more worryingly, from Israel's perspective, the AKP and the Turkish government forged a

strong partnership with Hamas, the Islamist organisation controlling Gaza. The already tense relationship with Israel eventually broke in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara incident (Bekker 2010; Sever & Almog 2019).⁸⁷ In Uzer's (2013, 102) words, the “incident and its aftermath marked the end of Israeli – Turkish relations”.

A rapprochement brokered by the Obama Administration based on the prospect of a natural gas pipeline taking Israeli gas to Europe through Türkiye proved short-lived (Efron 2018, 11, 34). The Israeli decision 2017 to support the creation of a Kurdish state – an anathema for Türkiye – highlights the severity of current Israel – Türkiye relations. The Turkish response to deadly Gaza Strip protests in 2018 and Erdogan's fierce opposition to the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital have furthered the division. The two states have recently been able to mend fences although their relationship is a long way from the alliance, they enjoyed between 1990 and 2009 (Bardakçı 2021).

In Egypt, the neo-Ottoman and Islamist turn of Erdogan benefited its relations under Morsi's presidency. However, Morsi's downfall led to a break in Egypt-Türkiye relations as well. On the one hand, Türkiye and the AKP opposed the al-Sisi administration in support of the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, the military establishment in Egypt, and President al-Sisi, viewed Islamist parties as a threat to their authority. In short, neither side proved flexible to recalibrate their policy in light of the change of leadership in Egypt, while the relationship between Erdogan and al-Sisi is one characterised by personal animosity (Kouskouvelis & Zarras 2019).

Turkish foreign policy was becoming much more assertive, aided by a buildup of Türkiye's military and its military-industrial capacity.⁸⁸ Under the AKP, defensive spending increased from about \$9 billion in 2002 to over \$20 billion in 2019 (SIPRI 2023). Simultaneously, much of this expenditure was invested in the country's military industry while augmenting the force of the Turkish navy, which was envisaged to play a regional role (Gingeras 2020; Tziarras 2019c). The Turkish military quickly became more assertive in Türkiye's regional foreign policy (Dalacoura 2021; Bechev 2022). The Turkish army invaded Syria on three occasions and has occupied part of the country since 2016, intending to

⁸⁷ The Mavi Marmara was a ship which was part in the Gaza flotilla which sought to break the Israeli embargo on Gaza and deliver aid in May 2010. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) boarded the ship and opened fire leading to the death of Turkish activists. Israel branded the activists as terrorists and linked them to the Turkish government. The Turkish response was a condemnation of Israel in international forums, and a cease in diplomatic relations.

⁸⁸ On the buildup of the Turkish armed forces and the country's military industry see the contribution on this special issue of *Insight Türkiye*, vol. 22, no. 3. (2020).

eliminate Kurdish militias in the north(Bechev 2022). Furthermore, the military support provided by Türkiye to the GNA in Libya allowed the GNA to even the playing field against Khafatar's forces and force the conflict into a stalemate(Ibid).⁸⁹ These developments in conjunction with the breakdown of Türkiye-Israel and Türkiye-Egypt relations, heightened the threat perception vis-à-vis Türkiye in Cairo and Tel Aviv.

Türkiye's regional adversaries deepened their relationships, creating two trilateral partnerships between Greece, Cyprus and Egypt, and Greece, Cyprus, and Israel. Moreover, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum(EMGF) was established in 2019 with the participation of Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Italy and France as members, and the US, the EU, and the World Bank Group as observers. Notably, Türkiye opposed to these alignments and increasingly, since the fall of Morsi in Egypt, found itself in "splendid isolation"(Yavuz 2020). Although Yavuz's statement can be viewed as an exaggeration given that Türkiye forged new partnerships, especially with Russia, it highlights the viewpoint that the country was a "spoiler" and "revisionist" power(Çağaptay 2019, 138-54; Yavuz 2020; Kardaş 2021).

6.1.4.Hydrocarbon Discoveries and maritime zone disputes

The discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean aided these novel regional alignments(Karagiannis 2016; Connelly 2023). Initially, many viewed hydrocarbons as a catalyst that could solve long-standing issues like the Cyprus Problem, creating a win-win situation between regional states heavily dependent on natural gas(Gürel & Tzimitras 2014; Faustmann 2014). Some impetus was achieved with joint hydrocarbon exploitation prospects positively facilitating negotiations between 2015 and 2017. Negotiations came very close to a solution, but they eventually collapsed in July 2017. The only positive development, linked to hydrocarbons was the recent resolution of the long-standing maritime dispute between Lebanon and Israel(Connelly 2023).

Overall, hydrocarbons became another source of interstate antagonism in the Eastern Mediterranean. Hydrocarbons intensified existing maritime zone disputes between Greece and Cyprus and Egypt on the one side and Türkiye on the other(Connelly 2023). Additionally, they created new maritime zone disputes between Egypt and Türkiye and between Greece and the GNA in Libya. By the end of the 2010s, the existence of hydrocarbons in the Eastern

⁸⁹ This support came in the form of Syrian, foreign mercenaries, special advisors and through the operations of SADAT, a private military consultancy with close ties to the Turkish security establishment(Cubukcu 2018).

Mediterranean and the resulting maritime zone disputes increased militarisation across the Eastern Mediterranean. Firstly, the Turkish navy has obstructed the capacity of gas firms Total and ENI that operate in Cyprus's EEZ to execute hydrocarbon explorations. The Turkish and Greek navies were also involved in a two-month standoff between August and October 2020, the closest the two states had come to an all-out conflict since 1996(Zachariades 2020).

The Libyan civil war created another source of contention in the maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. In November 2019, the GNA signed a memorandum of understanding with Türkiye demarcating their maritime boundaries—however, the demarcation deal cut through areas where Greece and Egypt consider parts of their EEZs. As a response, Egypt and Greece concluded a deal partially demarcating their EEZs. Although the GNA-Türkiye deal was nullified by the Libyan Court of Appeals in 2021, the GNU signed a preliminary exploration deal based on the previous agreement in October 2022(African Insider 2022).

6.1.5 The Key Takeaways

Based on the account above, there are four main takeaways for the analysis of Cypriot and Greek Foreign Policy in the Middle East that will follow in Chapters 7 and 8. The first key takeaway is that the partial withdrawal of the US from the Eastern Mediterranean left a power vacuum. The existence of a power vacuum was bound to lead to antagonism within the sub-region with different actors trying to take the place of the US. These actors – Türkiye, Iran, and Russia – were unsuccessful in filling the power gap left by the US which in turn created further instability.

The second takeaway is that beyond the US withdrawal, the Eastern Mediterranean international environment was fundamentally altered by the Arab Spring Uprisings. The Uprisings led two of the sub-region's traditional powers – Syria and Libya – into civil war. Both states, once seen as leading forces in the Arab World, became an arena where much of the interstate antagonism to fill the gap left by the US was played out. The changes of power in Egypt, which the Uprisings kickstarted, unleashed new dynamics. Initially, they bolstered Türkiye's bid to fill the gap through its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and become a regional hegemon. Subsequently, the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood by the army led to a cease of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The third takeaway is that Turkish foreign policy became increasingly more assertive and according to some analysts revisionist(Kardaş 2021; Yavuz 2020; Bechev 2022).This turn

in Turkish foreign policy manifested in the increasing militarisation and the neo-Ottoman and Islamist characteristics since the early 2010s(Taş 2022; Yavuz 2022). Consequently, many states viewed Türkiye as a threat, creating the conditions for the emergence of an anti-Türkiye bloc.

The fourth takeaway is that the discovery of hydrocarbons reinforced these emergent patterns of enmity and amity. Although they were once thought as a key to solving regional disputes the prevailing conditions created by the three developments outlined above rendered them another source of instability, fuelling maritime zone disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Overall, these four takeaways are essential to understanding the environment in which the Greek and Cypriot FPEs operated in the Eastern Mediterranean between 2004 and 2022. Without considering them, we would be unable to understand the Cypriot and Greek foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

6.2 The Gulf

Unlike the Eastern Mediterranean, which is seen as a relatively new and 'softer' region, the Gulf is more recognised as a longer-standing, distinct regional unit with interconnected security concerns among its constituent states. The sub-region's state system was completed relatively recently in 1971 when the last British protectorates in the region gained their independence leading to the formation of the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman as independent states(Gause 2010; 16-25; Onley 2009, 19-24). From that point onwards, most scholars working on the Gulf argue that we could view the sub-region as a regional security complex - a la Buzan and Wæver(2003, 203-209) - pointing to the three wars fought between regional states since the 1980s and the ample time and resources regional states have spent to guard against their neighbours(Gause 2010, 6-8; Han & Hakimian 2019). Based on these accounts, the members of the regional security complex are Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and Yemen.⁹⁰

Like the Eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf is part of the Middle East state system. The three leading regional powers – Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq – have played and continue to play

⁹⁰ There is much debate regarding the US's position in the Gulf and whether it should be considered part of the region's security complex given its centrality in the region's political economy and security architectures. Gause(2010) and Morgan(1997) accept that powers outside of the region can be considered parts of a Regional Security Complex if they are central to the complex's security architecture. In this respect, the US should be considered part of the Gulf according to Gause. In this they part with Buzan and Wæver(2003) who maintain a strict geographical criteria in determining membership to an regional security complex.

an important role in the Middle East's international politics.⁹¹ These three powers have played a direct or indirect role in developments in the Middle East through their involvement in regional conflicts during the Cold War. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq have also been influenced by pan-Arabism and political Islam which formed the ideational battleground of the Middle East up until the end of the Cold War.⁹²

Since the early 2000s, Power and influence within the Middle East regional system have been shifting away from the Eastern Mediterranean and the traditional pillars of the Arab World in Damascus and Cairo and have been moving towards Tehran, Riyadh, Doha, and Abu Dhabi(Kamrava 2018, 15). The Gulf's 'smaller powers,' like the UAE and Qatar, have increasingly played a disproportionate role in the international relations of the Middle East(Kamrava 2011; Almezaini 2018). Moreover, the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia has become a defining characteristic of the region, even contesting replacing the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict(Entessar 2018).

This sub-section proceeds by focusing on three themes which in the view of the author, are central to understanding the Gulf's international relations. The first is the establishment of a US-led security architecture in the region. The second examines the combined impact of the US troop withdrawal from Iraq and the Arab Spring Uprisings. The third focuses on the Iran-Saudi Arabia antagonism which intensified in the years after the Arab Spring Uprisings and the internal antagonisms of the GCC. The fourth and final sub-section will focus on the key takeaways from the account offered below.

6.2.1. The establishment of a US-led security architecture

The discovery of abundant quantities of oil in the Gulf elevated the region's strategic importance. Between World War One and World War Two, Great Britain, through its protectorates in the region, managed to construct a security architecture in the Gulf that allowed it to control the flows of oil and the vital seaways passing through the Straits of Hormuz. Britain's decline and decision to cede its Gulf protectorates in 1967 meant that Gulf states were looking elsewhere for their security needs.

In light of Great Britain's decision, US foreign policymakers increasingly understood that they would need to play a more active role in the Gulf if they were to secure the stable oil flows while deterring the Soviets from filling the gap left by Britain(Onley 2009). By the late

⁹¹ For an overview of their foreign policies see the relevant chapters in Hinnebusch and Ehteshami(2014).

⁹² On the struggle between pan-Arabism and political Islam see Gerges(2018) and Vatikiotis(1986).

1970s, the importance placed on the Gulf by US policymakers increased exponentially. The wording of the Carter Doctrine is illustrative:

“Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁹³

While the aims of the US strategy were clear, the tactics on the ground shifted at different points, with the US leadership responding to regional developments.

In the 1970s, the US strategy was based on the so-called “twin pillar policy”, with Saudi Arabia and Iran at the centre acting as US agents in the region and counterbalancing against Baathist Iraq (Brannon 1994). Saudi Arabia provided energy security, while Iran was viewed as the “policeman” of the region. Both states were allowed to purchase millions of US arms (Gause 2010, 21-22). Despite moments of tension, especially after the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the subsequent embargo of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on states supporting Israel, including the US, the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia with the US grew stronger (Ibid).

The twin-pillar policy was shattered by the Iranian Revolution (1978-79). For the new Islamic Republic of Iran, the US was an imperialist state. For the US and its regional allies, the new Iranian state was a revisionist power that sought to export its revolution and dominate the Gulf and the Middle East (Bill 1988, 216-316). At that point, the US leadership focused on expanding its regional military base network. The revolution was also critical because it allowed the US and Iraq to mend fences over a common enemy. Although Saddam's regime initiated the Iran-Iraq conflict, and initially, the US was officially neutral, the decision of Iran's armed forces to move beyond their borders in 1982 allowed the US to support Saddam as a military counterweight to Iran officially.

Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990 meant that this security arrangement had collapsed. This prompted the US to lead a large coalition against Iraq, eventually defeating the Iraqi army and destroying much of its fighting capacity. The defeat of Saddam's army meant that the balance of power in the region was dramatically altered. Iraq could no longer act as a counterbalance to Iran, and the capacity to rebuild its armed forces was non-existent given the strict international sanctions the regime was imposed in the

⁹³ The doctrine took the name of President Carter although it was articulated by Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (Aronoff 2006).

aftermath of its defeat. After all, Iraq's economy was suffering after ten years of war and was an essential factor in Saddam's rationale for going to war against Kuwait.

The result was that the US took an even more active role in the Gulf's security. US military presence in the region proliferated. However, as Gregory Gause points out, the US were not a hegemonic power yet, given their lack of influence in Baghdad and Tehran, two of the most important regional capitals(Gause 2010, 12-14). The critical turning point in the US's posture in the Gulf came with the election of George Bush Jr. and the onset of the global war on terror. Since the defeat of Saddam during the First Gulf War, US strategy in the region sought to maintain the status quo and essentially deemed that Saddam and the regime in Iran were actors that it could live with. After 9/11, however, the calculations in Washington changed, and the US administration was not content with the status quo but sought to establish a hegemonic security architecture within the context of the global war on terror. The regimes in Iraq and Iran were the apparent obstacles to materialising that strategy.

The official viewpoint from Washington was that the war on terror was not only about Al-Qaeda and the Taliban but sought to tackle an “axis of evil,” which included Iran and Iraq, of states that aided terrorist organisations(Glass 2002). Iraq fell into that category, and although the debate on the causes of the war is still ongoing, the inability of the Iraqi regime to persuade US foreign policymakers that it had neutralised its chemical weapons arsenal aided in the onset of hostilities(Ibid). By early 2003 it was evident that the Bush administration, as well as the Blair government in Great Britain, had decided to go to war. The invasion, launched in March 2003, swiftly deposed Saddam's regime and led to a US-British occupation.

The war soon gave its place to an insurgency and the liberal peacebuilding experiment proved impossible. The Gulf was now under a US hegemony but not for very long. The US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan meant that Iran now had US forces on its western and eastern borders along with the imposition of even greater sanctions. Nonetheless, the destruction of the Iraqi army and the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan heightened Iran's geopolitical standing. Furthermore, the failure of peacebuilding and the establishment of stable states in either Afghanistan or Iraq meant that a US attack on Iran, a much more formidable task than the aforementioned two states, was off the cards.

In Mohamed Ayoob's(2014, 408) words, “the aftermath of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq made it very clear that Iran was indispensable to the construction of a stable and legitimate security architecture in the Gulf and beyond”. This became even more apparent when

the Obama administration decided to withdraw US troops from Iraq, along with the gradually diminishing importance of the Middle East in the eyes of US strategists. The US withdrawal was an acceptance by the US that its hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf had ended (Leggrenzi 2019, 332). Even before the decision to withdraw its troops, Iran had increased its influence in Iraq in the aftermath of Saddam's toppling through its influence on various Shia political and military groupings. For instance, the Iraqi Premier Nouri al-Maliki could stay in his position between 2006 and 2014 through the combined support of both Washington and Tehran (Dreazen 2014). Once that support ended, he failed to keep his place.

Iran's elevated standing in the region around the late 2000s and President Obama's pivot to Asia increased the levels of insecurity among the members of the GCC (Kamrava 2018; Hashimoto 2013). Ever since the fall of the Shah, the GCC monarchies had viewed the Islamic Republic as an adversary whose political model could serve as a blueprint for a political challenge at home. The exception to this rule was Qatar which enjoyed closer economic and diplomatic relations with Qatar. The fear that the power gap left by the US's lessening importance of the region would be filled by Iran was a driver in the securitisation and militarisation of the Gulf monarchies' foreign policies, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Hence, by the end of the 2000s, the region's security architecture was still US-led but with a growing degree of independence by Iran and the leading GCC states – Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Finally, this degree of autonomy sowed further antagonism between Shia Iran and GCC member states with Qatar's leadership, which sought to maintain cordial relations with both sides.

6.2.2. The Arab Spring Uprisings and the Saudi-Iranian Confrontation

The second primary source of insecurity for the Gulf monarchies, with Qatar again being the exception, was the Arab Spring Uprisings and their consequences for regime security in the region. The Uprisings led to the toppling of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen while challenging the authority of the Syrian President. Although the GCC states did not see eye to eye with all of the regimes in the embattled states, the calls for democratisation and popular sovereignty were met with unease within the Gulf. This unease was transformed into insecurity when protests sparked in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The protests within the Gulf, except for Yemen, could not gain traction.⁹⁴ The GCC

⁹⁴ The protests in Bahrain were the larger ones and posed a considerable challenge to the ruling family. Saudi security forces were needed to curtail the protests (Ulrichsen 2014a). Protests in Kuwait were curbed more easily (Alsharekh 2018).

monarchies were able to weather the storm through a combination of security repression, economic incentives and, in some cases, some limited political reforms.

The Arab Spring Uprisings allowed a new generation of leaders in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar, empowered by the wealth of the second oil boom(2000-2008), to play a regional role within the Middle East(Wasser & Martini 2016). Saudi Arabia had the military, demographic, economic, and ideational capacity to be a regional power. In the case of the UAE and Qatar, both states have presented themselves as potential ‘middle powers’ despite their small size(Kamrava 2011; Almezaini 2018). This opportunity was presented because the old traditional powerhouses of the Middle East, such as Libya and, more importantly, Egypt and Syria, had either been engulfed in civil war or by the political and economic effects of the Arab Spring Uprisings. In this respect, they could not play their usual role as leading members of the Arab World in the way they had done during the Cold War.

In this context, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar have increasingly militarised their foreign policies. They have invested heavily in their armed forces and have participated in the civil conflicts in Yemen, Libya, and Syria (directly or indirectly). As Mehran Kamrava(2018) argues, the militarisation of foreign policy was also motivated, in the case of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, by Iran's capacity to emerge strengthened from the debacle of the Uprisings which was also exploited in their view by Iran to undermine their regimes. The protests in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were partly motivated by repression against Shia citizens and residents. This led to portraying the protests as an Iranian ploy to destabilise the GCC. This conclusion was also reached in Yemen, where the Houthis, a Zaidi Shia tribe, played a central part in overthrowing the GCC-backed President Saleh. The Houthis have become the primary opponent of the GCC-supported Yemeni government. In the minds of Saudi and Emirati foreign policymakers, there is no doubt that Iran and its proxies back them.

In addition, Iran has been able to assert itself as a key power broker in the area spanning Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the Arab Spring Uprisings. Iran's stature in the region was raised by being an integral part of the fight against ISIS and keeping Assad in power with the aid of its proxies and Russia. Finally, the signing of the short-lived P5+1 Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA) deal regarding Iran's nuclear programme in 2015 added further fuel to the fire with Saudi Arabia and the UAE vehemently opposing the signing of the agreement that would ease the sanctions and potentially lead to a

full rapprochement between Washington and Tehran(Bianco 2020).⁹⁵ To the relief of the Gulf monarchies, the deal was scrapped shortly after the election of President Trump, who instead opted to resort to the so-called “maximum pressure” campaign of even more significant sanctions.

Within this context, the Saudi-Iranian confrontation, which has waned and waxed since the days of the Iranian revolution, has been intensified. In many ways, the rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran has defined the Middle East's international relations since the late 2000s. The confrontation has been played through proxies in civil wars in Yemen and Syria while creating fault lines across the Middle East. These fault lines have led Arab states to identify Iran as the greatest threat rather than Israel. The changing threat perceptions have led Israel and Arab states in an unofficial pact against Iran(Totten 2016). A critical point was the establishment of diplomatic ties between Bahrain and the UAE with Israel with the conclusion of the Abraham Accords, which could be seen as a prelude to establishing diplomatic ties between Israel and other Arab states(IISS 2020). For the Abraham Accords to take place, the Saudis must have given their approval.

6.2.3 Qatar and the Rift within the GCC

The combined effects of the Arab Spring Uprisings and the confrontation with Iran have increased tensions within the GCC. Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, Qatar's foreign policy diverged from that of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the rest of the GCC on crucial issues despite maintaining a minimum basis of cooperation with its fellow GCC partners. Between 1995 and 2013, Qatar held an open line of communication with Iran, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood. It did not fully commit to the bidding of the US and, more importantly, Saudi Arabia(Khatib 2013).

The international environment formed in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings increased the stakes of Qatar's intransigence. Qatar supported the GNA government in Libya as well as the Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi in Egypt, pitting itself against Saudi Arabia and the UAE(Ulrichsen 2014b). The Al Jazeera news agency, owned by the Qatari state, was often critical to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Furthermore, the rest of the GCC states did not view Qatar's military cooperation with Türkiye positively. Türkiye, a regional adversary of

⁹⁵ Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain argued that the deal should also monitor and curtail Iran's ballistic missile programme.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE, was even granted permission to house a military base in Qatar in 2015, to the further dismay of its GCC partners(Bakir 2019; 2023).

The first point of rupture came in March 2014 when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar only to reinstate them in November of the same year(Kamrava, 134-136). After that point, Qatar distanced itself from Tehran and the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, Al Jazeera provided a more favourable outlook on the actions of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE in the region(Ibid, 134-136). Furthermore, Qatar offered military assistance to the GCC's efforts in Yemen(Ulrichsen 2020, 43).

Nonetheless, the change of course by Qatar was not enough. By June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, along with other members of the Islamic Organisation for Cooperation, decided to enforce a land, sea and air blockade of Qatar(Ulrichsen 2020; Roberts 2022). This decision was followed by a list of 13 demands that included the closing of Al Jazeera, the closure of Turkish military bases, the payment of reparations, and the end of its diplomatic ties with Iran, among other demands. Qatar did not accept the demands, while efforts for international mediation by the US were unsuccessful. Both sides stood fast, and the confrontation ended in January 2021 with a deal brokered between the two sides(England 2021). None of the demands set by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt was part of the deal, and Qatar has proclaimed that its diplomatic ties with Türkiye and Iran would not be affected by the deal(Kerr 2021). The key takeaway of this dispute was Qatar's resilience in withstanding the pressures of regional powers to recalibrate its foreign policy following their will.

6.2.4. Key Takeaways

Based on the account above, there are five main takeaways which will help us in the analysis of Cypriot and Greek Middle Eastern policy in Chapters 7 and 8. The first takeaway is that, like the Eastern Mediterranean, the US lessened their footprint in the region under the Obama administration. However, US foreign policy did not rescind its position as the leading power in the Gulf. Therefore, the US-led architecture in the Gulf remained.

The second takeaway is that there was a different approach by different US administrations towards Iran. The Obama administration focused on normalising its relationship with the Islamic Republic in exchange for gradually loosening the sanctions imposed on Iran. The JCPOA was seen as a great achievement by the Obama administration. On the contrary, the Trump administration withdrew from the JCPOA in favour of its

“maximum pressure” campaign that pleased GCC monarchies, except for Qatar, that were sceptical of Obama’s approach to Iran.

The third takeaway is that the lessening of the US’ involvement in the Gulf signified a ramping up of the Sunni-Shia antagonism. The shuttering of Saddam’s Iraq in 2003 and the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 eliminated two significant adversaries to Iran’s regional ambitions. Iran’s elevated geopolitical position, along with its extended influence in Syria and Iraq, heightened threat perceptions in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. The increased space left by the scaling down of US forces in the area allowed greater regional competition. By the 2010s, the Sunni-Shia confrontation became the defining characteristic of the Middle East system. The Abraham Accords and the normalisation of relations with Israel by the UAE and Bahrain under the tacit approval of Saudi Arabia solidified a long-standing shift in the threat perception of these states that Iran and not Israel were the main threat to their interests, highlighting the diminishing importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The fourth takeaway is that the Arab Spring Uprisings in conjunction with the rise of a new ambitious foreign policy elite in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar enabled these three states to engage in a proactive foreign policy beyond the Gulf region. The Arab Spring Uprisings and the civil wars in Syria and Libya enabled this ambitious foreign policy with all three states playing a crucial role as sponsors of forces on the ground. This ambitious foreign policy had a militarised facet exhibited in record weapons purchases, power projection in the Eastern Mediterranean and the civil war in Yemen.

The fifth takeaway is that antagonism in the Gulf did not only concern the Shia-Sunni split epitomised by Iran and Saudi Arabia. Türkiye, an extra-regional power, sought to extend its influence in the Gulf, most notably through its alliance with Qatar. Simultaneously, Qatar defied the will of an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain, managing to maintain its strategic autonomy. Qatar could withstand the ultimatum of the other GCC states and Egypt during its blockade. Consequently, it could keep its alliance with Türkiye and deal with Iran on its own terms.

6.3. Conclusion

The developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf described above form the international environment in which the foreign policies of Greece and Cyprus had to operate in. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the sub-region's international relations were characterised by

the end of the Pax Americana and the diminishing importance of the region under the second Obama and Trump administrations, creating a vacuum of power which no actor could readily fill. In addition, the spark of the Arab Spring Uprisings and their consequences in Syria, Libya and Egypt furthered regional instability, which in turn led to the end of old alignments and the creation of new ones.

In the Gulf, the region's US-led architecture has remained in place even though the US bid for regional hegemony through the Iraq war and the ensuing peacebuilding experiment failed miserably. The US's position following the 2003 Iraq invasion has been weakened, allowing Iran to exploit the favourable structural position after the fall of Saddam's regime and the Arab Spring Uprisings to expand its influence, emerging as a key power broker in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. As a consequence, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have responded by militarising their foreign policies to an unprecedented level to counter what they perceive as an Iranian threat to their interests. The confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran has become a defining feature of international relations in the Middle East. It has led to better relations between Sunni Middle East states and Israel due to their shared hatred against Iran.⁹⁶ The Sunni-Iran confrontation also led to a diplomatic dispute within the GCC against Qatar.

⁹⁶ While this chapter is being written there is a possibility for a rapprochement between Iran and its adversaries in the Gulf following a deal brokered by China between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is too soon to account for its effect and the time period examined here ends in 2022, thus, not encompassing the Chinese initiative.

CHAPTER 7: THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS IN THE MIDDLE EAST (2004-2022)

This chapter forms the first of two case studies examined in this thesis and concerns Cyprus's foreign policy in the Middle East between 2004 and 2022. As explained in Chapter 5, 2004 is chosen as the cut-off point because it marked the culmination of two critical undertakings of Cypriot foreign policy. The first was the country's quest to join the EU, which was successful in May 2004. The second was the rejection in a referendum of the UN Anan Plan for Cyprus by the Greek Cypriots. The Plan is the closest we have ever come to resolving the Cyprus Problem. 2022 was chosen as the other cut-off point because of the war in Ukraine, which has important implications for Cyprus in military and economic terms. Furthermore, there is a new President as of March 1st, 2023. It is yet too soon to competently account for President Christodoulides' foreign policy record.

This chapter will show that the theory outlined in Chapter 4 applies to Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus' immediate geographic environment, NcR's top-down framework works. On the contrary, in the Gulf, due to the lack of input from the independent variable, NcR does not explain Cypriot foreign policy. This chapter will also show that despite some successes in both sub-regions resulting from proactive diplomacy, Cypriot foreign policy did not help resolve the Cyprus Problem or become part of a hard balancing coalition against Türkiye. The Turkish threat remained and, arguably by 2022, it was at a higher level than in 2004. Consequently, Cyprus has been unable to pursue its hydrocarbon development program at full pace in the Eastern Mediterranean due to Türkiye's belligerence. Almost twelve years since the discovery of the Aphrodite block, Cyprus has not produced any natural gas from its deposits.

Cypriot foreign policy elevated Cyprus' status in the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean, building on its EU membership. Nonetheless, this status-seeking policy could have been much more successful if Cyprus had mediated the Syrian Civil War. As I argue below, this was feasible for the Cypriot government. In the Gulf, Cyprus elevated its standing and engaged in a successful anti-secessionist foreign policy by increasing its partners within the OIC. The Gulf also became a ground for economic diplomacy with the Cypriot FPE, hoping it would attract FDI. Despite some increase in FDI stocks from the region, the Gulf forms only a minor part of the overall FDI in the Cypriot economy.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. The first part deals with the independent variable, determining the existence of threats in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. The second part moves on to the intervening variables at the state level. Two variables are examined here: the FPE's perceptions and the state's political economy. The third part analyses Cyprus's foreign policy choices in the Middle East which is the dependent variable. The fourth part tests the two hypotheses outlined in Chapter 4 based on the analysis of Cypriot foreign policy.

7.1. The Independent Variable: Threats in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf

The independent variable is conceptualized based on Stephen Walt's (1987) balance of threat theory which rests on four components i) aggregate power, ii) offensive capabilities, iii) geographic distance and iv) offensive intentions. Based on these four components, I will determine whether there were any security threats that Cyprus's FPE had to deal with in the examined period. This section builds on Chapter 6's outline of the Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf international relations.

7.1.1. The Eastern Mediterranean

During the period in question, in the Eastern Mediterranean, only Türkiye meets the threat threshold. Geographically, Cyprus is only 80 km away from the southern coast of Türkiye. Since the 1974 invasion of Cyprus and the occupation of roughly 37% of Cyprus's territory by Turkish troops, the Turkish army has maintained a military contingent on Cyprus, with its numbers fluctuating between 20000 to 40000 men.⁹⁷ Most of this force is positioned along the Green Line, a de facto border separating Cyprus from the internationally non-recognised 'TRNC'.⁹⁸ In this respect, Türkiye meets the geographic criterion of being considered a threat given its geographic proximity to Cyprus and its placement of troops on Cyprus.

Türkiye also meets the threat threshold in aggregate power terms because there is a vast power disparity between Cyprus and Türkiye. Demographically, Cyprus has a population of under one million people while Türkiye's population skyrocketed from around 64 million

⁹⁷ From the establishment of Cyprus, Türkiye had a small military contingent on the island numbering 650 men. The existence and function of the contingent was regulated by the Treaty of Alliance between Türkiye, Greece, Cyprus and the UK which was part of the London-Zurich agreements of 1959 that led to Cyprus's independence from British colonial rule (Embargoed 2018).

⁹⁸ The Green Line, essentially a UN Buffer Zone, in its final iteration became the ceasefire line between the Greek Cypriot controlled RoC and the Turkish occupied areas where the 'TRNC' was formed in 1983. Between them there are areas of no-man's land administered by a UN Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP). UNFICYP is the longest standing peacekeeping mission of the UN (Ersözler 2019).

people in 2004 to more than 84 million people in 2020. Economically, Cypriot GDP has ranged from 14.55 billion USD in 2003 to 28.41 billion USD in 2021. Meanwhile, Türkiye's GDP stood at 314.6 billion USD in 2003, increasing to more than 800 billion USD in 2021(World Bank 2023).

In military power terms, Cyprus's military force – the CNG - is largely based on conscripts and has an active force of around 12000 with the capacity of that to increase to potentially 62000 with the reservists(IISS 2023 81-82). Cyprus's air force is based exclusively on several attack helicopters. The state's air defence is based on dated, short- and medium- range Soviet era-weaponry, namely the Tor M-1 and Buk M-2 systems that would find it difficult to prevent Türkiye's Airforce from controlling the Cypriot airspace in the event of hostilities(Ibid, 81-82). Cyprus's naval forces are primarily built around land anti-naval Exocet missile systems, which cannot prevent a Turkish naval superiority around the island(Ibid, 81-82).

On the other side, Türkiye's armed forces number 355200 active personnel and another 378700 reservists. Türkiye also has a fighter jet fleet composed of 10 squadrons of F-16 Block 30 C/D, Europe's largest main battle tank (MBT) fleet and the fourth naval largest fleet in NATO(Ibid 141-144). Türkiye boasts a burgeoning military industry intending to become self-sufficient eventually(Kurç 2017). So far, it has produced advanced weapon systems like the Altay MBT, the T-129 attacking helicopter and servicing its own needs in small arms and ammunition(Ibid). The Turkish Bayraktar drones had become hugely popular in the initial stages of the Russian invasion of Ukraine when they proved effective against Russian MBTs(Witt 2023).

In short, Türkiye has a staggering advantage over Cyprus in aggregate power terms and has the offensive capabilities to constitute a threat. Türkiye's offensive capabilities become even more evident if one considers geographic proximity and the Turkish army's capacity to station approximately 30 to 40 thousand troops on the island equipped with MBTs, armoured personnel carriers and fighting vehicles. The Turkish military can also count on the 'TRNC's' conscript-based armed forces.

The fourth aspect of a state's definition as a threat – offensive intentions – requires an examination of the relationship between Cyprus, Türkiye, and Greece. Cyprus has been a battleground of the wider Greco-Turkish confrontation since the days of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Greek nationalism in the early 19th century(Loizides 2007). There was

intercommunal strife numerous times, especially after the 1950s when Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalist organisations emerged under British colonial rule and clashed on the island (Kızılyürek 2009; 2010; 2020; Kyritsi & Christofis 2018). As explained in Chapter 5, the fragile status quo created upon Cyprus's independence in 1960 was short-lived and collapsed soon after, leading to the more violent episode of the 1974 Turkish invasion. On both sides of the Green line, the hegemonic narrative is one of hostility and insecurity regarding the adversary's intentions, despite considerable Greek and Turkish Cypriot pro-unification forces which advocate a 'Cypriot identity.'⁹⁹

Consequently, a perennial sticking point in the negotiations for the resolution of the Cyprus Problem is the insistence of Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots to maintain a unilateral intervention right in Cyprus along with the presence of Turkish troops, which is perceived as a threat by most Greek Cypriots and their governments (Gotsis 2021).¹⁰⁰ Simultaneously, the absence of Turkish forces in a future resolution would be considered threatening to the Turkish Cypriots.

Cyprus is important to Turkish strategists because the island with the right weapon systems can restrict parts of Türkiye's airspace and its access to the Eastern Mediterranean (Davutoğlu 2010, 274-281; Brey 1999). Hence, Türkiye is strategically interested in ensuring that a hostile actor does not control the island. This point has been reiterated by Kemalists and non-Kemalists alike. For instance, the AKP's Ahmet Davutoğlu's (2010, 175) argued that even "if there was no Muslim Turk on Cyprus, Türkiye is obliged to preserve a Cyprus Problem" due to the island's geopolitical importance. Although the Turkish position regarding the resolution of the Cyprus Problem has not been static, with certain Turkish politicians being open to resolutions of the Cyprus Problem along the UN-designated parameters of a bizonal bicomunal federation, Turkish policy makers and leaders have signalled that if their interests in the island are not satisfied then the military option is on the table (Loizides 2002; Özertem 2021).

In this respect, Türkiye fulfils the threat threshold for Cyprus. Apart from Türkiye, no other state meets these criteria within the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, mainly because no other state has offensive intentions against Cyprus. As outlined in Chapter 6, Türkiye's proactive

⁹⁹ For an excellent overview of the identity shifts between advocates of Turkish and Greek nationalisms and proponents of a Cypriot identity see Loizides (2007).

¹⁰⁰ At the same time the non-existence of Turkish troops in a solution is for a large segment of the Turkish Cypriot population and for Türkiye a sine qua non because in their view the Turkish Cypriots would be defenceless against the Greek Cypriot majority in the event of a solution.

foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean alienated some of its traditional allies in the region, namely Israel and Egypt in the 2010s. This was a systemic opportunity for Cyprus.

This opportunity coincided with the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean. Apart from allowing greater revenues for the national economies, leading to greater economic power and potentially greater military strength, offshore natural resources can act as a structural modifier. The existence of hydrocarbons within the EEZ of a small state can allow its FPE to cultivate relationships with other coastal states (Zachariades & Petrikos 2020). These relationships can be furthered if there is a common threat perception regarding the existence of a revisionist state that could threaten their access to these resources. This provides the small state with a systemic opportunity to create a 'balancing for profit' dynamic and construct strategic relationships with other coastal states, exploiting the offshore natural resources and hindering the revisionist state. For offshore natural resources to be exploited, a legal framework is necessary to entice investors and corporations; otherwise, the political risk would be too great.

Nonetheless, there is an important caveat from the perspective of a balance of threat theory for Cyprus's FPE. Despite the systemic opportunity to deepen its relationship with Türkiye's other regional adversaries, these relationships could not become alliances. Based on Walt's theory, it would be challenging for Cyprus to construct military alliances with other states against Türkiye, except Greece, because Cyprus has little to offer militarily to any potential ally.¹⁰¹ On the contrary, it would become a liability for any potential allies because they would gain very little military support from Cyprus and would be expected to safeguard the island's sovereignty by spending financial and military resources.

After all, the CNG's military dogma is based on being reinforced by Greece in the event of hostilities against the Turks. It would be impossible for the CNG to send military forces abroad because it would be left vulnerable and lacks the means to do so. In this respect, hard balancing against Türkiye would be impossible. Hence, pursuing that strategy would not be successful. Eliminating Türkiye's threat would not pass through the construction of

¹⁰¹ Even in the case of Greece where the two states are considered allies and there is extensive military cooperation between them as well as interoperability between their armed forces it is not certain that the alliance would work in time of war. During the 1974 invasion, Greece did not send any military aid to Cyprus and chose not to go to war against Türkiye over Cyprus. The only Greek troops that fought against the Turkish were the troops that were already on the island as part of ELDYK.

alliances but through a solution to the Cyprus Problem that would alter threat perceptions in Nicosia and Ankara than trying to achieve the impossible task of balancing against it.

7.1.2. The Gulf

Given the geographic distance between Cyprus and the Gulf, for a state to constitute a threat to Cyprus from the Gulf, that state would need to possess substantive military capabilities and the capacity to project them across space. The only such country potentially could be Iran. Nonetheless, what is lacking is offensive intentions. There is no indication that Iran threatens Cyprus's survival or sovereignty. Despite its close relationship with Egypt and Israel, Cyprus's FPE has refrained from taking an explicitly anti-Iranian stance although it has been moving towards that direction due to its EU membership and its close relationship with Israel(Bassist 2023b). Nonetheless, this is a very recent development.

So far, the only indication of threats from Iran against Cyprus relates to Israeli and Jewish businesses, interests, and individuals in Cyprus whose presence has increased in the examined period. There was a claim by Israeli politicians in 2021 that an Azeri hitman, hired by Iranian operatives was going to gun down Israeli entrepreneurs in Cyprus(BBC 2021). Nonetheless, these actions are far below the threshold of offensive intentions. Hence, no threats emanate against Cyprus from the Gulf based on the parameters set by balance of threat theory.

7.2. The Intervening Variables: The FPE's perceptions and the Political Economy

The two intervening variables utilised are the perceptions of the Greek Cypriot FPE and the political economy of the state according to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 4. Before delving into these two intervening variables, the first step is to determine who are the members of the FPE and which are the veto players within it.

7.2.1 Foreign Policy Decision-Making and the Constitutional Framework: Determining the veto players.

This section will seek to achieve two things; The first is to identify the members of the FPE and the second is to identify the veto players within the FPE. By doing so the actors whose perception is important on foreign policy matters will be identified and guide us in the conceptualisation of the first intervening variable.

The Foreign Policy Executive

The task of this section is to identify the members of the FPE. The two main actors constituting the FPE's core are the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry's Permanent Secretary is the highest-ranking public servant. He is influential because most of the Ministry's directorates are directly answerable to him. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has different directorates specialising in different issues and geographical regions. Depending on Cyprus's foreign policy target, these directorates' heads constitute ad hoc FPE members. Two directorates are important for Cyprus's foreign policy in the Middle East: the Middle East and Africa Directorate and the second the Cyprus Problem and Türkiye Directorate.

Apart from the offices of the Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2003, the President has his own diplomatic office comprised of diplomats of his choice. The office also allows the President to operate independently from the Ministry. Additionally, the negotiator for the Cyprus Problem is another key figure. The negotiator heads the Greek Cypriot side in the Cyprus Problem negotiations, deals with the Turkish Cypriot authorities on various bicomunal initiatives and is the point of contact for UNFICYP. The President appoints the negotiator, and the last three appointees, Tasos, Tzionis(2003-2008), Andreas Mavroyiannis(2013-2022) and Menelaos Menelaou(2022-ongoing), have been career diplomats.¹⁰² The Negotiator is the President's most important advisor on the Cyprus Problem and the point of contact for the UN and the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

Cyprus also has an ad hoc National Council (NC) comprising the leaders of the parliamentary political parties, former Presidents, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Government Spokesman, the General Attorney, the Secretary to the President, and the President of the House of Representatives(Katsourides 2013). It was created in 1975 as a consulting body to the President for the Cyprus Problem. The National Council is convened only by the order of the President, and there is no standardized schedule for meetings. It lacks any funding or the capacity to take executive decisions. The NC's capacity to play a decisive part in foreign policy decision-making is severely hampered by the body's ad hoc nature, the lack of any constitutional authority and the competition and acrimony between the political parties participating.

The only case in which a President of Cyprus in the examined period has relied on individuals apart from those I have recognised as members of the FPE above is the case of

¹⁰² Under Christofias this role was taken up by the President himself.

Demetris Christofias. Under his administration, AKEL's International Relations and Cyprus Problem offices, led by Vera Polykarpou and Toumazos Tsielepis, respectively, were consulted on foreign policy.¹⁰³ Tsielepis was a member of the negotiating team, and he was appointed advisor to the president. The members of these two offices participated in an ad hoc advisory body with members of these two offices, his appointed advisors and certain academics from the University of Cyprus with ties to AKEL.¹⁰⁴ According to Markos Kyprianou(2023), Minister of Foreign Affairs under Christofias, there was no standardised communication between the President's advisory body and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That advisory body was never institutionalised.

Cyprus lacks any constitutionally mandated national security council. In 2014, President Anastasiades declared the establishment of a Council of Geostrategic Research comprised of international relations experts that would counsel the President and the NC. The Council met occasionally, but by 2017 it was silently disbanded. There was another attempt to create such a body in the second term of Anastasiades with Ioannis Kasoulides(2021) at the helm, former Minister of Foreign Affairs. Still, it only "met a couple of times"(Ibid).

There is also no tradition of publishing a government document that sketches out the country's foreign policy principles. In many ways, foreign policy practitioners are implementing policy on an ad hoc basis based on past practice, what is perceived as official state policy, on the directions given by their superiors. A novel development is the publication of an economic.

As Ambassador Tasos Tzionis(2021) notes, decision-making can occur at various levels, depending on the urgency and substance of the matter. There are many issues in which Cyprus's diplomats will take decisions based on their understanding of state policy without consulting with their superiors(Ibid). The small number of Cypriot diplomats gives them important leverage in the conduct of foreign policy. Nonetheless, the overall oversee remains with the Minister and the President. Given the Minister's political dependency on the President, the President is the "overlord" of the decision-making procedure, making the most important individual within the state's FPE(Ibid).

¹⁰³ Tsielepis was also an appointed advisor to the President during Christofias' tenure.

¹⁰⁴ The President has the prerogative of appointing a number of advisors at the office of the Presidency that answer directly to him.

Determining the veto player(s)

The second step in our approach is identifying and determining the veto players related to foreign policy decision-making within Cyprus. Based on the analysis outlined below, the President of Cyprus is the only veto player in foreign policy decision-making. The Greek Cypriot President of Cyprus has no checks and balances to his power to determine foreign policy.

The 1960 constitution that *de jure* remains in effect, and its checks and balances are consociational. There is a Greek Cypriot President at the head of state and government, and a Turkish Cypriot is Vice President. Unlike most other European democracies, the head of state and head of government offices are not separated but combined into one office: the Presidency (Ker-Lindsay 2006). Both the Greek Cypriot President and the Turkish Cypriot Vice President had veto powers over the decisions of their counterpart. In this respect, *de jure*, the Greek Cypriot President's ability to act as a veto player is matched by the Turkish Cypriot Vice President's veto.

When the Turkish Cypriots ceased to participate in government following the intercommunal strife of 1963-64, they left the Greek Cypriot President constitutionally unchecked as the only veto player in the executive.¹⁰⁵ This was solidified by several legislative and juridical acts in the immediate aftermath of the conflict that enabled the Greek Cypriots to rule without their Turkish Cypriot counterparts in the name of the "law of necessity" (Nicolatos 2014).

The Presidency also carries an important symbolic status within a society defined by a frozen conflict and a very apparent threat to its survival. As Ker-Lindsay (2006) points out, the island's turbulent history elevated President to the status of a "national leader, both in a historical, cultural sense and in terms of handling the peace negotiations". The Presidency is thus not only constitutionally unchecked but also carries an important historical and political symbolism for Greek Cypriots.

¹⁰⁵ Whether the Turkish Cypriots withdrew from government or were forced out is still a matter of historical debate with the Greek Cypriot side arguing that they withdrew while the official Turkish Cypriot account is that they were forced out of government. Turkish Cypriot militias enforced fellow Turkish Cypriots to withdraw from villages and towns where they were living side by side with Greek Cypriots into eight controlled enclaves around the island. As part of this move the Turkish Cypriot politicians withdrew from their positions either voluntarily or with the threat of violence. There were cases, however, where Turkish Cypriots attempted to maintain their position within the government and the public service and managed to overcome the checkpoints and controls set by the nationalist Turkish Cypriot militias only to be turned away by the Greek Cypriots.

One could counterargue that most decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers (CoM) constitutionally. The President heads the CoM, but he does not vote. According to the constitution, the CoM's key tasks include the overall control of the government, taking decisions regarding the introduction of legislation and budgets to the HoP, managing foreign and defence policy, and coordinating and supervising public services(Katsourides 2013). Nonetheless, the appointment and firing of ministers is the prerogative of the President. Hence, the seat of the ministers in the CoM is at the President's discretion. Moreover, the President is constitutionally the only one who can call the CoM into session and set its agenda. Therefore, the capacity of ministers to act independently of the wish of the President is restricted. In this way, the executive power of the state is streamlined to the wills and whims of the President.

The HoP could also be seen as a collective veto player and agenda setter due to its power to vote legislation into place. In foreign policy matters, however, its capacity to act as a veto player and agenda setter is non-existent. This was exemplified plainly and clearly in February 2011 when the Parliament attempted to shape the state's foreign policy and act as an agenda setter. The HoP decided a decree calling the President that the country should apply for membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace. Christofias vetoed the decree despite outcry from all political parties except AKEL.¹⁰⁶ This indicated the Parliament's inability to act as an agenda-setter and illustrated the limits of its power.

Both Nicos Tornaritis(2021) and Giorgos Koukoumas(2021), members of the Parliament's Foreign and European Affairs Committee, note that the Parliament's powers in terms of influencing foreign policy are restricted to the approval of the budgets for the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence and the ratification of international agreements signed by the executive. Concerning the ratification of treaties, it is rare for the Parliament to disapprove a treaty signed by the executive. Finally, the Foreign and European affairs committee can summon the Minister of Foreign Affairs to its meetings.

Compared to the power of other EU executives, the Cypriot President exerts greater control over domestic and foreign policy than any other EU leader.(Ker-Lindsay 2006). Whether the presidency will swing towards a more autocratic or a more inclusive style of governance relies almost entirely on the president's character. Presidents like George Vasileiou and Glafcos Clerides and, to some extent, Demetris Christofias have favoured more inclusive

¹⁰⁶ Notably Markos Kyprianou(2023), Foreign Minister at the time and one of DIKO's vice-presidents, was not notified about the decision of his party to promote and vote in favour of this measure.

and conciliatory styles of governance(Ker-Lindsay 2006).¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, Presidents Makarios, Spyros Kyprianou, Tassos Papadopoulos, and more recently, Nicos Anastasiades have favoured a more hands-on and often autocratic style in their cabinets(Ibid).

7.2.2. The FPE's perceptions

There is continuity in the Cypriot FPE's perception of the Middle East in the examined period. There is much convergence between the political elite and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomats. The most crucial factor is the centrality of the Cyprus Problem and, by extension, the countering of the Turkish threat. These interconnected pillars remain the *raison d'être* of Cyprus's Foreign Policy from the viewpoint of Cyprus's FPE. Nonetheless, while there is a great degree of continuity on how Cyprus's foreign policy should promote its positions on the Cyprus Problem, especially in the Gulf, there are also significant differences in the approach compared to the pre-EU period.

Beyond Türkiye, Cyprus's FPE increasingly sought to improve its status within the EU and the Middle East. The FPE aimed to highlight its "added value" to fellow EU member states and Middle East states by bridging the Middle East and the EU. The understanding of Nicosia was that influencing the perspectives of Middle East states concerning the Cyprus Problem would need Cyprus to represent its interests within the EU. This would shift its monothematic focus on the Cyprus Problem to a more diverse foreign policy that would increase Nicosia's standing in the EU and the Middle East.

The third component of Cyprus's FPE's perception relates to economic considerations. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the focus was on hydrocarbons and their exploitation. Here there is a strong interconnection between political economy and security for the FPE. In the Gulf, however, the focus was on attracting FDI. Critically, the economic crisis of 2012-13 seems to have played only a minor role in the view of Cyprus's FPE in the country's foreign policy in the Middle East.

The centrality of Türkiye and the Cyprus Problem

The Cyprus Problem and its solution remain the focal points of Cypriot foreign policy for diplomats and politicians across the political spectrum(Menelaou 2022). In the words of a Cypriot diplomat, "if you look at the Foreign Policy of Cyprus because we have a continuing

¹⁰⁷ Under Christofias there was a shift following the removal of DIKO from the government in the summer of 2011. At that point AKEL was the sole party in government removing the need for Christofias to bargain with another party.

division and occupation of the island, our FP's core element and target is to solve the Cyprus Problem”(Interviewee 1 2018). For Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem is a “national survival” issue limiting its “sovereignty” unless resolved(Ibid).

The quest towards a solution in the eyes of Cyprus’s FPE passes through the Turkish threat. Former Foreign Minister in Tassos Papadopoulos’ administration, Georgios Lillikas(2021), argues that the foreign policy that Cyprus follows in the Middle East ought to “take advantage of the opportunities presented by Türkiye’s attempt to become the leading power of the Islamic world which led to backlash from Arab states that do not accept Türkiye’s leadership” and “weaken Türkiye”. Theodoros D. Gotsis(2021), spokesperson for Cyprus’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argued that Cypriot foreign policy’s goal is to “lessen the imbalance of power” between Cyprus and Türkiye, thus, edging Türkiye closer to a solution to the Cyprus Problem which is compatible to Cyprus’s “needs”.

All major parties within the Greek Cypriot share the same threat perception vis-à-vis Türkiye. Yiannakis Omirou(2015), former President of Parliament and leader of the social democratic EDEK, argued that Türkiye has “expansionary views”. Far-right ELAM is known for its hatred of Türkiye(Stefanini 2017). Centrist parties like DIKO and DEPA have described Türkiye as an “obstacle to peace,” a “destabilising factor”, and a “revisionist power”(DEPA 2022; Brief 2020). Former President of DISY, Averof Neofytou(2022), labelled Türkiye “hostile and unpredictable”.

Even the left-wing AKEL views Türkiye as a threat. Stephanos Stephanou(2021), the current General Secretary of AKEL and government spokesperson in the Christofias administration argued that the focus on the Middle East under Christofias was necessitated by Türkiye’s foreign policy that sought to “upgrade the ‘TRNC’'s standing in the region”.¹⁰⁸ AKEL’s stance is essential given the party’s close links with the Turkish Cypriot community and its conciliatory stance on the Cyprus Problem, highlighting the uniform threat perception of the Greek Cypriot political system.

Status-seeking in the Middle East: Cyprus as the EU’s “lighthouse” in the Middle East.

Cypriot Foreign Policy up until the early 2000s rested on a “traditional approach” that sought to enlighten the international community on the Cyprus Problem, highlighting the illegality of Türkiye’s stance and ensuring that the ‘TRNC’ remains internationally

¹⁰⁸ Stephanou used the expression “the false state”(ψευδοκράτος) to refer to the ‘TRNC’. The expression is widely used in Greece and among the Greek Cypriots community to express illegality of the ‘TRNC’.

unrecognised(Ker-Lindsay 2012). In recent years, Cypriot diplomats and politicians aimed to develop a novel “polythematic” approach.¹⁰⁹ There was a growing realization by the FPE that the traditional approach was limited and needed to be diversified(Interviewee 1 2018; Demetriou 2022). In the opinion of President Christodoulides(2022), Cypriot foreign policy was “monothematic” and “tiresome” for many states because of its sole focus on the Cyprus Problem and Türkiye.

Cyprus’s EU accession altered this. EU membership elevated Cyprus’ status and pushed the Cypriot governments to engage in further status-seeking. The perception of the Cypriot FPE was that Cyprus’ status-seeking efforts should be centred on the Middle East. These efforts should be based on two interconnected pillars. The first pillar concerned elevating Cyprus’ status within the EU. Cypriot foreign policymakers, as will be shown below, believed that Cyprus’ “added value” to the CFSP was to become the “EU’s lighthouse in the Middle East”(Interviewee 1 2018; Ker-Lindsay 2008). President Christodoulides(2022) reiterated this point, arguing that Cyprus needed to become a geographical and political “bridge” linking the EU and the Middle East.

A Cypriot diplomat who played a crucial role in these efforts summarised the rationale of this novel approach in this way:

“We are a small but integral part of this mosaic called the EU with a value-added. Our value added is our relations with the countries of the region. Before joining the EU, we were members of the NAM, so we had those relations, and I feel that we have our hand on the pulse of the region and understand the developments within it to a much better degree than some of our EU partners that may not be as close as we are to this region. So, we have historically cultivated those relations with the countries and people of the region – the Israelis, the Syrians, the Jordanians, the Palestinians. So, we are trying to turn these relations into something more tangible that becomes our value added within the EU and also adds to the EU’s toolbox regarding CFSP, for example.”(Interviewee 1 2018)

Simultaneously, Cyprus would elevate its status among Middle Eastern states by promoting its positions within the EU(Shambos 2022; Menalaou 2022; Interviewee 1 2018). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs under Glafcos Clerides and Nicos Anastasiades, Ioannis Kasoulides(2021) argued that Cyprus was “on the side of the colonised”. Hence, there is a

¹⁰⁹ The distinction between a traditional and a polythematic approach was used by all the diplomats interviewed(Demetriou 2022; Shambos 2022; Gotsis 2021; Menelaou 2022; Interviewee 1 2018)

greater understanding between Cyprus and regional states, which have a shared history, compared to other EU states that do not share the same historical and cultural ties. Especially, if those states were colonial powers(Ibid). Therefore, Cyprus could increase its standing within the Middle East as a reliable and trustworthy EU partner.

Cyprus' geographical proximity dictated the choice to focus on the Middle East. Most interviewees claimed that the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East generally were Cyprus' "neighbourhoods". As outlined in Chapter 5, the Middle East was also historically seen as an area where Türkiye could promote 'TRNC's' recognition through forums like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation(OIC)(Shambos 2022; Beham 2017; Ker-Lindsay 2012). Additionally, via the NAM and its links with the Palestinians, Cypriot leaders viewed the Middle East, where Cyprus had strong and long-standing partners. Therefore,

According to Andros Kyprianou(2021), then General Secretary of the ruling AKEL, and Stephanos Stephanou, these drivers were influential within Christofias' administration. Markos Kyprianou(2023) highlighted Türkiye's increasing influence within the OIC in the late 2000s and the early 2010s. Christofias' FPE argued that Cyprus needed to expand its footprint in the Middle East, moving beyond the Eastern Mediterranean towards the Gulf. The FPE shared this viewpoint under Anastasiades as well(Shambos 2022; Menelaou 2022; Christodoulides 2022). There was a growing understanding that Gulf states were becoming increasingly influential. Hence, Cyprus should seek to develop its relations with these actors(Shambos 2022; Menelaou 2022).

Overall, based on the "polythematic" approach described above, Cyprus would go beyond simply "enlightening" other states the illegality of the status quo in Cyprus(Shambos 2022). According to President Christodoulides(2022), Cyprus would deepen its relationships with regional states, generating interest among them regarding the Cyprus Problem. Importantly, this interest would lead them to support Cyprus's position. By brokering institutional agreements with regional states, Cyprus would also be able "express [its] sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity," according to Salina Shiambos(2022), head of the MFA's Middle East and North Africa Division. Given the threat to Cyprus' sovereignty, this "exercise in sovereignty" is vital for Cypriot diplomats. Finally, Cyprus would elevate its status by projecting the image of a trusted EU partner in Brussels and the Middle East.

The economic facet: Hydrocarbons and FDI

Cyprus's approach towards the Middle East rested on the fundamental elements described above - the Cyprus Problem, Türkiye, and the goal of elevating the country's status by linking the Middle East and the EU. Beyond these fundamental components, Cyprus sought to add an economic facet to its foreign policy. There was a differentiation between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf in the viewpoints of most members of the FPE regarding this economic facet. Different drivers were linked to Cyprus' economic diplomacy in the two sub-regions. In the Eastern Mediterranean, it was the discovery of hydrocarbons, while in the Gulf, the prospect of FDI from the prosperous states of the region.

The discovery of hydrocarbons whose exploitation necessitates the demarcation of maritime zones between littoral states was vital in the view of Cyprus' FPE in enhancing its regional relationships(Christodoulides 2022; Kasoulides 2021). The most developed of these relationships with Israel and Egypt began, in the view of many members of Cyprus's FPE, from energy cooperation but soon expanded to other areas like search and rescue, soft military cooperation, trade, education and tourism(Christoudoulides 2021). The breakdown of relations between regional states and Türkiye in the early 2010s, described in Chapter 6, deepened these relationships but did not start them(Shambos 2022; Christodoulides 2018; 2022). In the view of the FPE, it was the prospect of energy cooperation instead(Ibid; Stavrinou 2018).

On the contrary, in the Gulf, the prime economic motivator was the attraction of FDI. However, according to Markos Kyprianou(2023), Menelaos Menelaou(2022), and Salina Shambos(2022), the Cyprus Problem remained the most important factor. After all, Markos Kyprianou(2023) noted that soon after completing his first meetings in the Gulf, he realised that the prospects of attracting large-scale FDI were not optimistic because of Cyprus's small economy. He noted that before delving into economic diplomacy, Cyprus would have to establish embassies in the region, which were few at the time and of course go through serious planning.

Points of divergence

There are two points of divergence within Cyprus's FPE regarding its Middle East policy. The first relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second point is connected to the connection between the Cyprus Problem and Cyprus's foreign policy. Although the members of Cyprus's FPE largely agree on the overall trajectory of Cyprus's foreign policy, there is a divergence in the capacity of Cyprus's foreign policy in the region to push Türkiye towards a

solution to the Cyprus Problem. Critically, the second point links to the differences between political actors regarding the characteristics of a Cyprus Problem settlement.

On the first point, AKEL has criticized Anastasiades and his administration for not maintaining a balanced relationship over the Arab-Israeli conflict. AKEL points out that while Cyprus's officials have visited Israel yearly, they have not visited Ramallah with the same intensity. Furthermore, some joint military exercises with Israel have been criticised since the scenarios allow the IDF to practice for future operations in Gaza and the West Bank. A diplomat also shared this view with experience in the region (Interviewee 3 2021).

Andros Kyprianou (2021) argued that President Christofias maintained a balance between Israel and the Palestinians, which had been lost under Anastasiades. All members of AKEL interviewed spoke of the visit of Christofias to Israel in March 2011, the first of a Cypriot President, which was preceded by a visit to Ramallah (Ibid). According to interviewees from AKEL, the choice to visit Ramallah before visiting Tel Aviv was to illustrate that Cyprus's strengthened relationship with Israel will not come at the expense of Cyprus's "traditional relationships" with the Palestinian people (Stephanou 2021; Kyprianou 2021).

On the second point, considerable debate exists on what form a solution should take. An interlinked debate is about what role Cyprus's foreign policy should have in this process and what can be achieved through this policy. The majority of the political system subscribes to the UN-mandated framework of a bizonal bicomunal federation, albeit with crucial differentiations as to the components of that federation (Zachariades 2023).¹¹⁰ DISY and AKEL, the two largest parties, and DEPA support the framework UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres proposed. The victor of the last presidential elections Nicos Christodoulides, a former member of DISY, seemed to diverge from the framework on a few points but supports the bizonal bicomunal federation framework. DIKO, the third largest party in Cyprus, accepts the bizonal bicomunal framework but not the Guterres framework.¹¹¹ EDEK and the nationalist ELAM have rejected the bizonal bicomunal federation as a framework for a unitary state.

AKEL's (2023) view on the interconnection between Cyprus's foreign policy is that it should cultivate a win-win scenario by enticing Türkiye to move towards a solution rather than

¹¹⁰ For an excellent political economy account of Greek Cypriot opinions on the Cyprus Problem see Ioannou (2020).

¹¹¹ Notably, the parties that supported Christodoulides – EDEK, DIKO, and DIPA – have extremely diverging views on the resolution of the Cyprus Problem.

a confrontational stance. Seeking to confront Türkiye will achieve nothing in AKEL's view due to the vast disparity in material power between the two sides. In this respect, Cyprus should offer the carrot of exploiting the Eastern Mediterranean's hydrocarbons and aiding Türkiye in its relationship with the EU (Kyprianou 2023b; Psara 2023). Furthermore, AKEL has stressed the importance of negotiating with the Turkish Cypriots even if the international and domestic conditions are not ideal.

DISY has adopted a similar stance, particularly during the first Anastasiades administration (2013-2018).¹¹² Nonetheless, it has reverted course after the collapse of the Crans-Montana talks in 2017. The foreign policy under the second Anastasiades administration has been closer to the foreign policy of Tassos Papadopoulos than to the approaches of Anastasiades himself and Glafkos Clerides' second administration (1998-2003). This strategy is founded upon the assumption that Türkiye can alter its course on the Cyprus Problem and adopt Greek Cypriot positions through a confrontational foreign policy.¹¹³ The expression often used is "We should inflict cost on Türkiye" (Papadopoulos, 27, 33). The strategy resembles a mixture of hard and soft balancing via EU sanctions, the blocking of EU-Türkiye talks, the construction of regional alliances, the strengthening of the CNG and the progression of Cyprus's hydrocarbon exploitation programme in defiance of Türkiye (Ibid).

7.2.2. Political Economy

This section will proceed in two parts in line with the theory outlined in Chapter 4. Firstly, an overview of Cyprus's economy will be provided that will allow us to identify the makeup of the Cypriot economy and the most significant challenges faced by the FPE during this period. Secondly, the critical economic interests with a stake in foreign policy will identify along with their connections to the FPE. Given Cyprus's size and the nature of its political economy, there is a uniform acceptance and strive for an open economy that can attract FDI and revenue from tourism. The four sectors dominating Cyprus's economy agree on this basis.

¹¹² It is important to note that out of all political parties in Cyprus, DISY has the most divergent groupings regarding the Cyprus Problem. A liberal wing which includes Ioannis Kasoulides, and Michalis Sofokleous, has strong sentiments in favour of a resolution. Former leader Averof Neofytou is closer to this grouping. At the same time the party includes a hard-liner section which partly originates from EOKA B and other nationalist supporters that were included in the party in its creation who are quite sceptical with the prospect of resolution under a bizonal bicomunal federation framework.

¹¹³ A blueprint of this strategy was offered by Nicolas Papadopoulos during his unsuccessful presidential bid in 2018. (Papadopoulos 2017)

These sectors are tourism, the financial services industry, the banking sector and the construction and real estate sector and are all closely connected with the political elite.

The structure of the Cypriot economy: An overview

In 1974 Cyprus, an underdeveloped economy, lost 17.9% of its GDP due to the Turkish invasion. In 1975 the country's GDP stood at 489.9 million USD (World Bank 2023). By 2003, on the eve of Cyprus's EU accession Cyprus's GDP stood 14.55 billion USD while the country was listed as a high-income economy by the World Bank. An export-orientated agricultural sector and tourism initially stimulated this impressive turnaround. By the end of the 1980s, however, the economic paradigm on the island started to shift (Clerides 2018). Agriculture took the backseat while the international business services sector was picking up steam, with tourism maintaining its importance to Cyprus's economy.

The international business sector grew because of four factors. Firstly, the Vasileiou administration (1988-1993) introduced a very low corporate tax regime, making Cyprus an attractive destination for international businesses. Secondly, two geopolitical developments aided Cyprus's position as a business hub. The Lebanese civil war (1975-1989) shook Lebanon's credibility as a safe financial haven, and the introduction of capitalism in the post-Soviet states created a new market for Cyprus' financial sector (Ibid). Thirdly, Cyprus was home to scores of UK-educated lawyers and accountants who provided high-quality services and, fourthly, the country's excellent location.

As the international business sector grew, the banking sector grew with it. Importantly, Cyprus's banking sector was dominated by domestic banks rather than subsidiaries of multinational banks. The assets controlled by the banks rose from double the size of GDP in 1990 to nine times GDP in 2009. The country's EU's and eurozone membership increased the capital inflows into Cyprus's economy.¹¹⁴ From 2009 onwards, Cypriot banks had higher deposit rates than the EU average, thus, becoming an attractive destination for international depositors. By 2012, 38% of deposits in Cyprus's banks were from non-residents.¹¹⁵ Cypriot banks used their plentiful liquidity to finance consumer loans, a construction boom, and expand

¹¹⁴ Cyprus became part of the eurozone in January 2008. As Sofronis Clerides (2018, 5) points out the Cypriot banking system was under strict control up until the year 2000. From that point the governing of the banks became increasingly liberalized. The accession to the EU reinforced this liberalisation.

¹¹⁵ Between 2009 and 2012 deposit rates in Cypriot banks fluctuated between 4% and 4.5% while the EU average over the same period fluctuated between 1.5% and 2.5%. (Demetriades 2017a, 182).

overseas. The combined effects of these policies increased domestic Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) and the exposure of the Cypriot economy to the effects of the global financial crisis.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, Cypriot banks' most calamitous decision, especially the two largest banks – Bank of Cyprus and Marfin Laiki – was the investment in Greek Government Bonds (GGBs) in 2009 and 2010 at the onset of the Greek financial crisis. The gamble of Bank of Cyprus and Marfin Laiki of GGBs increased this interconnectedness rapidly. As part of the second Greek bailout package, it was agreed that private sector involvement (PSI) would contribute to lessening Greek sovereign debt. In March 2012, it was agreed that the private sector investors in GGBs would incur a loss of 53.5%(Cheng 2020). The losses suffered by the Bank of Cyprus(BoC) and Laiki were enormous and stood at €1.9 billion and €2.4 billion or 10.4% and 13.4% of GDP, respectively. The three largest Cypriot banks lost 24.2% of GDP, triggering an economic crisis(Demetriades 2017b).

The recapitalisation efforts of Laiki and BoC were unsuccessful, and Christofias was hesitant to request EU aid until June 2012.¹¹⁷ Then, the country was downgraded to junk status by international rating houses, thus, disqualifying Cypriot bonds from being accepted by the European Central Bank(ECB). The government was forced to request a bailout package from the European Stability Mechanism(ESM)(Clerides 2014). Negotiations soon began between Cyprus' government with the Troika of the European Commission, the IMF, and the ECB, but there was no quick conclusion. In November 2012, the Troika decided to wait until March 2013, when a new government would take charge.

Nicos Anastasiades' election signalled the restart of negotiations. The amount required for the bank recapitalisation reached 10 billion euros, and another 7 billion euros were needed to finance deficits and upcoming debt obligations. Anastasiades followed the path of his predecessor and sought financial assistance from Russia to avoid the Troika(Droushiotis 2020; Demetriades 2017a). Nonetheless, it was apparent that Russia would not help Cyprus. By 2013, a deal was reached, including the closure of Laiki, a bail-in and bailout component, and a reform package. In implementing those reforms, there was widespread consensus in the

¹¹⁶ There is a growing literature on the 2012-2013 financial crisis in Cyprus which seeks to account for the causes of the crisis and the decision-making of Cyprus's political system(Demetriades 2017a; 2017b; Clerides 2014; 2018; Apostolides 2013; Theodore & Theodore 2016; Droushiotis 2020).

¹¹⁷ Andros Kyprianou(2021) noted that AKEL and the government had courted Moscow and Beijing to find alternative sources of funding. Moscow had already loaned Cyprus under Christofias to the tune of 1.58 billion euros(Reuters 2019)

political system. By 2016, Cyprus made an early exit from the program. Nonetheless, structural problems remain(Ellina 2022).

The country's international standing as a financial hub was shaken due to the bail-in component of the deal(Christodoulides 2018). Cyprus, however, maintained most of the other components of an offshoring financial hub and tax haven. To those, one should add the citizenship by investment programme(Rakopoulos 2022). The programme began in 2007. However, in April 2013, it was reformed, allowing anyone willing to invest 2 million euros in newly built real estate to acquire Cypriot and EU citizenship.¹¹⁸ The programme reinvigorated the financial services and real estate sectors leading, however, to a new property bubble. More importantly, it allowed the powerful economic interest groups leading these sectors to continue to preserve their business model. The program itself had minimal impact on GDP. In 2019 Minister of Finance Harris Georgiades, proclaimed that the programme had contributed only 1.2% of GDP(Brief 2019).

In 2020, however, the programme came to a crashing end following an Al-Jazeera(2020) investigation entitled "The Cyprus Papers". The Cyprus Papers illustrated widespread irregularities and corruption involving government institutions, legal firms, and politicians. The scheme was also under the investigation of the General Auditor's office in Cyprus and attracted criticism within the EU(RoC Auditor 2022). The scandal brought the Anastasiades government under international criticism and led the President of the Parliament and an MP to resign.

The final two challenges that Cyprus's economy had to deal with during the period were the Covid-19 pandemic and the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Covid-19 pandemic led Cyprus's government to enforce several national and regional lockdowns between 2020-21, affecting tourist arrivals. Tourist arrivals in 2020 fell to 632 thousand; in 2019, they were almost 4 million(CYSTAT 2023). GDP contracted by 4.4% in 2020, rebounding with 6.6% and 5.6% growth rates in 2021 and 2022, respectively(World Bank 2023).

¹¹⁸ Under President Papadopoulos the amounts required for the acquisition of citizenship were much higher. The investment in real estate stood at 25 million euros while a second route was available to those that had at least 17 million in deposits in Cyprus's banks. Under President Christofias, the limits were lowered with the investment in real estate now standing at 10 million euros while the worth of the deposition in Cyprus's banks was then 15 million euros. Notably, there was no legislation regulating the program and instead its functioning was regulated by decisions from the Council of Ministers. In the pre-Anastasiades period 233 citizenships were granted compared to more than 7000 under President Anastasiades(RoC Auditor 2022).

Although the economy seemed to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine created new challenges. These challenges were initially related to the rising inflation and the loss of more than 700 thousand tourist arrivals from Russia and Ukraine (CYSTAT 2023). However, the most crucial challenge RoC's economy will face is the viability of the Cypriot business model. After the passport-selling scheme's demise, the EU sanctions on Russia will pressure Cyprus's capacity to act as an offshoring financial hub for Russians.

Political economy, sectoral interests, and Cyprus's foreign policy

As the overview provided in the previous sub-section illustrates, Cyprus's economy is centred on four sectors: i) tourism, ii) financial services, iii) construction and real estate and iv) the banking sector. These sectors are highly interconnected, and their needs from Cyprus's foreign policy overlap. More importantly, their needs also overlap with the state's necessity to maintain an open economy, attract FDI and tourists and take advantage of globalisation. In addition, we would expect Cyprus to take advantage of its energy-producing potential, given the recent hydrocarbon discoveries in its EEZ. This section will begin by examining the interconnection between the economic and political elite of the island before outlining what we would expect from Cyprus's economic diplomacy in the examined period. Finally, the focus will shift to the hydrocarbon potential of the state.

In the pre-crisis era, many of the island's lawyers and accountants were paid by banks as introducers of wealthy clients, mostly from states of the former USSR. Besides the banks, the lawyers and accountants acted as mediators for the acquisition of real estate. In the post-crisis era, the same legal and accounting firms would act as the entry point for individuals seeking citizenship, arranging for acquiring real estate and setting up bank accounts, thus, connecting them with the banking and real estate sectors once more. Finally, the construction and real estate sector is interconnected with the tourist sector as many leading island developers also own tourist enterprises.

The elites atop these four sectors are enmeshed in the country's political elite. Many of the island state's leading politicians have been lawyers, playing a role in the rise and perpetuation of the Cypriot business model. The cases of Presidents Nicos Anastasiades and Tassos Papadopoulos are illustrative. Both have been accused of money laundering activities connected to Southeastern and Eastern Europe (OCCRP 2021; Howden 2003). Despite the accusations, they could still rise to the pinnacle of political power. In doing so, they had important support from the economic establishment described above.

The economic interests of this elite rested on Cyprus maintaining an open and globally interconnected economy. In that way, Cyprus became an attractive destination for individuals and corporations looking for offshoring services, including the acquisition of EU citizenship until recently. Simultaneously, an open economy would attract more visitors to Cyprus's mass tourist industry. These economic interests wanted a foreign policy catering to these necessities. The entanglement with the state's political elite enables access to the political elite and the President. The cases of President Papadopoulos and Anastasiades illustrate that the President himself could belong to the political economy nexus profiting from Cyprus's financial services sector.

What is more important is that the state's economic interests are in line with the sectoral interests described above. Cyprus is a small economy that has no capacity for heavy industrial production. Its size prevents it from economies of scale and, therefore, cannot follow a mainstream path towards economic development. Any manufacturing or agricultural production would face a disadvantage when exported since it would have to face increased business costs because Cyprus is an island. Instead, Cyprus must rely on non-mainstream economic strategies (Prasad 2009; Prasad & Lal 2003). In fact, for the existence of an offshore financial centre, a "strong tourism sector appears to be a pre-condition (*causa sine qua non*)" (Ibid).

These conditions seem well understood by the executive branch irrespective of the government and political and ideological orientation. An example is the choice of the Christofias administration to retain the passport-selling scheme and even lower the thresholds necessary for citizenship. Equally, Christofias' party, AKEL, supported the 2013 legislative act that lowered the passport schemes threshold even further to 2 million euros. Even when AKEL and other opposition parties protested the passport-selling scheme, they never protested its existence. However, they argued that it should be reformed to benefit society as a whole rather than a select few.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ An important caveat that should be considered is the distinction between interests at the foreign and domestic levels. Although the interests of the political elite and of the elite atop the sectoral interest described above are common when it comes to what should be the targets of Cyprus's foreign policy in connection to the economy, there is considerable debate regarding the wealth distribution resulting from the FDI. A significant part of the political elite emanating from the Movement of Ecologists and AKEL have argued that state regulation should be imposed so that a significant part of the FDI made in the island is diverted towards the setting up of businesses, education and new technologies rather than opting for the easy route of investment in the real estate sector. As this chapter concerns the foreign policy of Cyprus and not its domestic policies further discussion into the matter is beyond the scope of this work. (Offsite 2020)

In this respect, the state's foreign economic policy needed to pursue economic diplomacy that would exhibit Cyprus's qualities as an FDI and tourism destination. The first step is to expand the state's diplomatic network in lucrative destinations by setting up embassies. States closer to Cyprus would make better targets because geographic proximity has the advantage of lessening business costs because of easier and cheaper transport links.

In addition, EU accession has made Cyprus an even more advantageous destination for FDI and offshore companies because any corporation setting up shop would have the capacity to access the EU's common market. After setting up diplomatic relations and opening an embassy in the target country, one of the essential tasks for Cyprus's diplomacy would be to conclude a double taxation treaty with said country. A double taxation treaty will increase the attractiveness of Cyprus as an investment destination.¹²⁰

We would also expect Cyprus's foreign policy to prioritise the monetisation of hydrocarbon discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, some of which are in Cyprus's EEZ. Exploiting hydrocarbons could be immensely beneficial for the island state's economy. Cyprus's electricity is produced primarily with mazut oil, with renewables only forming a minor part of the electricity production. Hence, Cyprus is a net energy importer, and the price of electricity is prone to volatility connected to the global price of oil. Exploiting hydrocarbons would lessen Cyprus's dependency on energy imports or even eradicate it, turning Cyprus from an energy importer to an energy exporter. The country's GDP could also be boosted by creating petrochemical industries associated with fossil fuel production. The offshore nature of these hydrocarbon discoveries means that Cyprus's diplomats would need to reach agreements concerning the demarcation of EEZs with other littoral states, creating a regulatory framework that would entice oil and natural gas firms to invest.

7.3. The Dependent Variable: Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East

This sub-section deals with Cypriot foreign policy in the Middle East, the dependent variable in this case study. The sub-section is split in two. The first part focuses on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus's attempt to construct a network of alliances to counter Türkiye's regional influence and enable Cyprus to hydrocarbons. Cyprus sought to link the region and the EU to elevate as part of its status-seeking foreign policy. In the second part, the focus is placed on Cyprus's foreign policy in the Gulf. Cyprus established a foothold in the region despite its minimal presence pre-2004 to boost its anti-secessionist foreign policy and

¹²⁰ See the relevant section in Chapter 5.

status-seeking efforts. The Gulf was also seen as a region with economic opportunities that could benefit Cyprus.

7.3.1 The Eastern Mediterranean Sea: Attempted hard balancing and eventual soft balancing.

Cyprus's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean between 2004 and 2022 continued to be preoccupied with the Cyprus Problem. Since the late 2000s, two regional developments shaped Cyprus's foreign policy prompting its FPE to react to these developments and expand its foreign policy beyond the traditional approach described above. The first development was the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the second was the souring of relations between Türkiye and regional states, most notably Israel and Egypt. Cyprus's Eastern Mediterranean policy was based on three pillars; i) Türkiye and the Cyprus Problem, ii) the exploitation of hydrocarbons and the transformation of Cyprus into a regional energy hub, and iii) the elevation of Cyprus' status as an honest broker between regional states and the EU (Tziarras 2019b; Ioannou 2022).

Despite some successes, Cyprus's foreign policy could not push Türkiye towards a settlement of the Cyprus Problem. At best, what Cyprus succeeded in was a soft balancing response vis-à-vis Türkiye. This approach did not yield tangible results in transforming Cyprus into a gas-producing state and the Eastern Mediterranean's energy hub. Finally, Cyprus lost key opportunities to enhance its status-seeking efforts as a bridge between the EU and the Middle East (Ioannou 2022, 183-184). Despite the failures, Cyprus has shifted away from a monothematic approach centred on the Cyprus Problem and engaged in an "age of proactivity" that diversifies away from the Cyprus Problem without diminishing the latter's position as the "national matter" (Tziarras 2019b).

Balancing Türkiye: The trilaterals and their limits

The most crucial goal for Cyprus's foreign policy was to counter "Turkish revisionism" in the Eastern Mediterranean and exploit its hydrocarbon reserves in both strategic and economic terms.¹²¹ The breakdown of Türkiye's relationships with Israel and Egypt in the 2010s provided a systemic opportunity for the Cypriot FPE. Cyprus's relationship with Israel prior to 2010 was problematic due to Cyprus' relationship with the Arab world and the

¹²¹ The reading of Türkiye as a revisionist state was made by almost all Cypriot interviewees irrespective of institutional role and political affiliation (Kardaş 2021; Drakoularakos 2021; Candar 2021; Yavuz 2020; Tziarras 2022).

Palestinians.¹²² Cyprus' capacity to deepen its relationship with Egypt after Mubarak's fall and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood was limited due to the solid and deep relationship between Morsi's administration and Türkiye. Nonetheless, Morsi's downfall provided a systemic opportunity for Cyprus to come closer to Egypt.

Cyprus's FPE exploited these circumstances and built deeper relationships with both states. These strategic partnerships took the form of trilaterals with the participation of Greece. Both politicians and academics have labelled these trilaterals as alliances.(Proedrou 2021; Karagiannis 2016; Delidis 2023; Marketos et al. 2022).¹²³ As I will illustrate below, although there is a security component in these relationships, it is far below the military alliance threshold that would require the involved parties to guarantee each other's security in the event of war. Critically, none of the works that term the trilaterals as alliances define the term alliance.(Proedrou 2021; Karagiannis 2016; Delidis 2023; Marketos et al. 2022). This is problematic since most definitions of alliance involve a defensive military pact as the quintessential characteristic differentiating an alliance from a quasi-alliance, entente, or strategic partnership(Nadkarni 2010; Wilkins 2012). Instead, the scholars that provided a theoretical framework argue that the trilaterals do not meet the threshold for an alliance, terming them "quasi-alliance"(Tziarras 2016), "entente"(Shama 2019) or "strategic partnerships"(Zachariades & Petrikkos 2020).

In the case of Israel, the beginning of their renewed and deepening relationship came on the backbone of hydrocarbon discoveries in their prospective EEZs. Some of these discoveries were on the edge of their prospective EEZs, highlighting the need for an EEZ demarcation agreement. This would enable the development of their respective gas fields per international law. In 2010 Cyprus demarcated its EEZ with Israel, paving the way for energy cooperation. The relationship in this field was further strengthened when the Israeli firm Delek invested in the Aphrodite gas block.¹²⁴

The visit of President Christofias to Tel Aviv in March 2011 highlighted the deepening relationship. With the ascendance of President Anastasiades, the bilateral relationship was further developed. Between 2011 and 2022, Cypriot and Israeli officials met on thirty occasions

¹²² See the discussion in chapter 5.

¹²³ Politicians that have termed the trilaterals as alliances most notably include President Anastasiades(Kathimerini 2013) and Nicolas Papadopoulos(2020), the head of DIKO, although one can find multiple assertions in Greek Cypriot media.

¹²⁴ Although Noble was a US firm before its buyout from Chevron, it was closely associated to Israel's EEZ after its findings in the Leviathan and Tamar fields(Shoshana 2023).

at the minister levels, head of the armed forces or head of state. The relationship also expanded into other domains beyond energy, including security, trade, and investment(Tziarras 2016).

Regarding security, Cyprus, and the Israeli Defence Forces(IDF) have conducted a series of joint military exercises with Israeli commandos deploying themselves in Cyprus. The Israeli air force has also engaged in war games with their Greek Cypriot counterparts in charge of Cyprus's air defence(Fabian 2023; Times of Israel 2022; Zachariades & Petrikkos 2020). There is increasing scepticism on whether these exercises are mutually beneficial or whether they favour the IDF disproportionately.¹²⁵ Security cooperation has been enhanced via arms acquisition by the CNG from Israeli producers. The CNG has so far acquired small arms, Israeli UAVs, and an open sea patrol vessel(Defense Update 2018; Times of Israel 2019). Additionally, Cyprus and the Israeli governments have agreed to provide Israeli anti-air defence systems to Cyprus.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, this relationship is far from being considered an alliance, a fact acknowledged by Ioannis Kasoulides(2021) and Tasos Tzionis(2021).

The relationship took a trilateral form with Greece's participation in 2014. The trilateral has also evolved into a strategic partnership on energy and shared security interests. On the security side, Greece replaced Türkiye as a participant in the Noble Dina naval exercise, the main annual war games conducted jointly by the US and the Israeli navies in the Eastern Mediterranean. Since 2021, Cyprus has also participated in the exercise(Regev 2022; Brander 2022, 8). More recently, the trilateral has convened in "3+1" form with the participation of the US. This format has allowed Cyprus to better its relationship with the US, a key role in bringing about a partial end to the arms embargo placed upon the island state by the US since 1987(Zachariades 2022).

Although Cyprus's relationship with Israel is arguably more developed, similar steps have been taken with Egypt. As outlined in Chater 5 Egypt and Cyprus shared historical ties as members of NAM and had cordial relations. As with Israel, the two states deepened their relations through the prospect of energy cooperation. The first step was the EEZ demarcation agreement signed and ratified by both states in 2003. The agreement paved the way for

¹²⁵ Two anonymous members of Cyprus's armed forces who have taken part in exercises with the IDF have argued that the scenarios of the exercises favoured the IDF's objectives disproportionately. One of them used a video game analogy claiming that "the IDF is contributing the players and we are contributing stage".

¹²⁶ Media reports suggest that the system in question is the Iron Dome although this is not clear yet(Kathimerini 2022).

establishing the legal framework necessary for hydrocarbon exploration in the EEZs of both states, enabling hydrocarbon discoveries in the EEZs of both states.

There was a setback in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood due to the affinity between the Muslim Brotherhood and the ruling AKP in Türkiye. The downfall of Morsi in 2013 and the rise of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi provided a systemic opportunity for the deepening relationship, given the animosity between Erdogan and el-Sisi. Cyprus's FPE understood this, and President Anastasiades was one of the first leaders to congratulate Fatah el-Sisi upon his election in 2014. Anastasiades' move defied the views of most EU member states, who viewed el-Sisi as a dictator who toppled a democratically mandated government(Shama 2019).

The relationship took the shape of a trilateral partnership with the participation of Greece in 2014. The trilateral with Egypt preceded the one with Israel, and since 2014, there have been almost annual summits bringing the FPEs of the three states together(Ibid). The three parties have agreed on common principles in several regional issues ranging from the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Cyprus Problem(Ibid). Egypt has also steadfastly supported Cyprus's anti-secessionist foreign policy against the 'TRNC.' President el-Sisi spearheaded an effort to stop naming the 'TRNC' as the "Turkish Cypriot state" during the 2014 OIC summit, resulting in the summit's adoption of no conclusions or resolutions(World Bulletin 2014). El-Sisi even demanded the removal of the 'TRNC's' observer status in the OIC.

Cyprus and Egypt have signed defensive cooperation agreements which allow for intelligence sharing, cooperation in the countering of terrorism and the conduct of joint military exercises(Kathimerini 2018). However, the military cooperation is limited given the lack of a defensive pact between the three states. Hence, it does not meet the threshold of a military alliance that would broadly counter Türkiye's military presence in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean.

None of the two trilaterals has helped Cyprus provide a hard balancing mechanism against Türkiye. Instead, the two trilaterals are, at best, a key component of Cyprus's soft balancing against Türkiye which has included the efforts of the Anastasiades administration to impose EU sanctions on Türkiye and the blocking of Türkiye's EU accession talks(Psaropoulos 2020; Wintour 2020). The trilaterals cannot be considered alliances due to the lack of mutual defence pacts. Neither Egypt nor Israel are obliged to aid Cyprus in a conflict with Türkiye. Similarly, Cyprus has no obligation to aid these states in the event of a conflict. Ioannis

Kasoulides(2021) aptly put it, “The trilaterals were never alliances. Let us imagine what would happen if we sent a company of raiders to aid the IDF in an episode in Gaza. There would rightfully be an uproar here [in Cyprus]. Israel only cares for its defence, so we are discussing partnerships, not alliances.”¹²⁷

Furthermore, the current state of the Cyprus Problem highlights that Cyprus is arguably in a worse position than in 2004. In 2017 the Cyprus Problem came very close to a resolution within the UN-mandated framework of a bizonal bicomunal federation. However, the negotiations collapsed, and essentially, they never restarted. Meanwhile, Türkiye pushed for reopening the city of Famagusta, which most Greek Cypriots believe would be part of the Greek Cypriot federal state in a resolution(Psaropoulos 2020). These developments highlight a reversal in the position of the AKP and the Turkish government, which up until that point supported the UN framework(Özertem 2021). The situation has become graver after the pro-solution Mustafa Akinci lost to the hard-liner Ersin Tatar in ‘TRNC’s’ 2020 elections.

Cyprus’s foreign policy has been unable to either push Türkiye closer to resolving the Cyprus problem or create an alliance framework against Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean despite the highly problematic relations between Türkiye with Israel and Egypt. Finally, the prospect of a resolution is dim at best, with the status quo being solidified and the ‘TRNC’ becoming much more interlinked with mainland Türkiye(Moudouros 2020).

Hydrocarbon exploitation

The second goal of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean was to exploit its hydrocarbon reserves. As mentioned above, energy exploitation and security considerations played a crucial part in constructing the trilaterals. While the involved states believed that there were common interests, no concrete moves would allow Cyprus’s hydrocarbons to be exploited. From the perspective of Cyprus’s FPE, hydrocarbons would have ideally turned the island state into an energy hub linking the Eastern Mediterranean’s gas with regional and international markets in Europe and Asia. However, Cyprus has failed to produce any energy from its gas reserves, and the prospect of becoming the region’s energy hub is fading away.

Over the years, a long debate has sparked regarding the monetisation and export options available to East Mediterranean states, including Cyprus. Some options favoured regional markets like those of Egypt and Türkiye; some focused on the East Asian markets, while some

¹²⁷ Kasoulides was referring to the CNG’s special forces which are commonly referred to as “rangers” (καταδρομείς).

viewed Europe as the final destination(Giamouridis & Tsafos 2015; Tsafos 2017; 2022). From the perspective of Cyprus, the three major ones which would elevate the island's strategic standing where the i) establishment of an LNG export facility at Vassiliko, ii) the construction of the EastMed pipeline connecting the region's gas to Crete and then to mainland Greece and from there link with the European gas grid, and iii) finally a pipeline to Cyprus and then to Europe via Türkiye.

None of the three options mentioned above has materialised. The most important reason is Cyprus's inability to prevent Türkiye from utilising gunboat diplomacy to dissuade international firms involved in the Cypriot EEZ. Turkish officials argue that parts of Cyprus's demarcated EEZ are part of its own EEZ or that of the 'TRNC.'¹²⁸ The Turkish navy has blocked drill ships of firms which have acquired rights to blocks in Cyprus's EEZ, preventing them from proceeding with hydrocarbon explorations. Additionally, it has used its drill ships to drill within Cyprus's demarcated EEZ. These actions have slowed Cyprus's exploration program and ruled two out of the three monetisation options above and export options. Furthermore, they highlighted the geopolitical risk of investing in Cyprus's EEZ without solving the Cyprus Problem.

Firstly, for the option of an LNG export facility in Vassiliko to be financially viable certain quantities of natural gas would have to be discovered and committed to the plant. Given that the firms have been unable to explore Cyprus's EEZ due to Türkiye's intransigence freely, it becomes difficult to have these natural gas reserves discovered and proven in Cyprus's EEZ(Kambas 2018; Reuters 2018; Agenzia Nova 2023). Secondly, a pipeline from the Eastern Mediterranean towards Europe via Cyprus and Türkiye is the most economically sound option allowing export to European and Turkish markets(Mullen & Gürel 2014; Mullen 2020). However, this scenario can materialise if the Cyprus Problem is resolved, and Türkiye and Cyprus establish diplomatic relations. Despite the optimism that gas could become the key to resolution, it exacerbated regional tensions rather than calming them(Faustmann 2014; Gürel & Tzimitras 2014; Mullen & Gürel 2014).

The third option of the EastMed pipeline is still in the cards, although its prospects are quite bleak. Israel, Greece, and Cyprus pushed for the creation of an EastMed pipeline which would take gas from the Tamar and Leviathan fields in the EEZ of Israel and the Aphrodite

¹²⁸ Türkiye is not a signatory of the UNCLOS III agreement which is the main source of public international law on the sea. (Grigoriadis & Belke 2020; İşeri & Bartan 2019).

field in Cyprus's EEZ to Europe via Cyprus's Crete and mainland Greece(Cyprus Profile 2020). The three parties reached an agreement which set the institutional framework necessary for the pipeline to be constructed, but so far, no private firms have agreed to finance the project.

The project has three major issues. The first issue is linked to its economic viability. The cost of the pipeline's construction, its limited capacity and the high selling price meant that it would be challenging to attract investors from a commercial perspective. Given that LNG spot and pipe gas prices are already at a downward trajectory from their 2022 peaks and along with the EU's push to diminish its reliance on fossil fuels by 2050, the long-term viability of the project is debatable(Michalopoulos 2022; Tugwell & Georgiou 2022). The second issue was the US's withdrawal of support for the project(Tugwell & Georgiou 2022). The third issue is Türkiye's hostile stance. Recently, ENI's CEO claimed that there can be no EastMed pipeline without Türkiye(Agenzia Nova 2023). Descalzi's words should not be taken lightly, given that ENI has rights to most blocks in Cyprus's and Egypt's EEZs.

What becomes apparent is that Cyprus' inability to exploit its hydrocarbon reserves is linked to a great extent to Türkiye's intransigence. The mantra of Cyprus, along with its partners in the region, is that the trilaterals are not aimed against Türkiye but that Türkiye can become part of the equation if it alters its stance(Christodoulides 2018; Gotsis 2021). Nonetheless, the circumstances of their creation and the nature of the multilateral efforts in the region indicate that Türkiye is excluded by definition(Axt 2021, 136).

In 2020 Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, France, and Italy established the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). The EU and the US have observer status. The EMGF's goal, according to its website, is to become "the base for a structured policy dialogue leading to the development of a regional gas market to unlock the full gas resource potential and to set the stage for multilateral and full hub trade"(Reuters 2020). Türkiye bears some responsibility for its exclusion because it has opted for disruptive military actions than legal procedures. However, the mantra that these initiatives are not directed against Türkiye does not hold water. The Eastern Mediterranean energy and security architecture will remain incomplete and fragile without Türkiye's effective participation, given the state's size, military capabilities, economic potential, and position as a regional gas market.

Cyprus's efforts to become a gas-producing state have been hampered by the Cypriot government's inability to solve essential issues. While Israeli interests were heavily involved in developing Aphrodite, Cyprus's only proven natural gas reserve, Cyprus has been unable to

agree with Israel over the Ishai reservoir, an extension of the Aphrodite block into Israel's EEZ. Without an agreement on delineating the border between Aphrodite and the Ishai reservoir, the commercial exploitation of Aphrodite is impossible(Zaken 2022).

Cyprus's foreign policy has failed in its quest to become the region's energy hub. Egypt is closer to taking that role since the country's LNG facilities are the only ones capable of exporting considerable amounts of gas from the region(El Safty & Eltahir 2023; Rabinovitch & El Safety 2022). Due to the Türkiye-Cyprus and Israel-Palestine conflicts, the option of Egypt as an energy hub carries less political risk. The Anastasiades administration seemed to acknowledge this fact, having signed an MoU to transfer gas from the Aphrodite block to Egypt in 2015(Udasin 2015).¹²⁹ Israel and Egypt signed an MoU in June 2022 to boost cooperation and increase their exports to Asia and Europe via Egypt's LNG facilities. The two states have also signed an MoU with the EU.

Glaringly, Cyprus has not been a party to these MoUs because of its inability to produce and export any of its hydrocarbon reserves for the above reasons. This also illustrates the limitations of the trilaterals and the attempted balancing strategy Cyprus's FPE has opted for, especially during the Anastasiades' administration. Critically, the Cyprus Problem looms large since its resolution would enable Türkiye's participation in the emerging regional security and energy architecture. Simultaneously, a solution would normalise relations between Cyprus and Türkiye. It is vital to note that while negotiations took place, Türkiye had a less belligerent stance, enabling Cyprus to progress with its hydrocarbon exploration program faster. In contrast, following the collapse of negotiations at Crans Montana, there was growing belligerence from the part of Türkiye that began with the deployment of the Turkish navy to hinder ENI's exploration activities at block six and culminated in Türkiye's state-owned drill ships drilling into Cyprus's EEZ.

Cyprus's FPE, especially during the second Anastasiades administration (2018-2023), lost meaningful opportunities to restart negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots. More importantly, President Anastasiades considered resolution frameworks which ran counter or were not aligned to the official Greek Cypriot position of a solution within the UN-mandated framework of a bizonal bicomunal federation.¹³⁰ Regarding hydrocarbon exploration, the

¹²⁹ Recently NewMed energy one of the firms with a stake in Aphrodite has presented a plan to link Aphrodite with Egypt's LNG facilities via pipeline(Samir 2023).

¹³⁰ Anastasiades officially proposed at one point the "restoration of the 1960 constitution" which would lead to a unitary state. At another point he proposed a "decentralized government" but at he did not outline how that

President at one point seemed to flirt with a two-state solution, an anathema to the majority of the Greek Cypriot population, when he called Türkiye to conduct research in the EEZ of the “illegal entity” referring to the ‘TRNC’. By claiming that the ‘TRNC’ has rights to an EEZ, the Cypriot President seemed to acknowledge its position as a state (Dialogos 2018). Furthermore, his statement runs counter to the agreement between Greeks and Turkish Cypriots that exploiting the island’s natural gas would be a responsibility bestowed upon the federal state in the event of the solution and not to the local governments of the two federal states. These contradicting statements showcase that despite the clear systemic environment and Türkiye’s position as a threat post-Crans Montana, there was no clear-cut strategy for monetising Cypriot hydrocarbons and dealing with Türkiye from the Anastasiadis administration.

Cyprus as a bridge between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean

The third goal of Cyprus’s FPE was to demonstrate its “added value” within the EU, acting “as a bridge between the Middle East and the EU.”¹³¹ Cyprus sought to elevate its status in the EU and the Middle East by illustrating its importance as a connector and honest broker. In this capacity, Cyprus aimed to represent the region's voice in the EU. Cyprus was able to partly fulfil that role in acting as a link between Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt on the one side and the EU on the other. Nonetheless, Cyprus missed a significant opportunity to enhance its status by failing to act as a bridge between the Assad regime and the EU in the Syrian civil war.

Cyprus’s capacity to act as an agent of regional interests within the EU was illustrated through the Greece-Cyprus-Egypt trilateral. In 2014, Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras announced that Greece and Cyprus would act “as ambassadors for Egypt to the EU” (Shama 2019). This was not a small task because most European and Western states viewed the Egyptian regime negatively due to its human rights record (EUPARL 2018). President Sisi thanked President Anastasiades for his help in improving EU-Egypt relations and for the opportunity given to Egypt to participate in the EU-Arab League Summit, an event that, in Sisi’s words, ‘would not have been possible without Cyprus’ contribution’ (Stockwatch 2019). Cyprus’s stance aided in improving EU-Egypt relations, which entered a new stage following Egypt’s LNG exports to the EU in 2022.

Arguably the most critical success of Cyprus’s FPE as a mediator in the region came in the 2017 political crisis in Lebanon. Cyprus has had cordial relations with neighbouring

framework would differ from the already UN accepted framework of a bizonal bicomunal federation (Kathimerini 2018; In-Cyprus 2021)

¹³¹ These expressions were used by almost all interviewees.

Lebanon, and historically it has acted as a safe haven for Lebanese fleeing conflicts and crises in their country (Maghribi 2023; Ibrahim 1989).¹³² Additionally, the two states demarcated their EEZ in 2007, highlighting their strong partnership even though, for various reasons that the Lebanese Parliament has not yet ratified the agreement. The crisis was sparked when the country's Sunni prime minister Saad al-Hariri resigned from his post while visiting Saudi Arabia. Hariri cited the influence of Iran via Hezbollah as a reason for his resignation (Al-Arabiya 2020). Hariri's resignation and the circumstances under which it took place led to a political crisis in the country.

On returning from Saudi Arabia, Hariri's final stop was Cyprus. There he had a meeting with President Anastasiades, who promised that he would take measures to mediate between the involved parties (Ibid; Ioannou 2022). The two politicians cited their friendship and the two states' strong relationship. Hariri eventually reversed course and maintained his position averting further political instability in Lebanon. Cyprus's backchannel diplomacy played a constructive role in this process and highlighted the potential of Cyprus as an honest broker within the region (Ioannou 2022).

Nonetheless, the most crucial opportunity for Cyprus to highlight its capacity to mediate between the region and the EU, representing the bloc's interests, came with the Syrian civil war. Cyprus traditionally had a strong relationship with the Assad regime in Syria for decades. The relationship was founded based on anti-colonial solidarity and joint membership of NAM, while AKEL had lines of communication with the Baath party. Additionally, Cyprus's close ties with Moscow would have also been an asset, given the emergence of Russia as a power broker in the Syrian conflict (Melakopides 2017; 2018).

The outbreak of the Syrian civil war was a first-class opportunity for Cyprus to act as the EU's mediator in Syria. The presence of Christofias at the Presidency, an individual who felt a greater affinity with anti-colonial figures rather than with Western leaders, should have allowed Cyprus to relinquish the opportunity. Instead, Cyprus chose to close its embassy in Damascus while Czechia, another EU member state in central Europe, retained its embassy and filled the gap. Czechia was not only the link for the EU but also the US's "protecting power" in the country throughout the conflict (Hutt 2021).¹³³ This fault was only rectified in 2020 with

¹³² The Lebanese were one of the largest group of Middle East nationals that took advantage of Cyprus's citizenship-by-investment scheme (Al-Jazeera 2020).

¹³³ The terms protecting power refer to a state which represents another sovereign state in a country where the latter lacks diplomatic representation.

the embassy reopening in Damascus. However, by that time, the opportunity to act as a bridge between the EU and the region had been lost.

7.3.2 The Gulf

In 2003 Cyprus had a minimal footprint in the Gulf, with only two embassies in Tehran and Doha. The striking fact was that Cypriot construction companies and workers were active in the region for decades, but Cyprus's foreign policy lagged.¹³⁴ After joining the EU, there were no clear goals regarding Cyprus's approach in the Gulf. Gradually, there was a change, and Cyprus's FPE began taking an interest in the area. The election of Dimitris Christofias and the appointment of Markos Kyprianou(2023) as foreign minister signified a drastic turn elevating the Gulf's status for the Cypriot FPE.

From 2008 the goals of Cyprus's foreign policy in the region were focused on three areas: i) The Cyprus Problem, ii) bolstering the anti-Türkiye camp in the Eastern Mediterranean and iii) status-seeking and iv) economic diplomacy. The first step in this process was establishing a regional diplomatic network by establishing embassies in regional states. Following the establishment of embassies in the region, Cyprus sought to gather support for its positions on the Cyprus Problem. The prominent place of the Gulf states within the OIC meant they would be valuable allies in Cyprus's anti-secessionist foreign policy against the 'TRNC.' In that process, Cyprus was aided by Türkiye's breakdown of relations with UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and the increasing influence of these states in the Eastern Mediterranean, bolstering the anti-Türkiye camp developing in the 2010s within the Middle East. Cyprus' position within that camp deepened its relations with these states. Cyprus's FPE believed that the Gulf was fertile ground for economic diplomacy, seeking to attract FDI from the region toward Cyprus. Finally, as with the Eastern Mediterranean, Cypriot foreign policy sought to utilise its position as an EU member to link the Gulf and the EU in a status-seeking effort highlighting Cyprus' position as a trusted partner.

Establishing a diplomatic network

Between 2003 and 2022, Cyprus's diplomatic network rapidly expanded, with new embassies opening up in most Gulf monarchies. To materialise the above objectives, Cyprus

¹³⁴ The most notable construction firm was Joannou & Paraskevaidis(Overseas). The company constructed three airports in Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE while also completing other major infrastructure projects in the Gulf. The firm had severe financial problems which led to the company being completely absorbed in 2019 was absorbed by the Greek construction company AVAX Group, a former business partner that had already been absorbing parts of Joannou & Paraskevaidis(Antoniou 2018).

needed to expand its embassy network. Originally Cyprus had an embassy in Saudi Arabia closed in 1964, leaving Tehran as the only diplomatic representation of the country in the Gulf for decades.

The first step towards increasing Cyprus's diplomatic footprint in the Gulf was the establishment of an embassy in Qatar in 2003. Notably, diplomatic relations between the two states were only established in 2001. However, there was no immediate continuity in pushing forward further diplomatic openings in the Gulf. Under President Papadopoulos, Cypriot foreign policy focused on finalising the country's EU admission and preparing the country for entrance into the Eurozone in 2008 (Demetriou 2022).

The change of government in 2008 led to a recalibration of Cypriot foreign policy toward the Middle East. Markos Kyprianou (2023) viewed the Gulf as a critical space for Cyprus's foreign policy. President Christofias shared the same view, and consequently, Cyprus moved to reallocate funds and diplomatic personnel towards the Gulf and away from opening more embassies in EU member states. Between 2008 and 2011, Cyprus opened embassies in the UAE, Oman, and Kuwait, creating a solid regional diplomatic network. The final pieces of the puzzle were added by President Anastasiades with the reopening of the embassy in Saudi Arabia in 2017 while also adopting a decision by the Council of Ministers to open an embassy in Bahrain. The Bahrain embassy should be up and running by 2025.

Promoting Cyprus's position on the Cyprus Problem: Gaining allies in the OIC and countering Türkiye

The enlargement of Cyprus's diplomatic network in the Gulf in 2008-2011 allowed Cyprus to promote its positions on the Cyprus Problem and counter any efforts to recognise the 'TRNC'. Cyprus successfully courted Gulf states to adopt more favourable positions, especially within the OIC. This change resulted from establishing a diplomatic presence in the region and engaging in active diplomacy that sought to portray Cyprus as a valuable partner to Gulf states that could aid them within the EU. Structural developments outlined in Chapter 6 led to a deterioration of Türkiye's standing in the Gulf, thus, aiding the Cypriot FPE.

In 2008, the perception of Cyprus's FPE was that Türkiye's influence in the region was on the rise. The rise of the AKP in Türkiye was accompanied by a rediscovery of the Middle East by Turkish foreign policy (Bakir 2019; 2023). Türkiye increased its involvement in the Gulf, and in 2008, the GCC signed an MoU with Türkiye, making it the first state to be recognised as a strategic partner (Larrabee 2011). During this period, Türkiye's bilateral trade

with Saudi Arabia and the UAE had increased rapidly compared to the 1990s. Türkiye was also emerging as a key security partner for Qatar and the GCC, who viewed Türkiye as a potential ally in balancing Iran (Talbot 2013, 2).

These developments were alarming to members of Cyprus's FPE. Markos Kyprianou (2023) argued that it was challenging for Cyprus to break through in the region due to Türkiye's position. He pointed out that Cyprus opened up embassies in the region without immediate reciprocation from the Gulf monarchies, highlighting the importance placed on building up Cyprus's profile and the difficulty of breaking through because of Türkiye's burgeoning influence (Ibid).

In conjunction with the rising status of Türkiye in the region, the position of the Gulf's states as prominent members of the OIC created a necessity for Cyprus to counter any Turkish efforts to recognise the 'TRNC' via the OIC. The Turkish Cypriot Community has observer status in the organisation since 1979, predating the declaration of independence by the 'TRNC' (OIC 2023a). Furthermore, the decision of the OIC to alter its preamble in 2008 to include the obligation of member states "to assist Muslim minorities and communities outside the Member States to preserve their dignity, cultural and religious identity" brought the Cyprus Problem firmly within its remit (Ibid).

At different points, the OIC had taken positions which could be seen as hostile from the perspective of Cyprus. For instance, in 1995, the OIC was alarmed by Greek Cypriot rearmament and in the aftermath of the Annan Plan rejection in 2004 by the Greek Cypriots called on its members to "take steps in putting an end in the unjust isolation of the Turkish Cypriots" (Beham 2017, 122). The more alarming of this move was the referral of the 'TRNC' as the "Turkish Cypriot State" at the OIC Senior Officials Meeting in Jeddah, organised in preparation 32nd Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Yemen in June 2005 (Ibid).

Cyprus' Gulf policy aimed to reverse this climate and gain partners within the OIC. In many respects, Cyprus has been successful in that task. As mentioned above, during the 2014 high-level summit of the OIC in New York, the UAE and Iran joined Egypt in their calls to remove the reference to the 'TRNC' as the 'Turkish Cypriot State' (World Bulletin 2014). For the first time in its history, the dispute led the OIC not to adopt any resolution or conclusions, highlighting the effectiveness of Cypriot foreign policy that exploited the cleavages between Türkiye and certain Gulf states like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

Cyprus has also been able to court Saudi Arabia because of these dynamics successfully. From the mid-2010s onwards, Saudi Arabia adopted a much more favourable stance on the Cyprus Problem in line with Cyprus's positions and the UN-mandated framework. In 2019, Saudi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Alassaf visited Cyprus and, among other declarations, claimed that the Saudi Kingdom "supports the legitimacy and sovereignty of Cyprus and the decisions by the United Nations and hopes that the two sides will solve the problem peacefully"(Arab News 2019).

Status-seeking and the anti-Türkiye front

Cyprus's capacity to gain allies within the OIC, promote its position on the Cyprus Problem, and deepen its relationship with the Gulf monarchies highlighted the capacity of Cypriot diplomacy to exploit systemic opportunities to its advantage. As outlined in Chapter 6, the Arab Spring Uprisings coincided with a more assertive foreign policy by the Gulf monarchies. The Eastern Mediterranean has become a critical space for enacting this assertive foreign policy(Bianco 2020; Al-Tamimi 2021). Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain maintained strong ties with the el-Sisi regime in Egypt and France, while Qatar allied with Türkiye(Guzansky & Lindenstrauss 2021; Bakir 2019). Türkiye's close alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood pitted them against Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain in the unfolding regional antagonism.

Türkiye's foreign policy in the region and Egypt's close collaboration with Greece and Cyprus through their trilateral partnership brought Saudi Arabia and the UAE closer to Cyprus, positioning them in the same camp. Both states have steadfastly supported Cyprus's positions on the Cyprus Problem and the maritime zone disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea(Al-Tamimi 2021, 93-95). Furthermore, the Abraham Accords that normalised Israel's relations with the UAE and Bahrain allowed Cyprus to benefit through its trilateral with Israel(IISS 2020; Guzansky & Feierstein 2022). In 2021 Cyprus organised a summit in Pafos, bringing together Greece, Israel, and the UAE(Guzansky & Lindenstrauss 2021). Cyprus and Greece have established a trilateral with the UAE, although still at an embryonic stage(Brief 2019).

Cyprus's value as a partner has been aggrandised by its EU membership. Regarding its status-seeking foreign policy in the Middle East, the Cypriot FPE liaised for Gulf states in Brussels over the last few years(Independent 2022). In 2022, on another visit, the Saudi Foreign Minister in Cyprus claimed that Cyprus is a "bridge" between the Middle East and the EU, highlighting the close relationship between the two states(Ibid).

Overall, Cyprus's foreign policy in the Gulf has progressed from a minimal footprint in 2003 with only one embassy to an extensive diplomatic network in the region with six embassies. This network was used to promote Cyprus's positions on the Cyprus Problem and allow Cyprus's FPE to exploit the opportunity to cultivate deeper relations with the anti-Turkish bloc within the GCC in the post-Arab Spring Middle East. The benefits for Cyprus were three. Firstly, Cyprus gained important allies within the OIC, a forum with a positive disposition towards the 'TRNC,' which helped Cyprus's FPE in the anti-secessionist component of its foreign policy. Secondly, it bolstered its anti-Türkiye camp in the Eastern Mediterranean with the participation of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, even though the latter two states have been on the path of rapprochement with Ankara after substantial investments in the Turkish economy since late 2021(Coskun 2023). Thirdly, Cyprus enhanced its status as a reliable EU partner for Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain.

Economic diplomacy

The third component of Cyprus's Gulf policy was an active economic diplomacy. The key aim was to attract FDI from the sub-region, which became a key priority by the early 2010s due to the pressures on Cyprus's economy by the evolving Eurozone crisis. There were two major difficulties that Cyprus's FPE would have to overcome to become an FDI destination for the Gulf's sovereign wealth funds and businesses. Firstly, Cyprus lacked a strategy for economic diplomacy. Despite establishing a government agency to attract investments in 2008, Cyprus only adopted a comprehensive strategy for economic diplomacy in 2021(Roc MFA 2021). Secondly, Cyprus being a small market, lacks economies of scale which would make it an attractive FDI destination.

Despite these two shortcomings, Cyprus had some success in attracting FDI from the Gulf. Arguably the most important investment was the Emirati's DP World's acquisition of the rights to Limassol's port for 25 years. The firm, owned by Dubai's royal family, has been expanding rapidly across the globe, acquiring port rights, and playing a key role in the UAE's push to establish itself as a global logistics hub(Ziadah 2018). In that context, Limassol's port, privatized under the Anastasiades administration, was a prime location for strengthening the linkages between Jebel Ali Port and the Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Europe(Ardemagni 2019). Although granting rights to DP World was not politically motivated and resulted from an open bidding process, according to Kasoulides(2021), granting rights to the firm from Dubai highlighted the cordial relationship between the UAE and Cyprus.

The second primary source of investment from the Gulf came from Qatar Energy's investment in the Cypriot EEZ. Qatar Energy, comprised of a consortium with US firm ExxonMobil, had acquired exploration and production sharing rights in blocks 5 and 10 of Cyprus's EEZ(Ardemagni 2019). The consortium successfully discovered the Glaucus-2 well, estimated to hold between 5 to 8 trillion cubic feet of gas(Ibid). Nonetheless, the consortium has yet to move forward with its export and monetisation plans for those blocks.

Another minor source of investment came with Cyprus's citizenship-by-investment program. Considerable numbers of Gulf state citizens took advantage of the scheme. According to the data released by Al-Jazeera's Cyprus Papers investigation, which involved applications between 2017-2019, 113 out of almost 2500 applications uncovered in the leak were citizens of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, or Yemeni descent(Al-Jazeera 2020). Furthermore, there was also the highly publicized case of granting citizenship to Prince Saud bin Abdulmohsen bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his family members in 2018(Farofli 2020). The extent of the programme's connection to the Gulf remains unknown since the report produced by Cyprus's General Auditor's Office and the Nikolatos Commission do not provide statistics on the original citizenship(RoC Auditor 2022).¹³⁵ Finally, as mentioned in the political economy subsection above, the programme's contribution to the island's economy was minimal despite the large amounts of money involved.

Cyprus's efforts in the region have led to a surge of FDI from the Gulf region towards Cyprus's economy. As the chart below showcases, the inward FDI stocks from the Gulf towards Cyprus's economy rose significantly from 232 million euros in 2013 to 2028 million euros in 2017.¹³⁶ There was a sharp fall between 2018 and 2020, with the country's total value of FDI stock from the Gulf amounting to 849 million euro in 2020 before partially recouping to 1571 million euros in 2021. We should note that before 2014 the FDI stock for the Gulf's Arab countries was negligible, and by 2017 it comprised the bulk of FDI from the region to Cyprus. Iran's FDI stock has remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2021 at around 200 million euros. This is a relative success of Cyprus's foreign policy in the region. However, despite the overall upward trend, FDI from the Gulf is not a significant contributor to the Cypriot economy.

¹³⁵ The Nikolatos Commission was a commission of inquiry led by Myronas Nikolatos, a former Supreme Court judge, appointed by the government to investigate following the passport selling scheme(Kambas 2021).

¹³⁶ I have only dealt with FDI stocks since most of the data provided by Cyprus's Central Bank was partial with many statistics from the region being confidential.

In 2021 FDI stocks from the Gulf were only 0.5% of the total FDI stocks in Cyprus's economy(CBC 2023).

As Markos Kyprianou(2023) outlined, Cyprus's FPE slowly came to grips with the limitations above concerning the size of the island's economy and the lack of a strategy surrounding economic diplomacy. Furthermore, despite its efforts, Cyprus's diplomatic force lacked the expertise to act as a link between Cyprus's economy and the Gulf. In addition, the

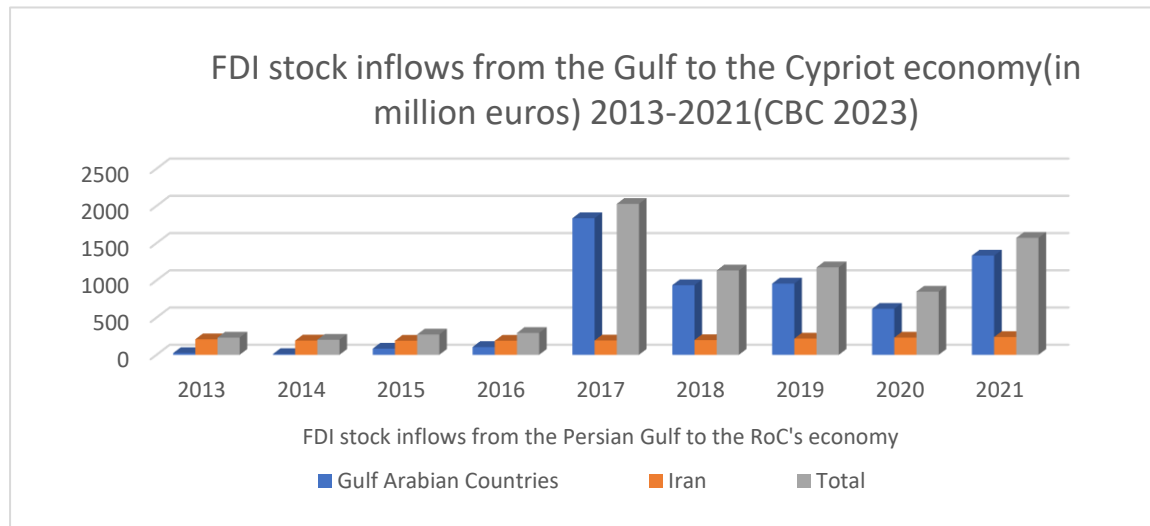


Figure 3 FDI Stock inflows from the Gulf to the Cypriot Economy(2013-2021)

importance placed upon the Cyprus Problem and the limited numbers of Cypriot diplomats in the region has also acted as a limiting factor. For much of the examined period, there was limited institutional cooperation between Cyprus's business community and the business communities in the Gulf.

These deficiencies have been rectified in the last few years by establishing business associations linking the Cypriot Chamber of Commerce with the GCC, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar(.Cyprus-Qatar Business Association 2023; Cyprus-GCC Countries Business Association 2023(Al-Monitor 2022). There has also been a reinvigoration of the Cyprus Trade Centre in Dubai, the commercial arm of the diplomatic representation of Cyprus in the UAE, in association with the Cypriot Ministry of Energy, Commerce & Industry. Furthermore, government officials from the UAE and Saudi Arabia have outlined their interest in investing in Cyprus' economy in the context of strengthening ties(Turner 2022).

Importantly, Cyprus's foreign policy signed double taxation treaties with Qatar in 2008, the UAE in 2011, and Saudi Arabia in 2018. Cyprus also signed a new treaty with Kuwait in 2010, which expanded the Kuwaiti taxes covered by the previous treaty signed in 1984(Ardemagni 2019; Al-Monitor 2022; UAE MFA 2023). These treaties create a more

favourable business environment for bilateral trade and investment and help battle tax evasion between Cyprus and these four states.

Overall, the perception that the Gulf could quickly become a source of FDI for Cyprus in the early 2000s was shattered, and Cyprus's FPE had to come to terms with the reality. Although the FDI attracted has not been up to expectations, there was an improvement compared to the pre-2013 period. The Anastasiades administration took steps in the right direction, particularly in drafting Cyprus's economic diplomacy strategy (RoC MFA 2021). The strategy that began to be implemented in 2021 seeks to create a joint structure that brings together all the agencies and institutions that attract FDI. Nonetheless, it is still too early to judge the strategy's success. Despite expectations, Cyprus has been unable to tap into the Gulf's potential for the island state's economy.

7.4. Testing the Hypotheses

The final section of this chapter tests the two hypotheses outlined in Chapter 4 against Cyprus's foreign policy in the Middle East:

H1: Systemic threats and opportunities act as the independent variable. They prescribe optimal foreign policy choices and the limits the FPE has to operate within. Domestic variables – the FPE's perception and the political economy - act as intervening variables filtering systemic inputs into foreign policy outcomes. The foreign policy outcome will be suboptimal if domestic variables take the driving seat.

H2: Systemic threats and opportunities play a minor role in determining foreign policy. Instead, the FPE's perception and the state's political economy are the main drivers of foreign policy and act as independent variables.

Cypriot foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean validates H1 over H2. NcR's top-down framework can explain the island state's foreign policy in its immediate geographic environment, with the intervening variables at the domestic level acting as moderating factors affecting the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable. On the contrary, despite some impact from the international system, Cyprus's Gulf policy was primarily determined by domestic-level variables that acted as intervening variables in the Eastern Mediterranean. The perception of the FPE and the political economy transformed into independent variables without a threat from the Gulf.

7.4.1 The Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean forms Cyprus's immediate geographic environment, and based on H1, we should expect the NcR's top-down causal chain to work in this case study. Indeed, the Turkish threat, the opportunities created by the breakdown of Türkiye's relations with regional states, and the discovery of hydrocarbons have primarily driven Cypriot foreign policy. The independent variable, thus, provided strong stimuli to the Cypriot FPE. The intervening variables played the role of moderating factors, conditioning the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable – Cyprus' foreign policy in the Middle East (Götz 2021).

Cyprus's foreign policy *raison d'être* has always been the resolution of the Cyprus Problem. However, EU accession and the rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004 pushed Cyprus's FPE towards a novel strategy that sought to diversify the island state's foreign policy in three fundamental ways without disputing the centrality of the Cyprus Problem. Firstly, Cyprus aimed to balance Türkiye. Secondly, exploiting the island's hydrocarbon reserves was another critical factor. Thirdly, Cyprus's foreign policy sought to operationalise its EU membership and act as a link between the Middle East and the EU, elevating its status.

These three facets of Cyprus's foreign policy are interconnected, but the first two are arguably the most important because they touch upon Cyprus' survival, sovereignty and security. They illustrate the primacy of the independent variable because at the heart of Cyprus's foreign policy to achieve these two targets is the necessity of overcoming the Turkish threat. In this respect, the independent variable is the critical driver for Cyprus's foreign policy. The intervening variables help us explain the third goal – status-seeking- while also explaining how systemic stimuli from the independent variable translated into foreign policy decisions, i.e. the dependent variable. Therefore, Cyprus's case study supports H1 rather than H2 with the NcR's top-down explanatory logic within Cyprus's immediate geographic area.

From a structural realist perspective, Cyprus's best foreign policy strategy to counter Türkiye's threat would have been bandwagoning. Hedging would be inadequate because of the high threat level. A hard balancing strategy would be considered suboptimal because of the vast power disparity between the two sides. Critically a resolution would alter threat perceptions in Ankara and Nicosia, removing Türkiye as a threat and paving the way for the hydrocarbon development of Cypriot reserves with Türkiye's support and with Türkiye's fundamental role

in their monetisation and export. In short, a resolution would be vital in creating a robust security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean.

During Christofias' presidency and the first Anastasiades administration, the viewpoint of Cyprus's FPE was that antagonising Türkiye would be futile. Instead, given that Mehmet Ali Talat (2005-2010) and Mustafa Akinci (2015-2020), the Turkish Cypriot community's leadership favoured a federal solution.¹³⁷ There was, thus, an opening for a favourable resolution. Hydrocarbons were also operationalised as part of this strategy, with President Christofias arguing that even if Cyprus could generate wealth through them prior to the solution, the share of the Turkish Cypriots would be kept and distributed to them after the dispute's resolution (Pieridis 2021).

Cypriot foreign policy adhered to this rationale. The trilaterals created during Anastasiades' first administration, and in the case of Israel, built on the openings by Christofias, had a minimal military component up to 2018. Of course, a common threat perception between Greece, Israel, Egypt, and Cyprus allowed for establishing the trilaterals. However, it was clear that these relationships were not military alliances, as explained above. Military cooperation up to that point primarily concerned search and rescue and anti-terrorism drills rather than any deepening cooperation that targeted Türkiye.

The collapse of the Crans Montana talks in July 2017 illustrated an alteration of Cyprus's stance. Anastasiades altered course and paid less attention to resolving the Cyprus Problem and greater attention to constructing a hard-balancing coalition against Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean and imposing sanctions against Türkiye via the EU. Cyprus's foreign policy played its part in the exclusion of Türkiye from participating in the nascent energy architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean via the EMGF and infeasible projects like the EastMed pipeline. In short, Cypriot foreign policy increased the antagonism with Türkiye. Anastasiades' foreign policy approach resembled the approach espoused by DIKO and EDEK that sought to inflict a cost on Türkiye to achieve a favourable resolution to the Cyprus Problem.

Consequently, Anastasiades faced a much more belligerent Türkiye due to its actions in Cyprus's EEZ. The Turkish navy prevented Cyprus from seamlessly continuing its exploration programme in its EEZ. A Turkish drillship drilled and conducted exploration in block 6 of

¹³⁷ Between Talat's and Akinci's stints at the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot Community the leader was Dervis Eroglu, head of the UBP. Like the current leader Ersin Tatar, Eroglu, was a hardliner espousing a two-state solution.

Cyprus's EEZ, and in 2019, President Erdogan greenlighted the reopening of Varosha, which has been under the Turkish army's control since 1974 (Smith 2020). However, the inability of Cyprus to stop any of these actions should have pointed the limits to Anastasiades and pushed him back to the negotiating table, whilst Akinci was still the leader of the Turkish Cypriots (Smith 2018; Kambas 2018).

This change of stance aggrandised the threat, highlighting the suboptimal foreign policy of the Cypriot FPE from 2016 onwards. It shifted from seeking to resolve the Cyprus Problem diplomatically via negotiations, to an attempted hard balancing via the trilaterals and a soft balancing strategy via the EU. Nonetheless, given that the trilaterals lack defensive pacts, they have been, at best, strategic partnerships in a soft balancing strategy that did not push Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots. Until 2016, Anastasiades' overall approach, like Christofias, focused on the benefits of a resolution for Türkiye to motivate Erdogan towards a solution. The benefits were several and included the potential of co-exploitation of the Eastern Mediterranean's resources and the removal of the complications caused by the Cyprus Problem in Türkiye's relations with the EU and the US.¹³⁸

However, Anastasiades showed indecisiveness in the 2016 Mont Pelerin talks to accept a beneficial deal on territory in exchange for Christofias-Talat convergence on central power (Ioannou 2020). Then his party voted in favour of far-right's ELAM's education bill amendment on a school commemoration of the 1950 Greek Cypriot referendum that demanded reunification with the British. The bill created tension between the Akinci and Anastasiades, which was a prelude to the complete collapse of the negotiations in Crans Montana. Anastasiades chose to follow an approach in line with the strategy proposed by parties like DIKO and EDEK that focused on confronting Türkiye and forcing it to resolve the Cyprus Problem.

This strategic shift can only be explained at the intervening variable level and linked to the island's political economy which is connected to Anastasiades's position and the economic interests he is representing. According to this rationale, most of these economic interests did not view a resolution to the Cyprus Problem with a favourable eye, in comparison to the status quo which was seen as a reliable "normal state of affairs" (Ibid, 121). The Cypriot Employers Organisation's refusal to sign any declaration supporting the favourable conclusion of the talks

¹³⁸ A key issue is the inability of full application of the Berlin Plus arrangements for EU-NATO military cooperation and the complications on Türkiye's EU membership bid (Acikmese & Triantaphyllou 2012; Ker-Lindsay 2007; Suvarierol 2003).

during 2015-2017 is a case in point(Ibid, 154). Anastasiades would have to think long and hard before going against the economic interests that helped put him in the presidency as well as the economic interests of his own family.¹³⁹ Veteran journalists Makarios Droushiotis and Andreas Paraschos(2021) and academics like Gregoris Ioannou have long argued that the lawyers, real estate developers and accountants involved in the rise of the Cypriot business model and the passport-selling scheme described above would lack a product in the event of a resolution(Paraschos 2021; Droushiotis 2021; Ioannou 2020). A resolution would lead to a new constitution that would at least initially lack the legal provisions for establishing a passport-selling scheme.

The clientelism and patronage nexus in Cyprus allows key employers to influence considerable parts of the electorate, which could have been swayed against Anastasiades in the 2018 presidential elections. Moreover, the political cost of a resolution, given that it would alienate part of his support base, could have also influenced Anastasiades' reluctance to engage in further initiatives regarding the resolution of the Cyprus Problem post-Crans Montana.

The perception of the FPE was important as a driving force in Cyprus's third foreign policy goal, i.e. Cypriot status-seeking as a bridge between the EU and the Middle East. The long-time view of Cyprus's political class as a state that connects Europe, and the Middle East was amplified by Cyprus's accession to the EU. By the end of the Tassos Papadopoulos administration, the FPE was convinced that Cyprus' "added value" was the linkage between the Middle East and the EU. This policy allowed Cyprus to move away from a monothematic foreign policy centred on the Cyprus Problem, engaging regional states with the newly acquired status of EU membership on various issues. The ultimate aspiration was to further elevate Cyprus' status within the region and the EU. This aspiration has been held by all four governing administrations since 2004.

Nonetheless, the third goal was subservient to the two primary goals analysed above. Türkiye and hydrocarbons dictated the overall direction of Cypriot foreign policy. Cyprus' status-seeking policy occurred within the context dictated by the two other goals. Therefore, the primacy of the FPE's perception in explaining the third goal of Cyprus's foreign policy in

¹³⁹ Anastasiades is the founder of one of the most important legal firms on the island which is now run by his daughters with the former President claiming that he has severed all ties with his former firm even though it still bears his name. Anastasiades' legal firm has dealt with a considerable number of passport entries and Anastasiades' son-in-law is a real estate developer who has developed properties in Limassol connected to the scheme(OCCRP 2021).

the Eastern Mediterranean does not validate H2 over H1, and the NcR's top-down logic retains its explanatory value.

7.4.2 The Gulf

Unlike the Eastern Mediterranean, within the Gulf, there is no threat. Hence, the region poses a challenge for NcR supported by H1 and should be an easy case for H2. Within the Gulf, Cypriot foreign policy sought to gather support against Türkiye's and the 'TRNC's' efforts to gain diplomatic recognition for the TRNC. In addition, the growing involvement of Gulf states in the Eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings pushed the Cypriot FPE to engage with the region. Finally, the Gulf was seen as a potential source of FDI in Cyprus's economy; thus, economic motivations were also vital.

Cyprus's anti-secessionist foreign policy is linked with the Cyprus Problem and the 'TRNC's' quest to gain recognition by any other state beyond Türkiye. Recognition by any state would hamper Cyprus's position as the legally recognised government that should exert control over the whole island. In essence, Cyprus is fighting any attempt by Türkiye and the 'TRNC' to elevate the 'TRNC's' status. However, this fight is fought legally and diplomatically rather than militarily.

Structural Realists are notoriously sceptical about international law, and the 'TRNC' within the context of structural realist theory, would be considered a state despite the lack of international recognition or as a Turkish client state given the economic and military dependency of the 'TRNC' on Türkiye (Krasner 2002). In this respect, Cyprus's anti-secessionist foreign policy is not dictated by structural realism's logic of material power and threat but rather by a legally driven approach which, in the Cypriot FPE's view, seeks to ensure that the *status quo* does not also become *de jure*.

Throughout the interview process, diplomats, politicians, and former foreign ministers viewed the Gulf as an area Cyprus needed to break into due to the prominent position of Gulf states in the OIC. As explained above, the OIC is an organisation that has granted observer status to the 'TRNC' and called it "the Turkish Cypriot state." Hence, the anti-secessionist component of Cyprus's foreign policy in the Gulf was primarily driven by Cyprus's FPE image of the Gulf. Therefore, we find more evidence supporting H2 rather than H1.

The second component of Roc's foreign policy was linked to the proactiveness of Gulf monarchies in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 2010s and the relations between Türkiye on the one side and the Gulf monarchies and Iran on the other, explained above and in Chapter 6.

These developments allowed Cyprus to court the regimes in the anti-Türkiye camp in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Abraham Accords were another positive development for Cyprus, given its close relationship with Israel. Cyprus looked to bolster its balancing act against Türkiye, and these geopolitical developments provided a systemic opportunity to strengthen its relations with the Gulf monarchies. In this case, we see that systemic developments were the main driver, thus, supporting H1 against H2.

The third component of Cyprus's Gulf policy was linked to the economic potential of the Gulf. Cyprus's position as a small island state economy based on services with no economies of scale meant that attracting FDI was vital for its economic security and prosperity. The economic crisis created further pressures to attract FDI, especially from untapped affluent states like the Gulf's monarchies. Hence, a key driver for the drive to attract FDI from the Gulf was the nature and necessities of Cyprus's economy, and the Cypriot FPE shared this view. Here we see that systemic pressures play no role, with the political economy being the primary driver contemplated by the images of Cyprus's FPE. Therefore, the evidence tilts on the side of H2 rather than H1.

Despite some systemic pressure within the Gulf and primarily within the Eastern Mediterranean, there is greater support for H2 instead of H1. The two main components of Cyprus's Gulf policy were fighting 'TRNC' and Türkiye's secessionist policy and seeking investments in Cyprus's economy. In both cases, domestic-level variables were driving Cyprus's foreign policy rather than systemic inputs. Systemic pressures played a part in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings, allowing Cyprus to deepen its established relationships with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the GCC. Nonetheless, the trajectory of Cyprus's foreign policy was predetermined, and that trajectory was not a result of a threat from the Gulf or systemic pressures. Domestic-level variables drove it.

7.5. Conclusion

The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 4 can explain Cyprus's foreign policy in the Middle East between 2004 and 2022. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus's foreign policy focused on three key objectives: i) creating a balancing act against Türkiye, ii) exploiting its hydrocarbon reserves, iii) status-seeking and iv) acting as a link between the Middle East and the EU. The rationale was that by fulfilling these objectives, Cyprus would be better positioned to solve the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus' "national issue." Simultaneously, Cyprus would move

away from the monothematic foreign policy focused solely on the Cyprus Problem towards a polythematic foreign policy.

Despite some successes in its Middle Eastern policy, Cyprus has failed to solve the Cyprus Problem, and today, the dispute is probably at its worst since 1974. The trilateral partnerships with Israel and Egypt solidified Cyprus's relations with these key regional players. Nonetheless, they are not military alliances and cannot provide a hard-balancing network of alliances against Türkiye in the region. Consequently, Cyprus has been unable to develop its hydrocarbon reserves due to Türkiye's belligerent foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and within Cyprus's EEZ.

Between 2008 and 2017, President Christofias and President Anastasiades negotiated with the Turkish Cypriots rather than seeking to achieve the futile task of balancing against Türkiye. Cyprus's moves in its EEZ, its relationships with Israel and Egypt, and the possibility of joint exploitation of the Eastern Mediterranean's resources with Türkiye as a partner, consumer and transitory state highlighted Cypriot foreign policy. The collapse of the Crans Montana talks signified a move away from this approach. Instead, Cypriot foreign policy reverted to a much more confrontational policy against Türkiye that sought to "inflict cost" via the trilaterals and the imposition of EU sanctions against Türkiye.

As explained above, Cyprus's shift cannot be explained by a shift at the level of the independent variable. If anything, Türkiye became more belligerent post-Crans Montana and the election of Ersin Tatar as leader of the Turkish Cypriot community meant that a return to the negotiating table within the UN-mandated framework was a near-impossible task. The shift can only be explained at the domestic level, highlighted by a change in the viewpoint of Cyprus's FPE and in the pressure exerted upon the FPE by leading economic interests that did not view the resolution positively. Support from those interests would be vital for Anastasiades' re-election in 2018, and we should not forget that the President and his entourage belonged to that segment of the population. In short, the suboptimal strategy on the Cyprus Problem which led to a suboptimal foreign policy strategy cannot be explained by a change in the Eastern Mediterranean's international environment but by domestic political considerations.

Beyond the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus missed significant opportunities to act as a mediator between the EU and the Middle East, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, where it had long-standing relations with regional states. Although Cyprus was able to illustrate its value to Egypt as a voice within the EU and played a constructive role in resolving the

political crisis in Lebanon, it missed an important opportunity to truly elevate its role with the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Cyprus was in an advantageous position to represent EU and potentially Western interests in the conflict while maintaining open lines of communication with the Assad regime and Russia due to its historical relationship with these two actors. Instead, it missed the opportunity by closing its embassy in Damascus in 2011.

In the Gulf, Cyprus's diplomatic footprint was minimal before 2003, and it took a decade for Cyprus's presence to be gradually felt in the region. Cyprus' foreign policy in the Gulf was influenced by the FPE's perception as a regional space that Cyprus should strive to gain allies to bolster its anti-secessionist foreign policy within the OIC. In addition, the region was viewed as a prime location for attracting FDI. In this respect, the structure of Cyprus's economy meant that Cyprus should seek to increase its inward FDI. The affluent and relatively proximate Gulf monarchies were a prominent area of interest.

Cyprus' ability to make inroads in the Gulf was aided by structural developments in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings that pitted Türkiye against the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and to a certain extent Iran. The antagonism that primarily took place in the Eastern Mediterranean helped Cyprus in its effort, but these structural developments were a boost to a foreign policy predetermined by domestic drivers. Cyprus's foreign policy record in the Gulf was a mixture of success, particularly in gathering support for its positions on the Cyprus Problem. The 2014 incidents in the OIC illustrated the success of this policy.

In economic terms, Cyprus has attracted FDI from the Gulf with DP World's investment at the port of Limassol being the most significant development. Nonetheless, the Gulf's FDI in Cyprus's economy remains relatively small to the overall FDI in the island state. Finally, Cyprus has gained some partners in its soft balancing act in the Eastern Mediterranean with the Gulf's monarchies. However, these partnerships' longevity will depend on their hostility with Türkiye. The investments by the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the Turkish economy since 2021 might signify a change in their stance vis-à-vis Erdogan's government.

Overall, Cyprus's foreign policy in the Middle East has moved Cyprus away from a foreign policy solely interested in the Cyprus Problem. The island state's foreign policy has expanded the country's regional diplomatic network. It has created new partnerships, while an economic diplomacy element is now a discernible component of this foreign policy. However, Cyprus has been unable to resolve the Cyprus Problem, which, as highlighted above, is arguably in the worst position since 1974. The FPE's decision-making, particularly regarding

the lack of negotiations between 2017 and 2020, has played a significant role in this issue. Lastly, Cyprus has been unable to develop its hydrocarbon reserves, and the inability to benefit from these resources signifies another foreign policy shortcoming.

CHAPTER 8: GREECE AND THE MIDDLE EAST(2004-2022)

This chapter focuses on Greece's foreign policy in the Middle East between 2004 and 2022, the second case study of the thesis. Greece rediscovered the Middle East during this period. This rediscovery did not only concern Greece's immediate geographic environment - the Eastern Mediterranean – but also the Gulf. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Greek FPE faced a clear Turkish threat. The threat provided systemic clarity to the Greek FPE, and, in turn, precise policy prescriptions favoured a balancing strategy by incorporating soft and hard elements. The economic crisis that engulfed the country between 2009 and 2018 did not temper Greece's balancing act despite its challenges. The economic crisis and the perception of the Greek FPE were the primary drivers for Greece's foreign policy in the Gulf due to the lack of a threat emanating from the Gulf.

This chapter is split into five parts. The first part utilises Walt's balance of threat theory to determine the threats faced by the Greek FPE in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. This forms the independent variable. The second part moves on to the intervening variables at the state level. Two variables are examined here: the perceptions of the leadership and the state's political economy. The third part analyses Greek foreign policy in the Middle East, which is the dependent variable. The fourth part tests the two hypotheses, outlined in Chapter 4, on Greek foreign policy, before concluding the chapter in the fifth and final part.

8.1. The Independent Variable: Threat Levels in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf

As with Chapter 7, the independent variable is conceptualised based on Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, building on four components i) balance of power, ii) geographical proximity, iii) offensive capabilities and iv) offensive intentions. Balance of threat theory will enable us to build on the insights of Chapter 6 regarding the balance of power in these two regions, providing the backdrop against which Greece's Middle Eastern foreign policy was conducted. Based on the balance of threat theory, Greece faces a threat from Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean and no military threat in the Gulf between 2004 and 2022.

Beyond the threat level, the final part of this section touches on the effect of Greece's position as an EU member state in connection to the CFSP. As I argue, although it is important to consider the CFSP when examining Greek Foreign policy decision-making in the Middle

East, its impact is less influential than the balance of threat and balance of power facing the Greek FPE.

8.1.1. The Eastern Mediterranean

Only one state within the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region could constitute a threat to Greece, Türkiye. Türkiye meets the threat threshold because of its geographical proximity to Greece and the balance of power that has tilted in its favour during the examined period, which saw the Turkish armed forces enhance its offensive capabilities. Moreover, Turkish policymakers moved from the conciliatory posture of the early 2000s towards a more hostile stance by the early 2010s, illustrating their offensive intentions. In the following paragraphs, these four components will be examined in depth to demonstrate the level and nature of the Turkish threat to Greece. The subsection will end with assessing the optimal strategic choice for Greece – a combination of hard and soft balancing.

Geographically, Türkiye and Greece share a narrow land border in Eastern Thrace and sea borders across the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. All the major islands of the Aegean are Greek except for Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos). Many of these Greek islands are closer to Türkiye than to mainland Greece. The two countries are geographically adjacent, meeting the criterion of geographical proximity.

In material power terms, Türkiye has the upper hand in military, economic and demographic terms throughout the examined period. Notably, the power disparity between the two sides has increased. Türkiye's advantage was heightened during the Greek economic crisis(2009-2018), with Greece partially closing the gap, especially in military terms, between 2019 and 2022. Greece's GDP in 2004 was more than half of Türkiye's GDP; however, since 2011, Türkiye's GDP has been three to four times larger than Greece's GDP(see Table below). Demographically, the Greek population has fluctuated from approximately 10 million people to about 11 million between 2004 and 2022, and since 2011 there has been a downward trend. In contrast, Türkiye's population skyrocketed from 67.79 million in 2004 to 84.78 million in 2021.

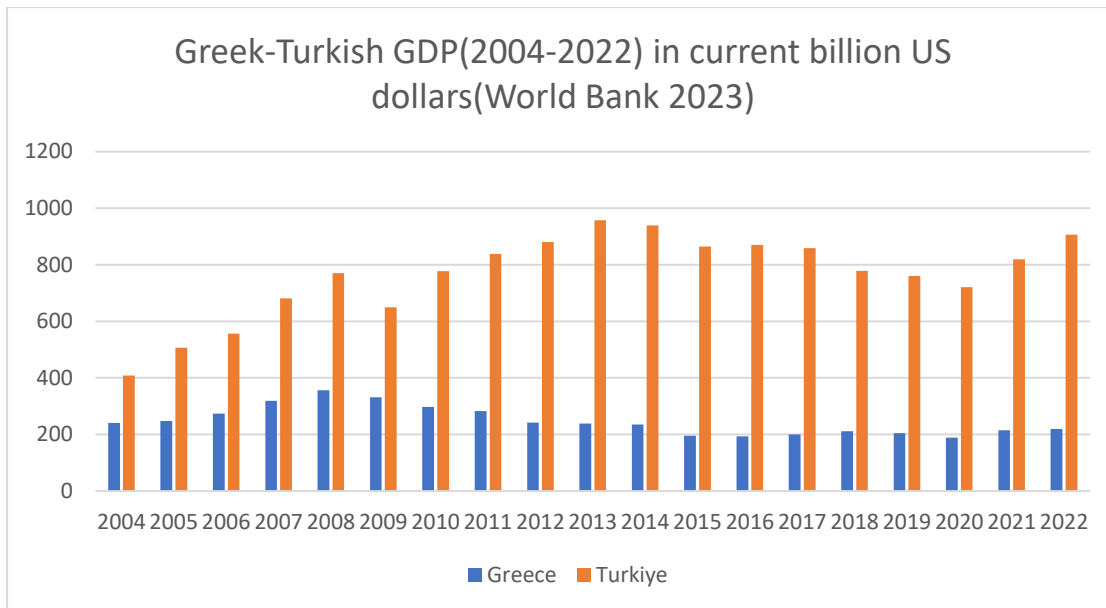


Figure 4 Greek-Turkish GDP(2004-2022) in Current Billions of US Dollars

In military terms, Türkiye holds a numerical advantage with 355200 active military personnel compared to Greece's active personnel total of 143,400(IISS 2023, 96-100; Aristotelous 2021). Türkiye has a crucial numerical advantage in land forces with 2.378 MBTs, compared to Greece's 1228 MBTs. Türkiye enjoys a significant advantage in armoured personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles. Finally, the Turkish artillery has an advantage over Greek artillery with 7833 guns, including mortars, rocket launchers, and trailers, compared to Greece's 3518 guns(Aristotelous 2021).

The gap in the air force is not as severe as in the land forces. The air force of both states is based on US-made F-16 fighter jets. The Greek air force comprised eight squadrons of modernized F-16 fighter jets and two squadrons of Mirage 2000 fighter jets in 2021(IISS 2023, 112-115).¹⁴⁰ On the other side, Türkiye's air force relies on ten squadrons of F-16 fighter jets(Ibid, 157).¹⁴¹ Since 2021 the Greek air force has also received the first 10 out of 24 Dassault Rafale fighter jets. At the same time, the Turkish air force is trying to develop its national fighter jet with the collaboration of foreign firms after being removed from the F-35 program(Kibaroglu 2020). The Greek air force has 238 fighter jets versus 293 fighter jets operated by the Turkish Airforce. Furthermore, Türkiye enjoys advantages in combat

¹⁴⁰ Specifically, the Greek air force has 3 sqn with F-16CG/DG Block 30/50 *Fighting Falcon*, 3 sqn with F-16CG/DG Block 52+ *Fighting Falcon*, 2 sqn with F-16C/D Block 52+ ADV *Fighting Falcon*, 1 sqn with *Mirage 2000-5EG/BG Mk2*, 1 sqn with *Mirage 2000EG/BG*. For a comprehensive overview of the Greek armed forces.

¹⁴¹ The Turkish Airforce operates 10 Squadrons of F-16 Block C/D. Eight Squadrons are responsible for fighter/ground attack roles and the other two squadrons are used for intelligence/surveillance and training purposes respectively.

helicopters and air refuelling tankers. Notably, Greece has no air refuelling tankers, while Türkiye has seven. Finally, the Turkish armed forces have a significant advantage in UAVs, also a product of the burgeoning Turkish military industry.

Like the air force, the gap in naval forces is not as significant as in the land forces. The Turkish navy has a comparative advantage over Greece regarding its blue water capabilities. These capabilities were developed in the 2010s in line with the Blue Homeland(Mavi Vatan) dogma that pushed Türkiye to expand its navy(Gingeras 2020; Tziarras 2019c). Recent acquisitions by the Turkish navy include the Anadolu amphibious assault ship and the procurement of four new frigates(Karagiannis 2021). These capabilities allow Türkiye to project its power across the Eastern Mediterranean. On the contrary, the Hellenic Navy is primarily a green-water navy with considerable firepower but would find it hard to conduct operations in the Eastern Mediterranean(Ibid). In the Aegean, Türkiye maintains a slight advantage which becomes far greater in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Regarding submarine warfare, although Türkiye maintains a slight numerical advantage with 12 submarines compared to 11 submarines of the Hellenic Navy, its submarines are qualitatively inferior(Ibid). The Hellenic Navy boasts 4 Type 214 submarines along with another seven variations of the Type 209, while the Turkish Navy's submarines are all variations of the Type 209(Economist 2021).¹⁴² Therefore, Türkiye also maintains an advantage in naval forces, but arguably the gap is much smaller than the other two branches.

The aforementioned illustrate Türkiye's offensive capabilities, which have placed it in a position to mount a considerable military challenge to Greece. Although an attack on mainland Greece by Türkiye is a far-fetched scenario given the narrowness and challenging geography of Thrace, the region where the land border between Greece and Türkiye is located, Türkiye can threaten many of the islands in the Aegean. As mentioned above, many of these islands are closer to Türkiye than mainland Greece, making them vulnerable to Türkiye's forces with extensive amphibious capabilities(Aristotelous 2021, 4). In this respect, the offence-defence balance favours Türkiye in certain parts of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Beyond geography and the balance of power, the intertwined history of Greece and Türkiye highlights that the two states have often been hostile to one another. Alexis Heraclides(2010) rightfully notes that the viewpoint of constant hostility in the history of the

¹⁴² This balance could be altered soon if Germany proceeds with the sale of six Type 214 submarines to Türkiye(Economist 2021)

two nations is a fallacy. However, as outlined in Chapter 5, developments since the 1950s have resulted in a security dilemma over the Aegean, with tension being the norm (Aydun & Ifantis 2004). After the Greek coup d'état against Makarios and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the two states came close to war in 1987 and 1996.¹⁴³ The Aegean dispute and the Cyprus Problem feature as persistent matters of national importance in the political landscape of Greece and Türkiye, thus, fuelling the tensions between the two states (Larrabee 2012; Economides 2020).

Furthermore, in the 2010s, the AKP's rhetoric shifted from a conciliatory stance based on a “zero problems with neighbours” policy to a harsher rhetoric that has seen senior Turkish officials, including President Erdogan, make direct threats against Greece (Davutoğlu 2001; 2010). Arguably the most glaring of these statements was the view of the Turkish President that the Treaty of Lausanne, which defined the borders of modern Türkiye in 1923 and has been the legal bedrock of bilateral relations between Türkiye and Greece, should be revised (Kathimerini 2016). Erdogan argued that Türkiye “gave away” many islands in the Aegean to Greece, closer to Türkiye's coastline than to mainland Greece. In this sense, Türkiye can be considered a revisionist state in the latter part of 2004-2022 (Ibid).

Hence, Türkiye fulfils the threshold of a military threat for Greek foreign policymakers. Türkiye enjoyed a favourable balance of power between 2004 and 2022, with the gap between the two sides increasing during the Greek economic crisis. The geographic adjacency, the unsolved issues in the Aegean and Cyprus, and the growing aggressiveness of AKP and President Erdogan classify Türkiye as a military threat to Greece based on the balance of threat theory.

We would expect Greece to opt for a hard balancing strategy. The rationale behind this strategic choice is connected to the considerable size of the Greek armed forces, even though the country's economy was under a prolonged crisis, which affected Greece's military spending. The armed forces' size and capabilities make Athens a credible ally to other regional states threatened by Türkiye, thus increasing the prospects of military alliances and strategic partnerships. Furthermore, the possible war theatres, except Cyprus and Kastelorizo, allow Greece to concentrate its armed forces in small geographic areas like those in Evros and the Aegean islands. Evros and the Aegean islands are heavily militarized and prepared for the event

¹⁴³ The literature on Greco-Turkish relations at their moments of crisis is an extensive one (Larrabee 2012; Ker-Lindsay 2000; Mango 1987; Bahcheli 1988; Katsoulas 2022).

of Turkish aggression and within reach of the Greek Airforce.¹⁴⁴ Overall, Greece's military dogma is based on deterrence, which places the onus of an attack, which is more costly in men, equipment, and resources, on Türkiye. This fact makes a hard balancing strategy a much more viable option.

Additionally, the antagonism between Greece and Türkiye is influenced at the systemic level by three other factors. The first is the presence of the US and NATO. Greece and Türkiye are both NATO members since 1952. The alliance and the US, the *de facto* leading power within NATO, have acted as a failsafe in the antagonism between the two states during and after the Cold War(Katsoulas 2022). Therefore, Greek foreign policymakers can count on NATO and the US to limit Türkiye's belligerence and act as an honest broker between the two sides(Gingeras 2023). In all these crises, the diplomacy and pressure from the US and other NATO allies proved vital to avoid a Greco-Turkish war(Katsoulas 2022). The participation of both states in NATO makes the cost of war higher for Turkish strategists who would need to contemplate the consequences of war in their relationship with the US and NATO.

The second development relates to Türkiye's overall foreign policy posture, bringing it closer to Russia and further away from the US. The removal of Türkiye from the F-35 fighter jet program due to the acquisition of the S-400 missiles from Russia highlights this breakdown(Gingeras 2023). Moreover, Türkiye and the US have been at odds in the Syrian civil war due to the support and collaboration between the US and Kurdish fighters(Kara 2023; Hale 2019). Although the US lessened its footprint in the region under the Obama and Trump administrations, US foreign policymakers have sought partners in the area. With Türkiye proving an unreliable ally, Greece had the opportunity to gain further support from the US to strengthen its balancing act against Türkiye(Gingeras 2023). In this respect, a balancing strategy combining hard and soft balancing elements would be a viable option against Türkiye.

The third factor concerns developments in the Eastern Mediterranean in the late 2000s and early 2010s, outlined in Chapter 6. These developments created systemic opportunities for Greece to bolster its position vis-à-vis Türkiye. The Arab Spring Uprisings and the diplomatic standoff between Türkiye on the one hand and Israel and Egypt on the other was the first critical development. These diplomatic breakdowns created important opportunities for Greece to strengthen its relations with these regional powers. In addition, the hydrocarbon discoveries in

¹⁴⁴ The four possible theatres of war between Greece and Türkiye are the Aegean, Thrace, Cyprus and Kastelorizo. The first two are arguably the most important while the latter do not carry the same strategic value.

the Eastern Mediterranean elevated the potential of Greece becoming an energy-producing state or, at the very least, a key transit state for exporting Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons to Europe.

A balancing strategy based on soft and, more importantly, hard elements was a viable option for Greek foreign policymakers against the Turkish threat that was increasingly becoming prevalent in the 2010s. Although worsening, the military balance in the Aegean did not deteriorate to the extent that a hard balancing option was off the table, especially in light of the US's and NATO's presence and the worsening state of US-Türkiye relations. Additionally, the geopolitical developments in the Eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings and the discovery of hydrocarbons in the region created the prospect of potentially new alliances and strategic partnerships with regional states against Türkiye.

8.1.2. The Gulf

The geographic distance between the Gulf and Greece is a considerable one, and there would be difficult for any Gulf state to project enough military power to threaten Greece's sovereignty. For most of the examined period, no power viewed Greece unfavourably. As argued in this chapter, Greece has been able to deepen its relationship with most Gulf monarchies, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Greece maintained a positive relationship with Iran until 2019 despite the hostile environment between the EU and the US on the one side and Iran on the other. Greece's NATO and EU membership did not cultivate offensive intentions on the part of Iran before 2019.

Nonetheless, from 2019 onwards, the relationship between Greece and Iran has been strained due to Greece's close relationship with the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE. Greece had distanced itself from Iran after the breakdown of the JCPOA due to its position in NATO and its obligations stipulated by the CFSP. The Tsipras administration did not antagonize Iran and maintained a positive relationship. As we shall see below this changed under Mitsotakis. Iran has viewed specific actions by Greek foreign policymakers in a negative light, including the approval of the killing of General Qasim Soleimani, the usage of Greek bases by the US to support its operations in the Gulf which have targeted Iran have prompted Iranian officials to threaten retaliation against Greece(Weinthal 2020). Moreover, providing a Patriot air-defence battery to Saudi Arabia would not have gone well with Tehran(Al-Monitor 2021).

Nonetheless, the retaliation cannot come in a form that undermines the Greek state's survival or sovereignty. Still, it would most likely involve utilising non-state actors or

disrupting Greek trade via the straits of Hormuz. Two incidents are worthy of mention here. The first incident was related to the seizure of two Greek-flagged vessels and their crews in June 2022, widely considered a retaliation to the seizure of Iranian oil from a Russian-flagged ship (Kube & Lee 2022). The second incident concerned two Shia Pakistanis planning to attack Jewish and Israeli targets in Greece in March 2023 (Bassist 2023a). Although Tehran has denied involvement, Mossad and Greek counter-terrorism officials have accused Iran of the attack. The two incidents might be a precursor to the future relationship between Iran and Greece. However, they are not defining features of the 2004-2022 period since they occurred its end.

Despite the growing tension between Iran and Greece, the Iranian threat is not significant enough for Greece's survival or sovereignty. Hence, there is no threat emanating from the Gulf. Instead, we should expect Greek foreign policy to be motivated primarily by drivers at the domestic level – the FPE's perception regarding the Gulf and the political economy of the state.

8.1.3. Greece in the context of the CFSP

As an EU member, Greece participates in the CFSP, which seeks to create a cohesive and consensual external EU policy. Historically, the CFSP and its predecessors were concerned with the EEC/EU's Trade and Commercial Policy with third countries and regional blocs. The CFSP's mandate has since been expanded to tackle a broader range of issues, seeking to “respond in a rapid and flexible manner to external conflicts and crises, to build the capacity of partner countries and to protect the EU and its citizens” (EU 2023). By establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU enhanced its capacity to enact the joint will of the member states, which was agreed upon through the Council of Ministers.

Within the CFSP's framework, there is a mutual defence clause (article 42.7 of the 1992 Treaty on the EU), which states “that if a member state is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other member states shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with article 51 of the United Nations Charter” (EUPARL 2014). In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon introduced a solidarity clause (article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU) stating that “the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster” through the mobilisation of all instruments, including military resources (Ibid).

Since 1999, the CFSP has gradually expanded its hard security component through the CSDP, especially after the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon.¹⁴⁵ Currently, the CSDP is responsible for EU peacekeeping missions, military-industrial cooperation through Permanent Structured Cooperation(PESCO) and the European Defence Fund(EDF), military equipment and infrastructure provision to EU partners, and several civilian missions. Nonetheless, the EU still relies on NATO's structures to mobilise forces on the continent, and NATO remains the major strategic security arrangement on the continent. The EU's proactive role in foreign affairs through the CFSP and the CSDP has fuelled academic debates on the EU's strategic actorness, i.e. its capacity to act as a unitary actor in international relations(Toje 2008; Gehring et al. 2017). This relates to a parallel debate on the EU's “strategic autonomy” and the extent to which the EU should eventually lessen its reliance on NATO structures, thus seeking strategic independence(EUPARL 2022; Szewczyk 2022).

The relation between Greece's national foreign policy and the CFSP has been examined through the work on the Greek foreign policy's Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation(Cryssogelos 2019; Economides 2005; Stavridis et al. 2015). Europeanisation theories examine how national policies of EU member states converge as member states adopt and adapt to official EU policy(Featherstone & Radaelli 2003; Gross 2011). In doing so, they assess the integration and adaptation of national state foreign policies and decision-making processes to EU norms, practices, and regulations. Greek scholars working on the matter have debated the level of Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation within Greek Foreign policy and the capacity of Greek foreign policy to Europeanise some of its national interests, i.e., not only “downloading” EU policies but also “uploading” them(Economides 2005).

Greek foreign policy throughout the 1980s and the 1990s diverged from EEC/EU norms on many occasions. Under the premierships of Andreas Papandreou, Greek foreign policy diverged from the policies of EU/EEC members on the Arab-Israeli conflict, relations with militant regimes like Qadafi's Libya, and the breakdown of Yugoslavia(Valianatou 2020). Even though Greece continued to be the only EU member supporting Serbia throughout the Yugoslav wars, the change from Papandreou to Simitis increased the rate of Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy. According to a Greek diplomat, under Simitis, Greek foreign policy was “Brussels-centric”(Interviewee 2 2022). Greece's capacity to Europeanise Greco-Turkish

¹⁴⁵ The CSDP was then know as the European Security and Defence Policy(ESDP). The name was altered in the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon.

relations and the Cyprus Problem between 1999 and 2004 and lead a policy of EU expansion in the Western Balkans highlighted this trend.

Greek foreign policy' Europeanisation has been endangered during the Eurozone crisis and the rise of populism, which influenced policies against the EU mainstream(Stavridis et al. 2015; Chryssogelos 2019; Valianatou 2020). In some instances, the Greek FPE took different stances on international issues from its counterparts and blocked the EU's capacity to create joint policies on certain occasions. Nonetheless, from 2018 onwards, the Greek Foreign Policy turned towards a Europeanising trajectory through the resolution of the Macedonian Name Dispute under Tsipras and the proactive diplomacy of Mitsotakis in the Western Balkans(Nimetz 2020; Michalopoulos 2023; Koneska 2019).

EU policy on the Middle East is based on a series of agreements and frameworks touching upon different actors and areas in the Middle East. The main policy instrument in the Mediterranean, involving ten Middle Eastern states, is the Southern Neighbourhood Policy, which concentrates on deepening “engagement with the civil society and social partners”(Commission 2023a). The EU is also a party to the Union for the Mediterranean(UfM), which builds on the 1995 Barcelona Process and is complementary to the Southern Neighbourhood Policy, given that they have similar objectives.

In the Gulf, the EU also has a Cooperation Agreement with the GCC, which primarily focuses on enhancing the dialogue between the two parties. Highlighting the growing importance of the Gulf for the EU, a Special Representative was appointed in 2021, and in 2022, an agreement on a strategic partnership has been reached(EEAS 2022;2023). Partnership and cooperation agreements exist with the OIC and the Arab League. These relationships are an influential part of the EU's policy on the Middle East Process. The EU has an appointed Special Representative and is part of the Quartet involving the US, UN and Russia on the Middle East Peace Process envisaging a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the UN position(EEAS 2021). Finally, the EU is also a party to the JCPOA agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program, as are two of its leading members: Germany and France.

Greek foreign policy is aligned with the CFSP's overall framework and shares EU positions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The EU's Southern Neighbourhood policy does not touch upon hard security matters; its most influential component is its impact on the EU's migration policy. The EU-GCC framework is still weak because it does not address hard security issues and has no overarching trade deal(EEAS 2022). While the CFSP/CSDP

framework must be considered when examining Greek Foreign Policy in general, its capacity to influence Greek foreign policy in the Middle East is limited compared to the balance of threat and balance of power considerations. Most notably, as the analysis will illustrate, the Greek FPE has tried to tie its regional initiatives to the CFSP to augment its status-seeking effort.

8.2. The Intervening Variable: Perceptions and the Political Economy

The two intervening variables utilised are the Greek FPE's perceptions and the state's political economy per the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 4. Before delving into these two intervening variables, the first step is to determine who are the FPE's members and the veto players within it.

8.2.1. Determining the veto player(s) and defining the FPE

This subsection aims to outline the members of the Greek FPE and subsequently illustrate who the veto players within the system are in line with Tsebelis'(2002) veto players theory.

Defining the FPE

The Greek PM governs Greek foreign policy decision-making. Despite the lack of constitutional checks and balances on the PM's power, as Kevin Featherstone and Dimitris Papadimitriou have argued, there is a paradox at the heart of Greece's "core executive"(Featherstone & Papadimitriou 2015; 2023). Although the PM is all-powerful, he is an "emperor without clothes" because the institutional weakness of the Greek state has limited his constitutional power(Featherstone & Papadimitiou 2013).

Nonetheless, this paradox does not hold in the foreign policy field. The PM's power and his capacity to enact his will is unprecedented. Although the diplomatic corps and the Greek foreign policy bureaucracy are among the most highly trained and able members of the Greek public service, the FPE, with the PM's approval, has sidelined them and foreign policy is formulated through an "ad hoc system of relationships between the PM, his advisors, other Cabinet members including the foreign minister and party-political appointees"(Economides 2020, 607). A case in point is the decision by PM George Papandreou to use his brother rather than a diplomat to discuss investment opportunities in the Gulf(Huliaras & Kalantzakos 2017, 68).

In theory, the foreign policy decision-making process involves several other actors beyond the PM, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and their close circle of advisors. These actors can advise the PM and, in some cases, scrutinise the government. The first actor is the parliamentary committee of National Defence and External Affairs. The committee is a platform for parliamentary parties to express their views on foreign policy matters. However, its powers are curtailed, and it is essentially a discussion forum on Greek foreign policy rather than holding any real power in the foreign policy decision-making process (Keridis 2022; Katrougkalos 2022).

The second actor is the Foreign Policy Council, established in 2003, which in theory, should act as an advisory body to the PM involving parliamentary parties, academics and the government. However, there is no standardized membership apart from the parliamentary parties (HMFA 2023). Andreas Loverdos (2022), former Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs and the MP responsible for legislating the Foreign Policy Council, argued that the Council never functioned as intended. In reality, it is another parliamentary committee of National Defense and External Affairs where the parties express their views without the interaction between politicians, bureaucrats and academics (Ibid). Finally, there are no regular meetings, and instead, it is up to the whims of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to summon it.

The third actor is the most crucial body in Greece's foreign policy decision-making, the Government Council of National Security (KYSEA).¹⁴⁶ KYSEA involves senior members of the Cabinet, including the MFA, and the Minister of National Defence, and is headed by the PM. Besides the government members, the Chief of Staff of the HAF is also present and has a vote. Constitutionally, KYSEA is “the chief decision-making body for foreign affairs” and is also responsible for military procurement decisions (Economides 2020; Dokos 2020). KYSEA's capacity to act is hampered by the lack of obligation to hold regular meetings and is convened only upon the wish of the PM (Economides 2020, 609). Moreover, the members of KYSEA are all appointees of the PM, and he has the prerogative to fire them if he pleases.

The diplomatic corps and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs experts have often played second fiddle to the government's political appointees. As George Katrougkalos (2022) put it, the diplomats are there to “illustrate the limits and consequence of your choices and advise” while implementing the government's will. The Ministry's bureaucracy, however, could

¹⁴⁶ KYSEA was formerly known as the Government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defence but it changed name and its composition slightly altered by the ND government in 2019 (PM's Office 2019).

potentially play a role in limiting the power of a Minister, especially if the Minister is inexperienced(Keridis 2022). In such a scenario, Dimitris Keridis(2022) notes, the Ministry's bureaucratic machine sets the framework within which the Minister will have to move, limiting his choices and freedom of action. Although the claim made by Keridis might be valid, if one examines all Foreign Ministers in the analysed period, they were all experienced politicians or former diplomats like Molyviatis and Kotzias. Ultimately, the political decisions remain with the FPE.

Beyond the PM, the FPE comprises the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, and the Deputy PM.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Kyriakos Mitsotakis established the post of National Security Advisor in 2019. The Advisor serves as a chief counsel to the PM for foreign policy and defence matters. The existence of a coalition partner with enough power to threaten the government's survival *de facto* makes him a member of the FPE.¹⁴⁸ In this period, two individuals had that capacity. The first is Evangelos Venizelos, leader of PASOK and Antonis Samaras' coalition partner. Following the withdrawal of DIMAR in June 2013, which increased PASOK's standing within the government, Venizelos was appointed Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The second case is Panos Kamenos, leader of the Independent Greeks(ANEL), Minister of National Defense and SYRIZA's coalition partner. Therefore, the two coalition partners in both cases had governmental positions that positioned them within the FPE.

Determining the veto players

Having outlined the decision-making process and the members of the FPE, the next step is to outline the veto players within the FPE. To achieve this, an understanding of the Greek political system is needed. Greece is a unitary parliamentary republic. The current political system emerged in Greece after the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974. A substantial alteration was the 1986 constitutional amendment, which diminished Presidential power. Although the President's role was considered ceremonial, he did have important powers that allowed him to dissolve the Parliament under certain conditions, among other prerogatives(Featherstone & Papadimitriou 2015, 29-34). The 1986 amendment stripped the President of the capacity to dissolve the Parliament under any conditions, removed his power to call the Cabinet into session, eradicated the Council of Democracy, and a Cabinet member

¹⁴⁷ The post of the Deputy PM is an ad hoc post created at the will of the PM.

¹⁴⁸ See the next section on veto players.

must co-sign any Presidential declaration. In essence, the President became a figurehead. Therefore, the power of the PM increased while the President's capacity to influence the country's political landscape was all but eradicated.

In this respect, the only curtailment to the power of the PM in foreign and domestic affairs can only come in the form of coalition partners. As Tsebelis(2014; 2016) argued, the number of veto players in parliamentary systems like Greece depends on how many parties participate in a coalition. Between 2004 and 2022, Greece had ten different administrations and eight PMs. Two of these ten administrations were caretaker governments and came into power after an election produced a hung parliament for less than a month.¹⁴⁹

Of the other eight administrations, the governments of Kostas Karamanlis(2004-2009), George Papandreou(2009-2011) and Kyriakos Mitsotakis (2019-2023) were one party-governments. Hence, there was a single veto player. The governments of Alexis Tsipras contained two partners: the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and ANEL. In these two administrations, ANEL were the junior partner and nominally a veto player. Alexis Tsipras was only able to form a government with the support of ANEL, even though SYRIZA came very close to an absolute majority.

Nonetheless, when ANEL attempted to exercise its veto by removing their support from the government due to the Prespes agreement in January 2019, Panos Kammenos could not bring down the government.¹⁵⁰ ANEL lacked party cohesion to act as a veto player when the alteration of the status quo in the country's foreign policy occurred with the conclusion of the Macedonian name dispute. Nonetheless, Alexis Tsipras was always mindful of the preferences of his coalition partner, which was exhibited with the removal of Foreign Minister Kotzias due to the clash between Kammenos and Kotzias over the Prespes agreement(Strickland 2018).

Beyond party veto players in a coalition government, a key factor in Greek politics is the existence of often powerful internal groups within the main parties that often acted as internal oppositions. Notably, since 1990 two government's that held absolute majority fell because internal opposition groups decided to break away from the government.

¹⁴⁹ The Greek constitution stipulates that in the event of a hung parliament the President, after negotiations with the parliamentary political parties, will appoint a caretaker government headed by one of the heads of the three Supreme Courts of Greece. The government will be in place for a minimum of 21 days and a maximum of 30 days. The two caretaker governments mentioned above are the administrations of Panayiotis Pikramenos in 2012 and Vasiliki Thanou-Christophilou in 2015.

¹⁵⁰ The Prespes agreement resolved the long-standing Macedonian name dispute between Greece and Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia which changed the name of the latter to North Macedonia.

ND currently has two groups with a harder stance on Türkiye than PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis who would be willing to discuss a resolution to the Aegean dispute under certain conditions.¹⁵¹ Former PM Antonis Samaras leads the first, arguably the most hawkish grouping with ND. The second is a looser formation around former PM Costas Karamanlis who are happy with the status quo in the Aegean dispute. Within SYRIZA, in 2015, the party was split after the July referendum on the Troika package, with hard-line Eurosceptics under Zoe Konstantopoulou and Panayiotis Lafazanis splitting away from the party when it opted to accept a deal forming two different groupings. The main factions within SYRIZA's second electoral victory in 2015 centred around Alexis Tsipras, who sought to push the party to the centre and the “Group of 53” headed by Euclid Tsakalotos that acts as a Left Opposition.

Papandreou's PASOK faced an internal struggle between a democratic socialist faction led by Harris Kastanidis and Loukia Katseli that traced its lineage from Andreas Papandreou and the “reformists” led by Evangelos Venizelos that came to the forefront through the party's leadership under former PM Costas Simitis.¹⁵² George Papandreou was between these two groups and often faced opposition from both. Eventually, the breakaway of Kastanidis and Katseli that took with them 32 MPs forced Papandreou to kickstart the events leading to his resignation and the Papademos administration.

The Papademos administration was a government of special purpose that lasted six months following the resignation of George Papandreou (Smith & Gow 2011; BBC 2017). The task was to agree and implement the second bailout package from the EU during the country's debt crisis. Given that the sole mandate of the Papademos administration was to deal with the country's debt crisis, Papademos did not concern himself with the Middle East and this thesis' research. As soon as the implementation of the second bailout agreement was reached and formalised, Papademos resigned and called for snap elections.

The dual elections that followed in May and June 2015 produced an administration under Antonis Samaras. The Samaras administration was a coalition government between ND, PASOK and the DIMAR. Of the three coalition partners, only two were veto players. DIMAR's parliamentary power was limited, and even if it withdrew its support, the MPs of PASOK and ND were enough to keep the government in place. When DIMAR withdrew from the coalition in June 2013, the government pressed with PASOK to strengthen its standing. Therefore, there

¹⁵¹ Mitsotakis would be willing to discuss only maritime zone disputes (Hadjicostis 2023)

¹⁵² This dichotomy within PASOK emerged after the death of Andreas Papandreou.

were two veto players in the Samaras administration – ND and PASOK – Antonis Samaras and Evangelos Venizelos.

The foreign policy decision-making process is therefore centred on the PM. The PM's power in foreign policy decision-making can only be limited in two ways. The first is the extent to which the PM places foreign policy at the top of his priorities. PMs like Costas Karamanlis or Alexis Tsipras have taken a more laid-back attitude in foreign policy matters. In the case of Karamanlis, foreign policy was placed in the hands of Petros Molyviatis, an experienced diplomat connected to ND and his family (Economides 2020). Similarly, Tsipras allowed FM Kotzias significant leeway, enabling him to establish a personal fiefdom in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ibid). Nonetheless, when Tsipras had to contemplate the survival of his government or the position of Kotzias as foreign minister, he chose the first by dismissing Kotzias (Strickland 2018).

Kotzias' removal highlights the capacity of a coalition partner as a veto player. If a coalition partner, capable of bringing down the government, took issue with foreign policy, he could influence or even force the PM's hand. Kamenos' push against SYRIZA was unsuccessful due to a lack of party discipline. However, had Evangelos Venizelos been in a similar position when in coalition with ND, then PM Samaras would have to change course or face the collapse of his government. Overall, the PM is the overlord of the FPE, and his power can only be curtailed via a coalition partner.

8.2.2. The Perceptions of the FPE

This subsection delves into the images of the Greek FPE. Beyond public statements by members of the Greek FPE, the section builds on the interviews conducted with politicians, diplomats, and experts in Greek foreign policy. Three major themes emerge from examining these sources regarding Greece's foreign policy in the Middle East. The first and most prominent is Türkiye and Greece's reaction to the threat of its Eastern neighbour. The second theme is the perception of the Greek FPE towards the Middle East which is connected. The third is the importance of the US in Greece's approach to the Middle East. The subsection ends with a synopsis, highlighting the almost identical perception of Greek FPE members between 2004 and 2022 on the three themes mentioned above. Despite their ideological cleavages, the three parties that led Greek governments since 2004 – ND, PASOK, and SYRIZA - shared a similar outlook on the Middle East and the challenges facing Greece in the region.

Türkiye

The Greek FPE, the political system, society and especially the Greek media are fixated upon the Turkish threat. Most parliamentary parties view Türkiye as Greece's most important foreign policy issue. The perception that there is a threat to Greece's sovereignty in the Aegean runs throughout the political system. Even the Communist Party (KKE), known for its anti-nationalist and internationalist worldview, views Türkiye as a threatening actor. General Secretary Dimitris Koutsoumpas warned that any “unilateral withdrawal or concession of [the country's] sovereign rights” in the Aegean would be a grave mistake.¹⁵³

Dimitris Keridis(2022), professor of International Relations and current Minister for Migration and Asylum, argued that Greece views the “world through the eyes of Türkiye”, which is “an almost existential issue for contemporary Greece and its foreign policy”. Greek foreign policy filters everything through the “existence of the Turkish danger”(Ibid). The centrality of the Turkish threat is also highlighted by Greece's National Security Advisor, Thanos Dokos(2020). Dokos(2020, 569) writes that “the Türkiye factor remains dominant in Greece's threat assessment and the driving force behind most foreign and defence policy initiatives”. Finally, Miltiadis Varvitsiotis(2022), former Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs(2019-2023) and former Minister of Maritime Affairs, argued that a key goal of Greek foreign policy is to “repel Türkiye's hostility” and “guard against the dispute of Greek sovereignty”.

Beyond ND, a diplomat with close ties to SYRIZA has reiterated that “Türkiye is a threat to Greece, threatening through largely illegal claims Greece's sovereignty and sovereign rights”(Interviewee 2). Therefore, the most crucial task for Greek foreign policymakers is to deal with that danger. PASOK's former leader George Papandreou, a key figure in the drafting of the Helsinki strategy and a champion of Greco-Turkish friendship, has shared these views that Erdogan's Türkiye is a “revisionist state” that threatens Greece's national sovereignty(iEfimerida 2022). PASOK's current leader Nikos Androulakis, recently stated that “2022 proved that the appeasing policy does not function against revisionist leaders that do not respect the international law”, before moving on to criticising NATO for maintaining “an equal distance policy” between a “revisionist” Türkiye and Greece(theToc 2023).

¹⁵³ KKE's reading has important differentiation to the mainstream approaches of ND, PASOK, and SYRIZA. KKE's reading views the approaches taken on the dispute by the country's mainstream political forces as part of a wider scheme to strengthen the grasp of the imperialist EU and NATO over the Aegean pitting the people of Greece and Türkiye against each other for the sake of profits and capitalist gains(iEidiseis 2020).

Alexis Papahelas(2022), a knowledgeable analyst of Greek foreign policy and Editor of Kathimerini, one of the country's most respectable newspapers, has also echoed this viewpoint by arguing that Greek foreign policy is, in essence, “one-dimensional” due to its overt focus on the Turkish threat. Vasilis Nedos(2022), Kathimerini's diplomatic editor and an expert on Greek-Turkish relations, argued that in essence Greek foreign policy is conducted “in reaction” to Turkish foreign policy. Alexandros Papaioannou(2022), former Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, claimed that although “Greek foreign policy is not Turko-centric”, Greece's relations with Türkiye are vital, acknowledging that between 2020 and 2022, there was a profound escalation due to Türkiye's provocations involving military and “hybrid threats” towards Greece and other regional states and the EU.

PASOK's former leader, Deputy PM, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Evangelos Venizelos, argued that despite the clamouring under Erdogan and the AKP, the state of Greco-Turkish relations had not deteriorated compared to periods when Kemalist forces had the upper hand in Turkish politics, citing the crises of 1974 and 1996(Vima 2023). Nonetheless, Venizelos(2020) acknowledges the centrality of Türkiye for Greek foreign policy on several levels, including relations with NATO and the US. Therefore, although there is a difference in the threat perception of a prominent member of the Greek FPE, that member still considers Türkiye a central part of Greek foreign policy.

In this respect, there is a profound uniformity in viewing Türkiye as a threat, albeit at different levels within the Greek political system and, by extension, within the Greek FPE. However, despite the slight difference in threat perception between Venizelos and the rest, what is more important, is that all members of the Greek FPE view Türkiye as the central challenge facing Greek foreign policy. Therefore, there is an alignment between the threat perception of the FPE and systemic pressures, as outlined in the independent variable section. The FPE's perception of Türkiye is also a key component in the perception of the Middle East within the FPE.

Greece and the Middle East: Security and status-seeking

Greek foreign policymakers have long discussed the Middle East as an area of importance for Greek foreign policy. Ever since the days of Andreas Papandreou, when referring to the region, Greek politicians have used the analogy of Greece as being “a bridge” between the Middle East and Europe or the West in general. This “romantic perception,” in Alexis Papahelas'(2022) words, still holds sway to this day. Greek foreign policy makers

increasingly also viewed the area as a region where Greece could elevate its status in regional and European politics increasing its importance for policymakers in the Middle East and the EU alike. More importantly, the Greek FPE increasingly views the Middle East as an area of critical importance regarding security and economics.

Dimitris Keridis(2022), ND MP and current Minister of Migration and Asylum, argued that developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the warming up of relations with Israel by George Papandreou pushed Greece towards elevating the Eastern Mediterranean and, by extension, the Middle East's strategic importance for Greece. Keridis(2022), who is heading the Greece-Israel and Greece-US Parliamentary Friendship Groups, cites the breakdown of relations between Türkiye and Israel following the Mavi Marmara incident, the rise of Al-Sisi in Egypt, which displeased Erdogan, and the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Abraham Accords also played a crucial part in maintaining and increasing the Middle East's strategic importance for Greece, according to Keridis(2022). The Accords led to a normalisation of the relationship between two partners of Greece, the UAE and Israel, elevating Greece's status in the region.

Similar points have been echoed by one of SYRIZA's foreign policy experts(Interviewee 2 2022). In addition, former alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andreas Loverdos(2022) from PASOK made similar assertions arguing that the breakdown of relations between Türkiye and Israel in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara incident was crucial to accelerate Greece-Israel relations. From that point on, in Loverdos'(2022) view, the negative perception in Tel Aviv against Türkiye due to Erdogan's openings in the Muslim world and his growing affinity with Hamas became even worse. This enabled George Papandreou's rapprochement with Israel to stand on solid ground.

The aforementioned illustrates that Türkiye's actions just before and in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings influenced the Greek FPE's perception towards the Eastern Mediterranean, with the “bridge” analogy beginning to take a more solid form in the minds of Greek foreign policymakers. The comments of PM Antonis Samaras that Greece would be an “ambassador” to Egypt's interest in the EU during his first visit to the country after al-Sisi's election highlight this novel attitude(Shama 2019). Samaras was accompanied by FM Evangelos Venizelos, highlighting the common perception of both coalition partners.

The element of security was also critical in the engagement of Greece with the Gulf. Andreas Loverdos(2022), for instance, argues that the defensive pact between Greece and the

UAE resulted from political convergence and a common threat perception against Türkiye. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Katrougkalos(2022) echoed this point as well. He also argued that along with Israel, the UAE was viewed as a critical force in Middle Eastern politics due to its activism in the Eastern Mediterranean and its central role in Gulf's international relations when explaining the choice of the SYRIZA administration to deepen its relationship with Abu Dhabi. Katrougkalos(2022) added that SYRIZA's choice enjoyed the support of the other two major parties within the Greek political system – ND and PASOK.

Nonetheless, beyond security, the Gulf was traditionally viewed by Greek foreign policymakers as a potential economic oasis. Alexis Papahelas(2022) argued that because of Greece's historically good relations with the Arab World, many Greek politicians in the past believed that this relationship could be translated into investments. Nonetheless, the reality was far from it, according to Papahellas(2022).

This has not hindered Greek foreign policymakers from continuing to view the Gulf similarly. George Katrougkalos argued that the SYRIZA administration did view the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia as potential investors in the Greek economy. Simultaneously, Iran was also viewed as a possible economic partner due to the positive relationship that SYRIZA had cultivated with the Iranian government(Katrougkalos 2022). In similar terms, Minister Varvitsiotis(2022) argued that fostering stronger economic ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other GCC states is vital in Greece's Middle Eastern policy. Both ministers acknowledged that FDI from the Gulf to the Greek economy.

The US Factor and the Middle East

A key component in the perception of the Greek FPE towards the Middle East concerns the US's strategic posture towards the region and how Greece could benefit in this context. The Greek FPE places great importance on its position as a NATO member and ally of the US(Keridis 2022). Greek foreign policymakers have perceived the region through pro-US lenses. They have tried to read US interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf and calibrate their foreign policy accordingly. By doing so, the Greek FPE sought to aggrandise its status as a reliable US partner in the region and gain the US' favour vis-à-vis Türkiye.

The rationale was that if Greece acted as a trusted US ally, it would be supported by the US in its rivalry with Türkiye. Although Türkiye was also a NATO member from 2016 onwards, it was proving itself as an unreliable ally because it antagonised the US through its deepening relations with Russia and a different agenda that diverged. According to Vasilis

Nedos, the Greek FPE's viewpoint was also supported by the changing attitudes of the Greek electorate. A large segment of the Greek population has been staunchly anti-American(Nedos 2022). The economic crisis and the austerity measures imposed upon Greece created resentment against Germany and EU institutions among the Greek public. Anti-Americanism gave way to Germanophobia, and a pro-US attitude was taking hold within the people because of US support to Greece in the debt negotiations.¹⁵⁴

ND has a long-standing tradition of supporting the Euroatlantic orientation of Greek foreign policy. All ND administrations in this period have been steadfast to this approach, especially the last administration of Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Dimitris Keridis acknowledged that the US remains the primary power in the Middle East despite its curtailment in the region, which needs to be considered by Greek foreign policy. Mitsotakis' government wishes to fashion itself as a key ally of the US, seeking to elevate Greece's status in Washington. During his visit to the US in 2022, the Greek PM claimed that Greece is “a reliable partner for the US”, highlighting the importance of Greece's position in the Middle East, among other factors(PM's Office 2022).

Despite dabbling with 'Third Worldism' in the 1980s under Andreas Papandreou, PASOK has remained steadfast in Greece's alliance with the US via NATO(Athanassopoulou 2010). Especially after the death of Andreas Papandreou, the party under the successive leaderships of Simitis, George Papandreou, and Evangelos Venizelos solidified the party's Euroatlantic commitment.

Importantly, the pro-US orientation was also not endangered under SYRIZA. One would expect that the party's radical slogans against US imperialism created doubts over the foreign policy orientation of its government. Nonetheless, the perception of the FPE under SYRIZA was that Greece should deepen its relations with the US and NATO. SYRIZA's foreign policy experts argued that the US was influential in Greece's relationship with Türkiye, with Tsipras' government calibrating its Middle Eastern foreign policy accordingly(Interviewee 2 2022). Again, for instance, the diplomatic openings of Alexis Tsipras with Iran between 2015 and 2017 were influenced by US strategic posture in the immediate aftermath of the JCPOA agreement(Ibid).

¹⁵⁴ On the tradition of anti-Americanism in Greece see Lialiouti(2015), Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos(2010). On the rise of anti-German sentiment within Greece see Fouka and Voth(2023).

The only noticeable divergence between the SYRIZA and ND's approach is linked to the decision of PM Mitsotakis to send a battery of Patriot anti-air missiles to Saudi Arabia. In George Katrougalos'(2022) view, ND risks damaging Greece's historic relations with Iran and a part of the Arab world by taking sides in the Sunni-Shia antagonism. Nonetheless, the centrality of the US factor in Greek foreign policy for ND, SYRIZA and PASOK is undisputed. As Evangelos Venizelos noted recently, the “convergences between the systemic parties in Greece are astonishingly great”(Atechnos 2023). Among the convergences listed by Venizelos was the Euroatlantic commitment of all three parties(Rizospastis 2023). Therefore, there is a remarkable degree of continuity in the perception of the Greek FPE.

Synopsis

The Greek FPE, especially from 2010 onwards, has a largely unified perception regarding the Middle East and the goals of Greek foreign policy in the region. Firstly, there is a common understanding that Türkiye constitutes a threat. Secondly, the Middle East has appeared as a space of strategic importance in both security and economic terms, especially in the case of the Gulf. Thirdly, despite some disagreements that arose after 2019 regarding Greek foreign policy in the Gulf, there is also a unified understanding that Greece needs to play the role of the US's steadfast ally. Nonetheless, at this latter point, ND and SYRIZA differ regarding the lengths Greece should go to prove its importance to Washington in the context of its status-seeking foreign policy.

8.2.3. Political Economy

This section will proceed in two steps, per the theory set out in Chapter 4. Firstly, an overview of the Greek economy will be offered, focusing on the 2004-2022 period. The main event here is the Eurozone crisis(2009-2018), which dominated and transformed Greek politics. Understanding the financial and economic necessities of the Greek economy and the repercussions of the Greek economic crisis on the country's political system is vital to understanding Greek foreign policy towards the Middle East. Secondly, based on the political economy analysis in the first part, the interconnection between foreign policy-making and the political economy will be explored in the second part, focusing on the key interest groups that can influence foreign policy. The most important economic interest group is centred on the Greek shipping industry, while of lesser importance are the interest groups centred on the tourist bauxite industries.

The Greek economy

As Stavros Tombazos(2018) aptly put it, the Greek economy in the 21st century had “two faces”. In the first period between 2000 and 2008, the Greek economy was growing, but after 2008, it faced a collapse of monumental scale. The Eurozone crisis affected Greece disproportionately compared to any other EU, resulting in a loss of more than 20% of GDP. The Greek economy at the moment of writing has not recovered to pre-crisis levels. This subsection will seek to provide a snapshot of the Greek economy since the turn of the century.

Between 2000 and 2008, the Greek economy experienced impressive growth across all macroeconomic indicators. The country's GDP rose from 130.46 billion USD in 2000 to 355.91 billion USD in 2008(World Bank 2023). Additionally, the percentage of wages in the GDP was rising. Still, it did not severely hamper the rate of profits within the GDP due to the improved rate between GDP and permanent capital(Pagoulatos 2018).

The foundation of this growth was established on hollow ground, namely the financialization of the Greek economy after the country's accession into the European Monetary Union(EMU). The introduction of the euro and the country's participation in the EMU allowed the Greek government and especially the private sector to access cheap finance. As Pagoulatos notes, the financial liberty created in the 1990s by the push to adhere to the Maastricht criteria and join the EMU “brought about an important reallocation of resources from sectors traditionally favoured for developmental or redistributive purposes (manufacturing, small- and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture, public investment), to increasingly modernizing non-tradable sectors (banking, real estate, constructions, media, retail trade) that corresponded to the strong demand for consumption created by trade and capital liberalisation”(Ibid).

Nonetheless, the makeup of the Greek economy on the eve of the crisis was still dominated by small and medium enterprises and very few large firms, which meant that Greece lacked economies of scale necessary for technological innovation, which would also make sectors of the Greek economy internationally competitive(Doxiadis 2013). The bureaucracy of the Greek state hampered entrepreneurship, making it challenging to attract FDI. The patron-client networks established primarily by the two ruling political parties amplified these problems and encouraged corruption, unprofessionalism and an economy connected to disseminating public funds(Sotirouopoulos 2020).

Moreover, despite the benefits of “imported stabilisation” that came with joining the EMU, access to cheap finance created severe problems for the Greek economy (Pagoulatos 2018, 2). The mismanagement of financial windfall occurred at both the public and private levels. In the 2000s, public pensions and wages increased while private debt doubled from around 60% in the 1990s to 120% by 2008 (Tombazos 2018).

As Kevin Featherstone argued, combining the eurozone's architectural deficiencies and the Greek state institutions' weak capacity epitomised the Greek crisis. Despite the strength of the executive branch, successful Greek governments have failed to “overcome endemic problems of low competitiveness, trade and investment imbalances, and fiscal mismanagement, placing the economy in a vulnerable international position” (Featherstone 2011). The cheap finance provided by the EMU accession allowed Greek governments in the late 1990s and the 2000s to maintain their distributional policies without “fixing structural rigidities in labour markets or curb public spending”. Finally, Greek inadequacy was amplified by removing monetary flexibility due to EMU participation and the Eurosystem's inability to react quickly and concertedly to a systemic crisis (Ibid; Lapavitsas 2019; Pagoulatos 2018).

The point of reckoning for Greece came with the election of George Papandreou's PASOK government in 2009. Papandreou revealed that the figures on the government deficit the previous ND administration provided were false. The government deficit, reported at 6.7% of GDP for 2009 by the outgoing ND administration, was revised upwards by the incoming PASOK administration to 12.7%, with the EU eventually claiming that it rose to 15.6% (Economist 2009; Smith 2010). This triggered a domino effect, and by early 2010 it was clear that Greece's access to international markets to finance its debt would be closed, prompting Papandreou to ask for assistance from the EU and the IMF, resorting to austerity measures.

Papandreou was able to pull through the first austerity package. However, when it was clear that Greece would need further help to avoid bankruptcy, there was mounting political pressure on the Greek PM. Faced with opposition within PASOK, with MPs threatening to leave if further austerity was pursued, and from Antonis Samaras' ND, Papandreou tried to force both his creditors into a more lenient stance and the opposition to take its share of responsibility by stating that he would take the choice of further austerity and a second bailout based on a referendum (Smith & Gow 2011). The following crisis led to Papandreou's resignation and the establishment of a national unity government under Lucas Papademos (see above) with PASOK, LAOS and ND. The second bailout package involved a private sector

involvement(PSI) that restructured Greek sovereign bonds, leading to a nominal haircut of 53.5%(Cheng 2020).

The Samaras administration governed between June 2012 and January 2015 and implemented the provisions of the second package, but it was clear that a third package would be needed. The Greek economy lacked the finances to fulfil its debtors' obligations and pay civil servants. Samaras was forced to call for snap elections over the election for the Presidency of the Republic in Parliament. The elections were held in January 2015 and led to a resounding victory for SYRIZA, a radical left party that was voted on an anti-austerity platform. It was the first time since the restoration of democracy in 1974 that neither PASOK nor ND won the election.

The incoming SYRIZA administration resorted to prolonged negotiations and extensive brinkmanship, given its proclamation that it would cancel the austerity measures imposed by the Troika with “one law and one article”(Mpogiopoulos 2015). Between January and July, extensive negotiations continued. Still, the deal in place was not to the liking of the Greek government, so it moved forward with a referendum, resulting in a resounding refusal of the agreement on the table(Tsebelis 2014; Featherstone & Papadimitriou 2023). The referendum's result endangered Greece's position in the Eurozone and the EU, putting Greece in a precarious position. Eventually, Tsipras defied the result of the referendum and made a monumental U-turn, signing a new deal with the Troika with terms similar to the previous one. Tsipras had to rely on support from the opposition to get the new deal through parliament as 40 of his MPs split away from the party. The fiasco meant that Grexit was avoided but at a tremendous financial cost. Tsipras called for new elections, which he won for a second time, forming another coalition with ANEL.

In August 2018, the program was completed with Greece not requiring further assistance, signalling the end of the Greek crisis. The Greek crisis had significantly deteriorated all macroeconomic indicators. Although the Greek debt between 2009 and 2017 only rose from €300 billion to €318 billion, the debt to GDP ratio skyrocketed from 127% to 172% due to a staggering GDP loss(Tombazos 2018). The IMF has acknowledged that they underestimated the damage that would be caused. Poul Thomsen(2019), the IMF negotiator on the first and second bailout programs, stated that the IMF believed that it would take eight years in 2010 for Greece's GDP per capita to return to pre-crisis levels. Nonetheless, in a speech in 2019, he accepted that by their projections, Greece's GDP per capita would return to pre-crisis levels in 2031(Ibid).

The end of the crisis has not yet led to a honeymoon for the Greek economy. As soon as the crisis was coming to a close and there was a prospective return to GDP growth, the Covid-19 pandemic led to another cycle of crisis, which was prolonged by the effects of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Especially for an economy heavily dependent on tourism, 2020 proved tricky and led to further GDP contraction. However, 2021 and 2022 have led to economic growth, record-breaking tourist seasons, and an upsurge in FDI, and Greece has edged closer to investment grade. Despite the positives, the Greek economy is still fragile, with public debt at 171.3%, inflation averaging 9.6% of GDP for 2022, and real wages still being depreciated(Commission 2023b).

Economic interests

Following the formulation outlined in Chapter 4, after providing a snapshot of the Greek economy since the turn of the century, our attention will now turn to the economic interest groups that can influence Greek foreign policy. A variety of different interest groups dominate the Greek economy. These groups range from powerful trade unions, the few large corporations of the country that are either connected to public funding or operate in oligopolistic markets, the tourist and bauxite industries and Greece's shipping industry(Doxiadis 2013; Zambarloukou 2020; Sotiropoulos 2020). These interest groups have historically been incorporated into the Greek political system in a clientelist manner(Ibid; Mouzelis 1986; Trantidis 2016).

Of these groups, only three have vested interests in Greek foreign policy, Greek shipowners, tourist, and bauxite industries. Greece has a long tradition of more than two centuries in shipping and the maritime industry. The Greek shipping cluster is hierarchical, with approximately 440 to 500 and roughly 2500 people at the top forming a cohesive elite(Constantinides 2008; Doxiadis 2013; Huliaras & Petropoulos 2014; Bergin 2015). As of 2022, the Greek merchant fleet was the largest in the world in deadweight tonnage, numbering 5514 vessels(Union of Greek Shipowners 2022). Greek shipowners are considered industry leaders worldwide.¹⁵⁵ The sector is also the second largest in the Greek economy behind tourism, significantly contributing to the overall economy. In 2019 the industry created 160 thousand jobs and contributed 6.6% to GDP(Deloitte 2020).

¹⁵⁵ Every year the most prominent Greek shipowners make it to the prestigious Lloyd's List(2022) of the most influential people in the shipping industry..

The wealth of the Greek shipping industry has placed it in a unique position to access political power. This power has been amplified in recent decades by the investment of many Greek shipowners in domestic enterprises like the insurance, telecommunications, energy, and banking sectors and, notably, the media. Furthermore, some of the most important sports clubs in the country are owned by shipping magnates, adding to their influence throughout society.

The sway Greek shipowners hold on the country's political class has been evident in the development of Greece-China relations in the past twenty years. Huliaras and Petropoulos argue that pressure from Greek shipowners pushed PM Costas Karamanlis to pursue a closer relationship with China(Huliaras & Petropoulos 2014). The result was the most significant single direct investment in the history of the Greek state with the acquisition of two piers of the Piraeus port by Chinese state-owned firm COSCO. The investment cost \$4.3 billion. Huliaras and Petropoulos note that “these Greek shipowners not only *facilitated* COSCO's investment in Piraeus, but there is evidence that they have also *initiated* the whole process.”(Ibid).

Furthermore, the way the contribution of the Greek shipping industry to GDP is calculated also indicated the political power of the Greek shipowners. According to former Finance Minister George Papakostantinou, how Greek shipping's contribution to GDP is measured is not in line with international practice(Papakostantinou in Bergin 2015). If the shipping industry's contribution were measured, its contribution to GDP would be much less, raising questions about the necessity of the lucrative tax breaks the industry enjoys(Bergin 2015). Nonetheless, there has been no authoritative study on the matter and in Papakostantinou's words, “it's not by accident” (Papakostantinou in Bergin 2015). This highlights the capability of the shipping industry to influence the political class and the Greek FPE to promote its interests.

So, what would the Greek shipping industry want from Greek foreign policy in the Middle East? Given that the bulk of Greek ships are oil tankers with a growing capacity for LNG transfers, the Middle East is fundamental due to its position in the global oil and gas markets(Union of Greek Shipowners 2022). Therefore, improving Greece's standing in the Gulf, particularly its bilateral relations with the oil-producing monarchies, would enhance business opportunities for Greek shipowners, primarily in transportation and refining oil products.

The other two industries – tourism and bauxite - have significantly less sway on Greek foreign policy than the shipping industry, especially in the Middle East. The tourist industry accounts for roughly 20% of Greek GDP and employs more than 800,000 people(WTTC 2023). The Greek National Tourism Organisation and the Greek Tourism Confederation run PR campaigns to promote the industry globally. The Greek FPE has supported these campaigns and has used its diplomatic network to promote Greek tourism via bilateral and multilateral treaties(Bisa 2013). However, Middle Eastern states are rarely the target of these campaigns, which primarily focus on populous and high-income countries, especially in the West. Moreover, Middle Eastern states do not feature among the country’s main tourist arrivals(INSETE 2022). In this respect, we would expect a limited impact from tourist interests on Greek foreign policy in the Middle East.

The bauxite industry is export-oriented; in 2021, its export value stood at €2.148 billion(AAG 2022). Approximately 30,000 people are employed in the sector across 3,000 enterprises, highlighting its importance for the Greek economy(Ibid). The economic crisis pushed the sector to increase its exports, leading firms to establish a presence in the Middle East, among other regions(aluNET.gr 2017). Nonetheless, EU member states are the leading destination for Greek bauxite exports, with two Middle Eastern featuring among the top export destinations. Between 2015 and 2017, 4.9% of Greek aluminium exports went to Türkiye, and another 2.9% to Israel(Maniati et al. 2019, 42). Nonetheless, given that both states are located in the Eastern Mediterranean – Greece’s near geographic environment - the bauxite sector, organised around the Aluminium Association of Greece, would have minimal capacity to push the Greek FPE into prioritising its needs. We would expect security to come first ahead of any economic interests.

8.3. The Dependent Variable: Greek Foreign Policy in the Middle East

This sub-section deals with Greek foreign policy in the Middle East, the case study’s dependent variable. The sub-section is split in two parts. The first part focuses on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and Greece’s attempt to balance against the Turkish threat through a mixture of hard and soft balancing measures. Greece also aimed at boosting its status-seeking foreign policy by promoting itself as a bridge between the region and the EU and primarily as a reliable partner for the US and France. In the second part, the focus is placed on Greek foreign policy in the Gulf. The Greek FPE viewed the Gulf as a space ripe for economic diplomacy that could provide trade and investments to the Greek economy that was in dire straits between 2009 and 2018. Additionally, the Greek FPE pursued a status-seeking foreign policy in the region. This

policy was aimed at regional states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, highlighting Greece's capacity to act as a reliable partner within the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, Greek foreign policy makers sought to increase their status vis-à-vis the US fully aligning their Gulf with the policy of the US in the sub-region.

8.3.1. The Eastern Mediterranean

Greek foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean can be split into three periods. The first period between 2004 and 2012 is when Greek foreign policy gradually rediscovered the Eastern Mediterranean. The most crucial feat was the rapprochement between Greece and Israel. Nevertheless, Greece's Eastern Mediterranean policy was hampered by the onset of the economic crisis, which turned attention and resources towards Brussels. The second period began in 2012 with Antonis Samaras' administration and lasted until the electoral victory of Kyriakos Mitsotakis in 2019. During this period, Greek foreign policy in the Mediterranean builds on the Greek-Israeli rapprochement and takes advantage of structural changes in the region due to the Arab Spring Uprisings. Greece had a more active foreign policy in the region, characterised by trilateral partnerships, partly due to Turkish foreign policy. Finally, the third period begins with the advent of the ND government in 2019, which coincides with Turkish hostility at various levels, prompting Greek foreign policymakers to pursue and agree on defensive cooperation agreements with the UAE and France, rebuild its military strength and elevate its status as a key US and French ally in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Rediscovering the Eastern Mediterranean: EEZ talks, Greek-Israeli rapprochement and the onset of the crisis(2004-2012)

The March 2004 elections produced an administration under Costas Karamanlis whose foreign policy outlook sought to shift Greece's focus from Brussels to China and Russia without threatening the pro-Western orientation of Greek foreign policy. In this respect, the Eastern Mediterranean was not a priority for Greek foreign policymakers, a sentiment aided by the détente in Greco-Turkish relations.

Karamanlis shifted Greece's stance away from the position that Greece and Türkiye would need to settle the Aegean dispute for EU-Türkiye accession talks to start. The 1999 European Council at Helsinki set out the parameters for Türkiye's accession and prescribed that Greece and Türkiye would try to iron out their differences in bilateral talks(Economides 2005). They would turn to the International Court of Justice(ICJ) at the Hague if an agreement

were beyond reach(Raptopoulos 2017). Karamanlis feared that by going to the Hague without agreeing on the issues to be settled, there was a danger that Greece would lose much more than it would gain, given the diverging positions of what items should be negotiated(Ibid). Greece's approval for the start of Türkiye-EU accession talks prolonged the détente between the two sides(Ker-Lindsay 2007). Despite some positive steps, such as the visit of Karamanlis to Ankara in 2008, there was no progress in the negotiations on bilateral issues.

The foreign policy strategy of the Karamanlis administration in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean concerned bilateral negotiations with other coastal states to demarcate Greece's EEZ. In the Ionian Sea, Greece proceeded to talks with Italy and Albania. Greek diplomats in the Eastern Mediterranean pushed forward with negotiations with Egypt and Libya that began in 2004. Despite substantial progress, none of the talks with either Egypt or Libya produced any results(Athanasopoulos 2019; Kakaounaki 2019; Valinakis 2020). Karamanlis lost the 2009 elections and gave way to PASOK and George Papandreou. Although the negotiations continued by 2010, they had collapsed.

Papandreou, one of the architects of Helsinki, sought to pursue negotiations with Türkiye. Papandreou broke protocol: his first PM visit was to Türkiye instead of Cyprus. He stated the need to resolve the Cyprus Problem and Türkiye's EU accession, creating a conditionality between the two(Raptopoulos 2017). The Greek PM sought to capitalize on the ongoing Cyprus Problem negotiations and the favourable climate between Greek Cypriot President Demetris Christofias and the Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat. By early 2010, there was an understanding in Ankara and Athens, and the two sides agreed to restart the exploratory talks on the Aegean and set up a High-Level Council to deal with "low politics" like the promotion of bilateral trade and tourism between the two parties(Ibid, 126-128).

Despite the successes of the Council, there was no progress on security issues and the onset of the Arab Spring Uprisings and the break in Israel-Türkiye relations altered foreign policy priorities in Ankara. At the same time, the economic crisis was taking a toll on Papandreou's government, shifting the PM's priority from foreign policy to economic policy and government cohesion. Additionally, the inability of the two sides to reach a breakthrough on security issues retained the security dilemma. Therefore, there was further pressure on the Greek economy, which maintained a relatively high defence expenditure due to the unchanging security environment.

Arguably, the most important development in this period was the rapprochement between Greece and Israel. As outlined in Chapter 5, Greece's relations with Israel were frosty because of Greece's relationship with the Arab World and the strategic partnership between Türkiye and Israel. As Aristotle Tziampiris(2014, 77) notes, the relations between the two countries had been warming as early as 2008. From late 2009, unofficial efforts to bring the two countries closer together made headway, resulting in the first official meetings and calls between the Greek and Israeli government officials. In February 2010, Benjamin Netanyahu and George Papandreou dined in Moscow, further impeding the rapprochement efforts(Ravid 2011).

The critical turning point arrived with the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident in May 2010(Ayşegül & Almog 2019). Although the Greek government officially criticized the IDF's use of force, the Greek FPE realized there was a systemic opportunity in the breakdown of Turkish-Israeli relations(Loverdos 2022; Tziampiris 2014, 82-83). Back-channel diplomacy and official calls between the Greek PM and his Israeli counterpart paved the way for an official visit by Papandreou to Israel in July 2010(Tziampiris 2014, 82-84). The meeting created a basis for further economic and security cooperation and paved the way for Netanyahu's visit to Athens. Papandreou also met with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to stress the continuity of Athens' historical ties to the Palestinians and the capacity of Greece to act as a link between Israel and the Palestinians(Ibid, 85).

Netanyahu followed through with a visit to Athens three weeks after Papandreou visited Tel Aviv. Netanyahu's visit established the renewed relationship as a pillar of Greek foreign policy in the Middle East and signified Greece's rediscovery of the region. During the visit, Netanyahu and Papandreou made important declarations. The Greek PM stressed that "bilateral cooperation in sectors involving investments in tourism, telecommunications, information technology, water technologies" and announced the establishment of a joint Israel-Greece committee to "develop our cooperation in various sectors including security"(Vima 2010). The visit enjoyed bipartisan support since Netanyahu met with Samaras, the leader of ND and the Opposition(Tziampiris 2014, 89).

The rapprochement stood on solid grounds, although the unfolding Greek crisis slowed the impetus of Greece's Eastern Mediterranean policy. Negotiating a second bailout package led to a governmental crisis, momentarily turning the Greek FPE's gaze away from the region. Eventually, Papandreou stepped down, leading to the national unity government of Papademos.

Under Papademos, the intensification of cooperation between Israel and Greece continued, with both states taking part and the US in the Noble Dina military exercise(Barak 2012).

Despite failing to reach EEZ agreements with Libya and Egypt, the rapprochement with Israel and the Arab Uprisings and their consequences reinvigorated the interest of Greek foreign policy in the Middle East. Over the next decade, the Eastern Mediterranean would emerge as Greece's main strategic environment.

From Samaras to Tsipras: Trilaterals, continuity, hydrocarbons, and status-seeking(2012-2019)

Antonis Samaras' and Alexis Tsipras' premierships continued on the path laid by Papandreou. They expanded Greece's footprint in the Eastern Mediterranean despite the limitations imposed by the bailout programmes and the economic crisis. As the region's hydrocarbon potential became more obvious, Greek foreign policymakers stepped up their efforts to position Greece as the link between the Eastern Mediterranean's gas fields and EU markets(Tsafos 2017). Although this element was part of Papandreou's calculations, it became much more professed in the following administrations. There were also strong indications of hydrocarbon reserves south of Crete and in the Ionian Sea. Additionally, a key element in the Greek FPE's strategy was the push of the EastMed Pipeline, which was granted the status of a project of common interest by the EU Commission(Chondrogiannos 2022). Apart from any economic benefits, the Greek FPE's fixation on hydrocarbons was influenced by the perception that they would elevate Greece's status and strategic value within the EU and the region.

When Antonis Samaras took charge in June 2012 the Greco-Turkish détente was in its twilight. The Greek coalition government agreed to participate in two more high-level Cooperation Councils with Türkiye in March 2013 and December 2014 that failed to produce tangible results in the Aegean or Cyprus(Raptopoulos 2017). Simultaneously, Turkish foreign policy was increasingly becoming more assertive in what Athens viewed as a revisionist policy aimed at regional hegemony(Shama 2019). The end of Morsi's presidency in Egypt signified the end of those aspirations, but Türkiye had already antagonised the new government in Egypt. Meanwhile, Türkiye's relations with Israel remained problematic. Greek foreign policy was able to exploit these systemic opportunities.

The downfall of Morsi in Egypt led to a warming up of relations between Greece and Egypt. Greek foreign policy was quick to react following Sisi's electoral victory. The Greek FPE realised that the hostility between Türkiye and the new administration in Egypt because of the former ties with the Muslim Brotherhood could be exploited to pursue a closer

relationship with Egypt. The Greek PM made an overture to the Egyptian President, offering to be a bridge between his country and the EU(Ibid). This was important for Egypt because there was a negative sentiment among most EU members against the al-Sisi regime. Furthermore, by drawing closer to Egypt, Greece could enhance its status within the Middle East with the support of an influential state.

Greek moves were in tandem with the approach of Cypriot foreign policymakers, leading to the creation of the Egypt-Greece-Cyprus trilateral, which met for the first time in November 2014, kickstarting cooperation in energy, economic matters, and security(DailyNews Egypt 2014). The second meeting in Nicosia in April 2015 set out the vision of the three parties for the region and their positions on key issues like the Cyprus Problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict(HMFA 2015).

Moreover, Samaras maintained and deepened Greece's relationship with Israel by strengthening the security ties between the two countries. Greece and Israel continued to conduct joint exercises. Russian weapon systems within the Greek arsenal, like the S-300 anti-aircraft missiles stationed in Crete, proved helpful in IDF's war games because Russia supplied the S-300 to Iran and Syria(Williams & Tangaris 2015). Both states conducted military exercises with Cyprus and the US during that period, deepening their security cooperation.

Samaras lost the 2015 elections giving way to the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition. The ascendancy of SYRIZA and Alexis Tsipras led to important questions regarding his government's foreign policy orientation. Before rising to power, SYRIZA was a staunchly anti-Western party that viewed the US and Israel as bastions of local and international imperialism.

Nonetheless, Tsipras chose the path of continuity and deepened and strengthened Greece's relationship with Israel and the US. By doing so, the Greek FPE sought to position itself as a steadfast US ally and elevate its status in the eyes of US foreign policy. Foreign Minister Kotzias visited Israel in late June and July 2015 to illustrate this continuity. Kotzias and Tsipras built on the work of Papandreou and Samaras, and under their tenure, the first trilateral summit between Greece, Israel and Cyprus was organised in January 2016(Diplomat Magazine 2016). Between 2016 and 2018, another four meetings were scheduled, while in the 6th trilateral summit in March 2019, the partnership took a 3+1 form with the participation of the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo(US Embassy Greece 2019). Pompeo underlined the US support for the trilateral partnership of Cyprus, Greece, and Israel, noting the importance

of increased cooperation to support energy independence and security and to protect against external malign influences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East(Ibid).

The trilateral with Israel played a key aspiration in Greek aspirations to become a gateway to energy flows from the Eastern Mediterranean to the EU. SYRIZA's foreign policy elite, including Ministers Katrougkalos, Kotzias and PM Tsipras, shared this view.(Roussos 2017). The perception in Athens was that Greece would increase its strategic value while reaping important economic benefits. Tsipras, like Samaras, pushed forward with constructing the EastMed pipeline by signing an intergovernmental agreement during the 6th trilateral summit(Ibid). In addition, Tsipras' government supported the EuroAsia Interconnector(2018) project that would connect the electrical grids of Crete, Cyprus, and Israel.

The Greek government continued its close collaboration with Egypt via the trilateral format with annual summits, and in January 2019, the Greek government spearheaded the efforts to create the EMGF(Reuters 2020). Despite the deepening relationship with Israel, SYRIZA's government attempted to maintain Greece's historical links with the Palestinians. Under its tenure, the Greek Parliament recognised the Palestinian state, and the Greek PM visited Ramallah. The participation of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the EMGF was an important development, and Greek diplomats worked hard with their counterparts to achieve this result(Roussos 2017). To this day, the EMGF remains the only regional forum with Israeli and Palestinian membership.

The SYRIZA government also engaged in "low politics" which aided the status-seeking element of its foreign policy, by organising three international conferences between 2016 and 2018 on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East(Katrougkalos 2022). The Conferences came to be known as the "Forum of Rhodes"(Ibid).¹⁵⁶ According to Tsardanidis(2019), these conferences were "another initiative of Nikos Kotzias, who believed very strongly that Greek foreign policy should be active on numerous issues in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, including protecting Christian heritage". It should not be forgotten that there are Greek Orthodox minorities across the Middle East(Roussos 2005; Vatikiotis 1994).

Katrougkalos(2022) noted that "the forum of Rhodes allowed Middle Eastern states that maintained a relatively moderate religious agenda to come together". The former minister

¹⁵⁶ This conference should not be confused with the Rhodes Forum conducted by the Russian Dialogue of Civilisations Research Institute.

stressed the forum's importance in deepening Greece's relationship with the UAE. Greece's relationship with both the UAE and Israel allowed was critical. The military forces of both states met for joint military exercises in Greece with the HAF. This way, Greece aided the rapprochement between the UAE and Israel before the Abraham Accords. Greece's role assisted US' strategy in the region, illustrating Greece's firmly pro-US foreign policy.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, SYRIZA's administration was wary not to antagonise Iran, which supported Greece during the economic crisis.¹⁵⁸ The UAE and Saudi Arabia positioned themselves in the anti-Turkish camp in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Greek FPE was able to exploit this opportunity and deepen its relationship, especially with the UAE.¹⁵⁹

By the end of 2016, the Greco-Turkish antagonism was coming back. Tsipras' visit to Türkiye in 2016 did not produce any tangible results. In July 2016, Türkiye was shaken by a military coup d'état against Erdogan. In the aftermath of the coup, Erdogan clamped down on the opposition. Erdogan intensified his authoritarian turn at home, which was solidified by the 2017 constitutional referendum that increased his power as President of the Turkish Republic(Çağaptay 2017). These moves pushed Türkiye away from the West and EU membership, minimising Greece's leverage as a gatekeeper in EU-Türkiye negotiations.

After all, Greece-Türkiye relations had been shaken by the Syrian war's refugee crisis in 2015-2016. The problem highlighted Türkiye's turn towards a more transactional foreign policy vis-à-vis the EU and the West. Although, at the time, the Greek government was using the situation to push its EU lenders and extract a better deal for the third bailout package, Türkiye's posture was heightened insecurity in Athens(Tsourapas & Zartaloudis 2022). The Greek stance can be summarised in this comment by FM Kotzias; "there will be millions of migrants and thousands of jihadists flocking into Europe if the Greek economy crumbles"(Kotzias in Ovenden 2016).

The following major incident between Greece and Türkiye involved eight Turkish military officers who arrived in Greece via helicopter requesting asylum. The Greek government returned the military helicopter to Türkiye but stated that the case of the Eight would be dealt with according to international law(Christofis et al. 2019). The Greek

¹⁵⁷ Greek foreign policy under SYRIZA was paradoxically firmly pro-US and the Middle East policy was only one part. Arguably the most important feat of SYRIZA's foreign policy was the resolution of the Macedonian name dispute that brought North Macedonia into NATO, expanded the alliance's network in the Balkans and pushed back against Russian influence.

¹⁵⁸ See sub-section on the Gulf below.

¹⁵⁹ On the rise of an anti-Turkish camp in the Eastern Mediterranean see Chapter 5.

government did not accept Türkiye's request to extradite them, and eventually, the Greek Supreme Court granted them asylum in 2017(Ibid). The incident heightened tensions between the two countries. In 2018, two Greek soldiers on patrol strayed off into Turkish territory in Evros(Smith 2018). The Turkish military detained the soldiers, and Erdogan proposed an exchange with the eight, but the Greek government responded that it could not intervene given the court's decision.

The most alarming development of Greek foreign policymakers was the comments of Erdogan that the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 should be revised. On 29 September 2016, the Turkish President stated that "some tried to deceive us by presenting Lausanne as a victory; in Lausanne, we gave away the islands that you could shout across to"(Kathimerini 2016). The reference to the Greek Aegean islands was a clear sign of revisionism. These comments were reiterated during Erdogan's visit to Greece in December 2017. PM Alexis Tsipras and Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos met them with solid responses(Christofis et al. 150).

Beyond the aforementioned, the visits of Greek and Turkish defence ministers to the Imia/Kardak islets on the anniversaries of the 1996 crisis during this period did not help diffuse the tension(Hurriyet 2016). The collapse of the talks for the Cyprus Problem also led the issue to another stalemate. The stalemate, in turn, was exploited by Türkiye to halt Cyprus' gas programme via gunboat diplomacy. In short, the antagonism between the two sides was increasing.

Conclusively, the Samaras and Tsipras administrations deepened Greece's relationship with Israel and Egypt over this period, culminating in the trilaterals with Cyprus. Furthermore, both premierships believed that Greece should position itself as a transit country for energy flows from the Eastern Mediterranean. They both promoted the EastMed pipeline project, and Tsipras' government supported the EuroAsia interconnector. In short, their Eastern Mediterranean policy had great continuity despite their fierce opposition at home. Meanwhile, Greece's regional adversary, Türkiye, moved away from the EU and gradually ended the détente.

*Elevating Greece's regional status? Assertiveness and alliances under Kyriakos Mitsotakis (2019-2023)*¹⁶⁰

Kyriakos Mitsotakis took over from Alexis Tsipras in July 2019. His government's approach to the Eastern Mediterranean had essential elements of continuity. Like his

¹⁶⁰ Kyriakos Mitsotakis was re-elected as Greece's PM in July 2023. This section refers to his first term in office.

predecessors, he deepened Greece's already established relationships with regional states. He shared the perception that Greece could become a transit hub for the region's energy supply to the EU. The central point of departure for Greek foreign policy under Mitsotakis was that it faced a belligerent Türkiye that pushed Greece to react firmly. After exiting the austerity memorandums, Mitsotakis had greater fiscal space, and some of it was used to build Greece's military power.¹⁶¹ Türkiye's stance also aided Mitsotakis in deepening the already established relationship with the UAE and France, two extra-regional powers with long-standing security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As soon as Mitsotakis took office, he faced increasing hostility from Türkiye. The first critical event was the signing a memorandum between Türkiye and the Libyan GNA administration in November 2019, demarcating their EEZ (Johnson 2020). The memorandum, in essence, cut through the island of Crete and disputed Greece's EEZ claims south of Crete. The area claimed by Türkiye and the GNA administration was among the areas that the Greek FPE planned to proceed with hydrocarbon exploration. Greece had already supported the GNA's rival, the LNA led by General Khalifa Haftar. Within nine months, Greece reached a partial demarcation EEZ deal with Egypt to dispute the Türkiye-GNA agreement (Kathimerini 2022).

Soon after, in February 2020, Türkiye added further pressure on Greece with a border crisis across their land border in Evros (Oztig 2020). Following the death of Turkish soldiers in Idlib, Türkiye announced that it would no longer stop refugees from Syria from reaching Europe, signalling the end of its agreement with the EU. Soon after, thousands of migrants descended on the Greek-Türkiye border. Greek authorities deployed security forces and closed the passing.¹⁶² The Greek PM noted that this "is not essentially the immigration or refugee problem. It is a conscious attempt by Türkiye to use migrants and refugees as geopolitical pawns to advance its own interests" (Mitsotakis in Oztig 2020). The crisis was diffused by the end of March 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Oztig 2020).

The pinnacle of the tension between the two states came in August 2020. Greek and Turkish naval forces engaged in a standoff in the Aegean Sea for almost two months. The standoff resulted from the Turkish survey ship Oruc Reis's exploration into waters the Greek

¹⁶¹ Greece completed the third bailout program in 2018 and eventually exited the monitoring by the Troika in 2022.

¹⁶² Greece's stance in the matter and the general migration has been critiqued as contrary to human rights law (Amnesty International 2020)

government considers part of its continental shelf(Zachariades 2020). Oruc Reis was accompanied by Turkish Navy vessels, with Greece deploying its own warships. Türkiye's actions were viewed as part of its "Blue Homeland" doctrine(Tziarras 2019c; Gingeras 2020). On August 14, the Greek frigate Limnos collided with the Kemalreis frigate in an accident that could have escalated the crisis to the point of no return(Zachariades 2020). The standoff was the most severe crisis between the two states since 1996.

Between the August 2020 naval standoff and the end of Mitsotakis' first tenure in May 2023, the tensions between the two states remained high. Fortunately, they did not reach the point of another military standoff. The aerial dogfights over the Aegean continued, and the rhetoric from Turkish officials was, in many cases, belligerent(Gingeras 2020). Moreover, in 2022, Türkiye signed a preliminary energy exploration deal with the GNU administration in Libya based on the previous prompting responses from Greece, Egypt, the US, and the EU.

The Greek FPE responded to Türkiye's actions by building existing relations that Greece had cultivated in the region but sought out new partners. Türkiye's actions in Libya and beyond prompted the Greek FPE to strengthen its ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia and France, who found themselves in the anti-Turkish camp along with Cyprus, Egypt and, to some extent, Israel.¹⁶³ In May 2020, Greece, the UAE, Cyprus, Egypt and France issued a joint statement condemning Türkiye's energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the case of France, the two states are already NATO allies and EU member states. However, Greece has traditionally enjoyed close defence ties, with Greece opting for French military systems. This trend was continued by the government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis, which was adamant after a decade of recession to spend and upgrade the HAF. The first purchase concerned 18 Rafale fighter jets.(Stamouli 2021). Subsequently, in September 2021, France and Greece finalised a €3 billion defence pact involving the acquisition of 3 French Belharra frigates, among other provisions(Smith 2021). The deal will enable the Greek Navy to modernise part of its fleet by 2026 and provide the navy with some blue water capabilities necessary for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean theatre. Finally, in March 2022, Greece purchased another six Rafale.

These acquisitions were accompanied by a mutual defence treaty signed in October 2021. Under Article 2 of the treaty, both sides declared that they would aid each other in case of hostilities. Greece's military buildup is a response to the Turkish navy's unprecedented

¹⁶³ On the regional antagonism between the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye see Chapter 6.

modernisation and the Turkish military's general buildup during Greece's decade of recession.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, France has found itself locking horns with Türkiye in Libya and Cyprus, where the French energy giant TOTAL has a stake in the country's EEZ. French President Macron and Erdogan have not enjoyed the best relationships, with a series of altercations between 2019 and 2021(Cetinmuhudar 2023).

The Greco-French pact was important for the Greek FPE for its purely defensive component and its status-seeking foreign policy. The pact builds upon the UN Charter, NATO, and EU Treaties, recognising that while “NATO remains the pillar of their collective security,” Greece and France “continue to strengthen the EU's CFSP, will progressively work towards an EU Defense Policy”(Vima 2021). Macron and Mitsotakis hailed the deal as a move towards EU strategic autonomy(Stamoulis 2021). Through the pact, Greece attempted to build its status as a leading actor in efforts towards increasing defensive integration among EU members. Furthermore, Greece elevated its status with France as the deal allowed Macron to soften the blow from the cancellation of the Australian-French submarine deal in the aftermath of the AUKUS agreement(Zachariades 2021). Furthermore, the deal strengthened France's Mediterranean Policy and played into the agenda of the French presidency of the EU(Schmid & dos Santos). The US embraced the pact with the State Department praising Greek efforts to “build stability in the region”(Kathimerini 2021).

The Greek FPE under Mitsotakis intensified its cooperation with the US. Mitsotakis intensified Tsipras' status-seeking strategy, which sought to position Greece as the most reliable ally in the Eastern Mediterranean in contradiction to unreliable Türkiye. Greece and the US revised their defence pact in 2019, and in 2022, the Greek parliament ratified another agreement extending the network of Greek bases that US troops can use.(Reuters 2022b) In the context of these agreements, infrastructure projects will expand the capacity of the Souda naval base and the Alexandroupoli port(France 24 2021). Alexandroupoli has been vital in the US' logistical support to Ukraine's war effort(Economist 2022). Speaking during the ratification of the latter agreement, Mitsotakis stated that “the text (of the agreement) we are called to ratify ... depicts a new reality” since “the U.S. is extending its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean ... and our country becomes in the clearest way the main partner and interlocutor of the United States in the region”(Mitsotakis in Reuters 2022b).

¹⁶⁴ There was a great deal of controversy about this clause since many analysts argued that it was targeting Türkiye, circumventing NATO's structure. Nonetheless, the deal's text stated that it was building on NATO and EU treaties(Zachariades 2021).

The second major component of Mitsotakis' courting of the US was the acquisition of US arms. In 2020, the Greek government officially requested the F-35 jet(Kathimerini 2023). The request has received bipartisan support in Washington DC and is in the process of being approved. The US State Department also approved the sale of four warships worth \$6.9 billion to Greece and an additional \$2.5 billion(Greek City Times 2021). A final decision on the matter has not yet been taken. As with France, these moves are a response to Türkiye's actions and an effort to build up Greece's status.

The bipartisan support towards Greece was exemplified in the 2019 Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act signing(US Congress 2019). The Act lifted the prohibition of non-lethal arms to Cyprus, authorized Foreign Military Financing for Greece, and generally deepened security and energy cooperation with Greece. The Act complemented the 3+1 framework with Israel and Cyprus.

Mitsotakis, like his predecessors, shared the view that Greece could become a transit hub for Eastern Mediterranean gas. Like Samaras and Tsipras, Mitsotakis supported the Eurasia Interconnector and the Euroafrica Interconnector(2020).¹⁶⁵ The Greek FPE continued its support for the EastMed project. The Trump administration was also supportive of the EastMed pipeline. In January 2020, along with Israel and Cyprus(Cyprus Profile 2020). However, the Biden administration withdrew its support from the project. Victoria Nuland, US Undersecretary of State, argued that the EastMed pipeline would be technically challenging, expensive, and time-consuming(Nedos 2022). Speaking just after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Nuland pointed out that Europe needed energy urgently and that LNG and underwater electricity cable were the solution, not a pipeline(Ibid).

Under the first administration of Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece had to face sustained challenges to its sovereignty and security from Türkiye. Greece responded by maintaining and deepening already established partnerships in the regions with Israel, Egypt, and the UAE. The Greek FPE built up Greece's military power after a decade of cuts, and in 2021, Greece had the highest percentage of military spending relative to GDP within NATO(Chondrogiannos 2022). The military buildup allowed Greek diplomacy to foster closer ties with France and the US, elevating Greece's status with both actors. Greece sought to establish itself as the most important ally for France and the US in the Eastern Mediterranean. To a large extent, Mitsotakis accomplished this, exemplified by his strong relationship with President Macron and his visit

¹⁶⁵ The EuroAfrica interconnector seeks to connect the electric grids of Cyprus, Greece and Egypt..

to Washington in May 2022, becoming the first Greek PM to address the US Congress. Despite these successes, Greece could not attain tangible results in becoming an energy hub. The EastMed pipeline was the main project promoted by the ND government, but the lack of US support highlights the infeasibility of the project. Finally, the Greek FPE has not yet attained regional status within the Eastern Mediterranean, the absence of Greece in the 2022 conference on the future of Libya is a case in point.

8.3.2. The Gulf

Greek foreign policy in the Gulf can be roughly split into two periods. The crucial turning point was the advent of Kyriakos Mitsotakis' government in 2019. Before the Mitsotakis administration, Greek foreign policy had maintained cordial relations with Iran and the GCC camp. Greek foreign policy at that time was more concerned with attracting trade and FDI from the GCC while engaging with Iran for energy-related purposes. The economic crisis and Türkiye's fallout with the GCC, except for Qatar, acted as a wake-up call, and Greek foreign policymakers began to engage the region more concertedly. Critically, Greece did not pick sides in the antagonism between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The electoral victory of ND in 2019 led to a change of policy. Greece has strengthened its relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia at various levels, including military cooperation. As a consequence, Greece's relations with Iran have been tested.

The beginnings of Greece's Gulf policy: Oil, FDI and growing involvement

Greek foreign policy up until the late 2000s lacked a Gulf component. The Gulf was traditionally viewed as an area Greece could harness for investments, even though these never materialised. Greece enjoyed cordial relations with the Gulf monarchies and Iran, but these relations were not meaningful. On the contrary, Greek shipowning and construction firms were active in the region, building essential infrastructure projects and shipping the region's oil (Antoniou 2018). The heads of these firms enjoyed close personal relationships with the royal families of certain Gulf monarchies. Stavros Niarchos, Aristotelis Onassis' and Ioannis Latsis's relationship with the Saudi royal family illustrate the point (Crowe 2003).

The first interconnection between Greek foreign policy and the Gulf arrived in the late 1990s when Greece, Iran and Armenia constructed a trilateral partnership. The three countries conducted a series of summits until 2002 (Cutler 2002). Greek foreign policymakers viewed their country as a possible entry point for Iranian gas (Roussos 2017). However, the war on

terror, the sanctions on Iran and Greece's pro-Western orientation prevented the materialisation of this plan.

Greek-Iranian relations remained on favourable terms as Greece was supplied with Iranian crude. Imported crude oil was crucial for Greece's energy consumption and refined and exported. After all, refined oil is Greece's primary export product. Between 2006 and 2011, Iran was the most crucial oil supplier to Greece; in 2011, Iran ranked 7th in the Greek economy's importers list(Ibid). Chaffin and Blitz(2012) stated, "Iran supplied crude to Greece on highly favourable terms that would have been difficult to match elsewhere." Greek refiners could pay Iran 60 days after receiving shipments. Soteris Roussos(2017, 109) argued that Iran kept the possibility of Greece as a "corridor ... to re-enter the European market" if sanctions were lifted. However, this relationship was hampered by the 2012 oil embargo placed on Iran by the EU(Chaffin & Blitz 2012). Even though Greece pushed back, it could only secure a longer transition period.

Greece's relationship with the Gulf monarchies was friendly but lacked substance. Trade and FDI between the GCC and Greece were negligible.¹⁶⁶ The notable exception was the investments of the Saudi Olayan group, which shifted much of its business from Beirut to Athens since the onset of the Lebanese civil war(Dokas 2014). Olayan has invested in Greek bottler Coca-Cola HBC, Vivartia and most recently in Costa Navarino(Ibid). Vivartia, in particular, has expanded its production of juices, teas, dairy and baking products to the UAE(Ibid). Lubna Olayan also serves as the chair of the Saudi-Greek Business Council(Saudi General Authority of Foreign Trade).

Greece began to take a proactive role in the Gulf with the coming of the Greek crisis. Greece needed to boost exports and FDI, and the GCC states were viewed as an untapped resource. PM Papandreou had met with Qatar and UAE officials to increase investments, and his government concluded double taxation treaties with Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In 2010, he enlisted his brother, Nikos Papandreou, as an envoy to offer 75% of the Scaramanga shipyards to the UAE-based Abu Dhabi Mar and to promote the Liquefied Petroleum Gas project in Astakos to the Qataris(Huliaras & Kalantzakos 2017, 68). Both attempts were unsuccessful.

Under Antonis Samaras' tenure, these efforts continued without tangible results. The participation of the UAE firm Al Maabar International Investment in the Hellenikon project in

¹⁶⁶ The exception here are the years 2006 and 2009 when the inward FDI from the UAE reached 394 and 108 million euros respectively(Bank of Greece 2023).

a consortium headed by Latsis Group was announced in 2014 but was officially withdrawn in 2019(Kimpouropoulos 2020). Beyond the involvement of the Olayan group in Costa Navarino, mentioned above, the other notable transaction was Kuwait's Al Ahli Bank takeover of Piraeus Bank's unit in Egypt for \$150 million. Notable moves include the signing of a double taxation treaty with the UAE(Al Ahli Bank Kuwait 2015).

Despite many promising exchanges between Greek and GCC officials, the investments were negligible overall. According to Huliaras and Kalantzakos(2017, 68), “general investment pledges by GCC countries to Greece have largely failed to materialize because of planning inconsistencies in Greece that have led to over-expectations and unfulfilled promises to investors”. The Ministries of Economy, Infrastructure, Maritime Affairs and Tourism continued to maintain the responsibility for attracting foreign direct investment in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs(Ibid, 70). This fragmentation of government bureaucracy was challenging to navigate on the part of the investor and complicated the brokering of deals.

Meanwhile, Greek construction firms maintained a presence primarily as subcontractors in infrastructure projects. J&P had a long-standing presence in the Gulf, while Ellaktor was prompted towards the region by the crisis. However, both Gulf businesses went sideways, pushing Ellaktor into crisis mode and J&P to bankruptcy and a buyout(Antoniou 2018).¹⁶⁷

The government of Alexis Tsipras also sought to foster closer partnerships with Gulf states. The economic facet remained prominent under SYRIZA despite a growing strategic component.¹⁶⁸ FM Kotzias visited the UAE in March 2015 to strengthen bilateral relations. Kotzias was able to further Greece's relations with the UAE, which was present in all the Rhodes conference summits. Furthermore, the UAE and Greece conducted joint military exercises that brought them together with the Israeli Defense Forces(Gross 2017). This was the first time Israeli and UAE forces trained together and highlighted Greece's role as an enabler of the US strategy that culminated in the Abraham Accords.

Greek foreign policy was not only courting the GCC but was also proactive in reestablishing its relationship with Iran. The two states remained on good terms despite the overall framework imposed on Greek-Iran relations by EU and US sanctions. The JCPOA

¹⁶⁷ The firm had severe financial problems which led to the company being completely absorbed in 2019 was absorbed by the Greek construction company AVAX Group, a former business partner that had already been absorbing parts of Joannou & Paraskevaïdis.

¹⁶⁸ See chapter 6.

breakthrough provided an opportunity for SYRIZA's government to reengage Iran (Interviewee 2). The visit of the Greek prime minister, Tsipras, to Tehran on 8 February 2016 sought to reactivate this strategic relationship between Iran and Greece (Stamouli 2016). Soteris Roussos (2017, 110), an academic linked to SYRIZA, argued that Greece's courting of Iran was part of a "*balancing approach* to the Eastern Mediterranean [that] believes the most important antagonist to Türkiye for hegemony in the region is not Israel but Iran". However, the electoral victory of Donald Trump and the US withdrawal from the JCPOA stopped the Greek FPE's efforts. Tsipras' Iranian policy was pertinent to US approval. Once that approval was gone, there was also an end to the policy. As in 2002, the end of Greek engagement with Iran did not sour the climate in their relationship.

From the turn of the century up until 2019, there was a growing engagement of Greek foreign policy with the Gulf. The Greek FPE initially took a more active interest in the Gulf once an economic recession struck the country. The area was seen as a prime location for FDI due to the traditionally close relationship of Greece with the Arab world and the prominent relationship of certain Greek businessmen with royal families in the region (Crowe 2003). The consequences of the Arab Spring Uprisings, outlined in Chapter 6, had pitted the UAE and Saudi Arabia against Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Gulf. This created an opportunity for the Greek FPE, especially under Tsipras, to add another facet to Greece's deepening relations with these two states. Furthermore, under Tsipras' Greek foreign policy sought to project an image of a constructive player to elevate Greece's status. Simultaneously, the perception of the Greek FPE that Greece would benefit if it aided US strategy in the region was influential, with Greek foreign policy calibrating according to the needs of US foreign policy. Again, status-seeking was a crucial factor. Nonetheless, until 2019, neither the strategic nor the economic aspirations Greek foreign policy had for the Gulf had materialised.

A more assertive Gulf Policy: Patriots, investments, and the US factor

While the SYRIZA administration had deepened its relations with the UAE and, to a lesser extent, with Saudi Arabia, it never jeopardised its relations with Iran. Katrougkalos (2022) argued that Greece sought to be a "bridge" between the EU and the Gulf and did not seek to take part in the unfolding Sunni-Shia antagonism. The incoming Mitsotakis administration did not share this view. Mitsotakis took unprecedented measures by choosing sides in the Shia-Sunni antagonism. The target of the Greek FPE was to strengthen its status in Washington by supporting its regional allies, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Greece

was partnering with two economic powerhouses, heightening the chances of increased trade and investments from these two states in the Greek economy.

As outlined above, Greece was facing a belligerent Türkiye at that point, and all the aforementioned states had problematic and conflictual relationships with Türkiye to some extent. For the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the Turkish foreign policy after the Arab Uprisings threatened their interests.¹⁶⁹ Türkiye's intervention on the side of the GNA government in Libya in 2020 led to further alignment between the UAE and Greek threat perceptions vis-à-vis Türkiye (Ghafar 2021). Although it was less invested in the Libyan civil war, Saudi Arabia was still alarmed by Turkish foreign policy, which aimed at leading the Muslim world (Ibid; Venetis 2014).

In the case of the UAE, the two states were already enjoying cordial cooperation that extended to security, which was deepened under Tsipras' tenure. In August 2020, the UAE positioned four F-16 fighter jets on the island of Crete in response to the rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean (Al-Monitor 2020). In November 2020, the two states signed a foreign policy and defence agreement and throughout 2021 and 2022, their militaries participated in joint military drills in the Eastern Mediterranean (Idon 2021). Beyond military cooperation, the UAE and Greece also increased their economic cooperation. The volume of non-oil bilateral trade increased by 29% between 2019 and 2021. FDI inflows from the UAE rose from 26 million euros to 68 million euros between 2019 and 2022 (Bank of Greece 2023).

In the case of Saudi Arabia, Mitsotakis took a proactive stance. After the attack on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019, Greece deployed a Patriot anti-aircraft missile battery and its crew to Saudi Arabia to guard against future attacks in 2021 (Al-Monitor 2021). This was the first military deployment of Greek forces in the Gulf. This was only the beginning of the military cooperation between the two sides. The air forces of the two states took part in the "Falcon Eye 1" exercise at the Souda Air Force Base in Greece. The Greek PM also supported the US decision to assassinate General Qasim Soleimani in another move highlighting Athens' alignment with Riyadh and Washington DC. Both moves were essential to Greek status-seeking policy towards the Gulf and the US.

In economic cooperation, there were essential deals between the two states and private actors in the shipping sector. In December 2021, Greece and Saudi Arabia agreed to develop commercial maritime navigation and increase commercial ship traffic (GBO 2021). In

¹⁶⁹ See chapter 6.

August 2022, the Saudi state-owned firm Bahri, responsible for shipping Saudi Arabia's oil and gas, signed two initial agreements with Greek maritime firms Dynacom and SeaTraders(Arab News 2022). The agreements will enhance the firms' capacity, establishing avenues to transfer technology and services between the three firms(Ibid). Greece and Saudi Arabia also agreed on constructing a data cable linking Europe with Asia(Reuters 2022a). Greece was the first trip to Europe of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman since the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. Bin Salman arrived in Athens on 22 July 2022. His lavish reception and included the signing of 17 bilateral agreements(Smith 2022). The trip was vital in rehabilitating bin Salman in Western capitals following the outcry after Khashoggi's murder, proving Greece's status as a reliable EU partner for Saudi Arabia.

Apart from the bilateral level, Greece sought to cultivate relations on a multilateral level as well. In April 2021, Greece and the GCC signed a memorandum of understanding touching political, economic, and cultural relations(Aluwaisheg 2021). The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense signed the deal on the part of Greece and the General Secretary of the GCC. Greece also organised the "Philia" forum in 2021 that brought together Cyprus, France, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE(Grigoriadis & Tsourapas 2022). The official announcement states it will seek to foster friendship and cooperation among the participating states(HMFA 2021). One could argue that the forum based on the membership comprises actors that view Türkiye as hostile.

Under Mitsotakis, Greece has made inroads in its relationship with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the GCC. Naturally, this created tension with Iran, as outlined above. Nonetheless, Greece has been able to count itself as a reliable US ally, potentially leading to critical economic benefits for Greece in the form of increased trade and FDI with the GCC. Nonetheless, until now, the GCC and the Gulf remain a tiny part of the overall FDI inflows to the country(Bank of Greece 2023). In 2022, the Gulf region contributed only 100 million euros of FDI to the Greek economy out of 7,221 billion euros(Ibid). Trade between the GCC and Greece is also negligible(GCC Stat 2022). Mitsotakis has taken some decisions centralised decision-making on economic diplomacy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ending the fragmentation of previous years. Konstantinos Fragkogiannis took the novel post of Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs for Economic Diplomacy, and so far, the results are positive. The Greek economy's FDI inflows increased from 4,484 billion euros in 2019 to 7,221 billion euros in 2022. It remains to be seen if similar feats can be achieved in the Gulf(Bank of Greece 2023). Finally, Greece's relationship with the UAE and Saudi Arabia was enabled by the animosity

of these two states with Türkiye. There are signs that the UAE and Saudi Arabia are in the process of rapprochement with Türkiye. Hence, it is important to see whether Greece's Gulf diplomacy can have a lasting impact (Coskun 2023).

8.4. Hypothesis Testing

The final section seeks to test the two hypotheses outlined in Chapter 4:

H1: NcR's top-down logic will work in the immediate geographic area of the small state. Systemic threats and opportunities act as the independent variable. They prescribe optimal foreign policy choices and the limits the FPE has to operate. Systemic threats and opportunities should be the main drivers of foreign policy. Domestic variables – the FPE's perception and the political economy - act as intervening variables filtering systemic inputs into foreign policy outcomes. If domestic variables take the driving seat, then the foreign policy outcome will be suboptimal.

H2: NcR's top-down logic does not apply in other geographic spaces because systemic threats and opportunities are absent. In these cases, domestic variables drive foreign policy and act as independent variables.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece faced a clear threat from Türkiye. Based on the military power parity between Greece and Türkiye, the Greek FPE could opt for a hard-balancing strategy. Despite the détente of the early days, the Greek FPE's perception of Türkiye as a potential enemy remained unchanged due to the unresolved issues in the Aegean and Cyprus. An increasingly assertive Turkish foreign policy, which was viewed as revisionist and hostile in Athens after the Arab Uprisings, only heightened the threat perception of the Greek FPE. In short, there was an alignment between the perception of the FPE and the optimal foreign policy prescribed by the independent variable. This alignment did not change even when the Greek FPE faced immense pressure during the economic crisis.

During this period, the Greek political economy developments were the most influential on Greece's foreign policy. The drastic shrinking of the Greek GDP due to the economic crisis took a toll on Greece's defence expenditure. Until 2009, Greece maintained relative parity with Türkiye in defence expenditure, but from 2010 onwards, the gap increased. Türkiye's defence was roughly twice the size of Greek defence expenditure by 2012, and between 2018 and 2020, Türkiye spent more than three times what Greece spent on defence.

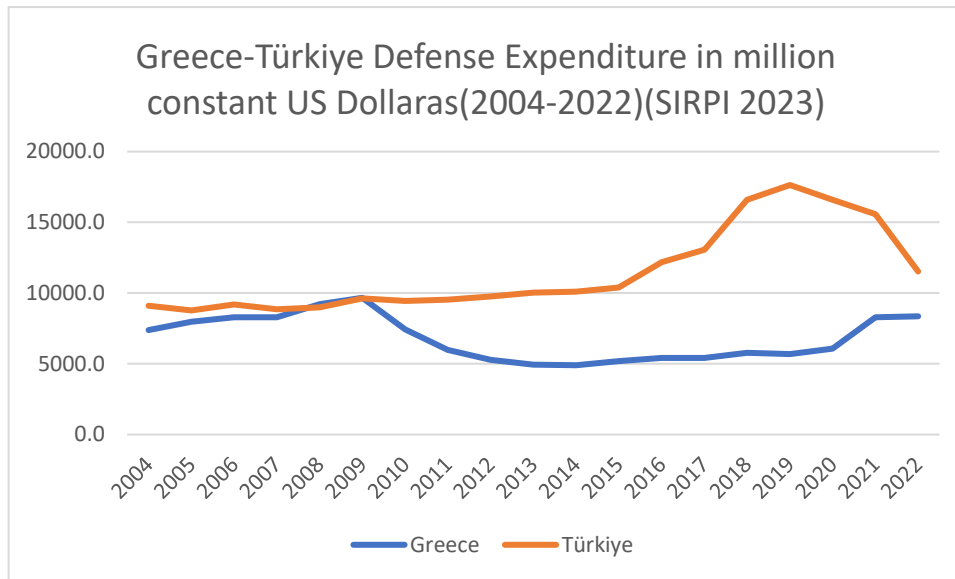


Figure 5 Greece-Türkiye Defense Expenditure in million Constant US Dollars(2004-2022)

If economic considerations were powerful enough, we would expect the Greek FPE to approach Türkiye to ease tensions in the Aegean by accepting President Erdogan’s call to revise the Lausanne Treaty. This would consist of a reversal from a complex balancing to a bandwagoning strategy, thus, a suboptimal foreign policy response. This would allow the Greek FPE to lessen defence expenditure further and redirect funds and resources elsewhere. Despite the pressure, none of the governments considered going down this path. Even the left-wing SYRIZA administration, once it could, signed a deal with the US for approximately \$2.4 billion to upgrade Greek its F-16 in 2017(Mehta 2017).

The Greek FPE had a unified threat perception across time vis-à-vis Türkiye. Despite the pressure exerted on the Greek military by the economic crisis, the Greek FPE maintained adequate defence expenditure for adequate deterrence. Nonetheless, the state of the Greek economy meant Greece’s balancing response. The political economy variable was a moderating factor because it affected the intensity of Greece’s balancing strategy and its ability to fulfil it optimally. In short, it can account for the limitations of the Greek strategy. Once these limitations were gradually lifted after 2017, the potency of Greece’s hard balancing returned with arms acquisitions and the defence pact with France.

Establishing trilateral partnerships with Israel and Egypt and the increased cooperation with the UAE and Saudi Arabia provided a soft balancing facet to Greece’s strategy that sought to cover for the limitations described above in two ways. Firstly, it created alignments with regional states that shared, to an extent, the same threat perception with Greece on Türkiye.

Secondly, it was centred on hydrocarbon exploration that could transform Greece into a transit hub connecting these energy resources to the EU. Greece would reap economic and strategic benefits. However, the latter plan has not materialised yet. A secondary and interconnected component of Greek foreign policy was its status-seeking foreign policy, which aimed to gather support for Greek positions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU and, more importantly, France and the US. The perception of the Greek FPE drove this policy, which was also influenced by structural developments like the level of Türkiye's threat, its relationship with Israel and Egypt, and US and French strategic posture in the region.

Therefore, the independent variable was the key driver of Greek foreign policy with the economy, with the two intervening variables either enabling the optimal strategy, in the case of the FPE's perception or not being capable of, in the case of the political economy. Hence, H1 rather than H2 can explain Greece's foreign policy options in the Eastern Mediterranean.

8.4.2. The Gulf

Unlike the Eastern Mediterranean, no clear threat emanated from the Gulf. The balance of threat – the independent variable – did not provide any input for the Greek FPE. Therefore, there was no optimal foreign policy strategy dictated by systemic imperatives. As a result, we see the two domestic-level variables – the FPE's perception and the political economy – to take charge and act as independent variables.

Greek foreign policy took an interest in the Gulf in the early 2010s. This coincided with the onset of the economic crisis. Hence, the political economy here plays its part via the financial necessities faced a nearly bankrupt country. Greece needed new export markets and, notably, FDI that could boost the country's economy, increase innovation, and create new jobs. The Gulf's wealthy monarchies were an untapped source of economic potential. Importantly Greek businesses already had important and historic relations with the region involved in shipping and construction. Although these economic interests centred on the Greek ship-owning elite have benefited from government policy, as outlined above, the literature does not indicate whether they pushed Greece towards the Gulf.

Beyond the structural necessities of the Greek economy, these strong and historic business links established by Greek shipowners with the monarchies played a part in the Greek FPE's decision to target the Gulf. The viewpoint in Athens was that these deep relations that Greek shipowners had in the region could be harnessed to benefit the Greek economy. Moreover, the Greek FPE's long-standing beliefs that friendship with the Arab World could

lead to investments and financial benefits for Greece influenced the Greek FPE's push in the region. Despite lacking engagement with the region, Greece maintained cordial relations with the GCC and Iran. This fact reinforced the perception that the GCC and Iran could become critical economic partners for Greece. Hence, the Greek FPE's perception was important in this period.

Apart from the economic facet in the Greek FPE's perception of the region from 2016 onwards, there was a growing strategic element in the thinking of Greek foreign policymakers. This perception was based on two pillars. The first was the US factor. Both Tsipras and Mitsotakis increasingly looked to gain the favour of Washington, aligning Greek and US interests in the region. In the case of Tsipras, this was viewed in the openings towards the UAE and, importantly, towards Iran in the context of the JCPOA. In the case of Mitsotakis, this meant breaking with neutrality in the Shia-Sunni antagonism and firmly siding with Saudi Arabia vis-à-vis Iran in the context of Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign. The second pillar was connected to the Greek FPE's long-standing belief across all administrations since the turn of the century that Greece could become an energy hub connecting the energy flows from Asia and the Middle East to Europe. This perception was a factor in the warming up of Greek-Iranian relations between 2015 and 2017. All these were linked to Greece's efforts to increase its status in Washington.

The increased entanglement of Emirati and Saudi foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean helped Greece to deepen its relations with both states. Türkiye's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Gulf increasingly aligned with the threat perceptions of Athens, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi. The security cooperation, however, was not centred on the Gulf but primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is illustrated by the fact that all joint military drills between the HAF and its Saudi and Emirati counterparts occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean and not in the Gulf.

Overall, until the advent of Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece's economic necessities and the perception of the Greek FPE were the main drivers of Greece's Gulf policy. Hence, between 2004 and 2019, H2 rather than H1 holds water. Under Mitsotakis, I argue that H2 is more valuable in explaining Greek foreign policy despite the increased security cooperation between Greece and Saudi Arabia. This cooperation took place primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean theatre and was driven by the balance of threat in the sub-region and the conditions created by the Arab Uprisings. The exception here is a Greek Patriot battery deployment in Saudi Arabia. However, Greece agreed to the deployment not because it felt threatened by Iran. Instead, its

relations with Iran soured after the decision to deploy the battery. The driving force behind the decision was the Greek FPE's perception that it needed to completely align its foreign policy with US strategy if it would increase its status. By aligning its Gulf policy with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the Greek FPE sought to aggrandise its status with both states, proving its reliability as a partner. By doing so, the Greek FPE hoped this support would translate into economic cooperation and FDI in the recovering Greek economy.

8.5. Conclusion

Between 2004 and 2022, Greece gradually rediscovered the Middle East. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Greek foreign policy went beyond the Aegean dispute and the Cyprus Problem. The Arab Spring Uprisings, the discovery of hydrocarbons and Türkiye's assertive foreign policy under the AKP created threats and opportunities, prompting successive Greek governments to elevate the Eastern Mediterranean into a strategic priority. The main goal of Greek foreign policy was to counter the threat from Türkiye, which was increasingly becoming more belligerent. Given Greece's military power, a balancing strategy was optimal. The backbone of this balancing strategy was based on hard balancing measures that sought to maintain a balance of power in the Aegean despite the adverse effects of the economic crisis. Once the Greek FPE had greater fiscal room under Mitsotakis, substantial investments were made to create a favourable balance over the Aegean, allowing Greece to project power across the Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek FPE also concluded alliance agreements with the UAE and France. This strategy was combined with soft elements like establishing trilateral strategic partnerships with Israel and Egypt. H1 and NcR rise to the challenge of explaining Greek foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece's immediate strategic environment.

This balancing strategy went hand in hand with a status-seeking foreign policy directed at three levels influenced by systemic factors and primarily by the perception of the Greek FPE. Firstly, it sought to establish itself as a reliable and influential state within the Middle East, utilising its EU membership. The Greek FPE attempted to become a bridge between the region and the EU to elevate its status within the Middle East. Secondly, Greece attempted to elevate its status in Washington as a reliable US ally in the Eastern Mediterranean. This second element was connected to the growing perception of US foreign policymakers that Türkiye was an unreliable ally. Greece sought to exploit Türkiye's stance and gain the US favour in their rivalry. Thirdly, Greece's status-seeking was targeted at France. Greece sought to gain France's support vis-à-vis Türkiye, exploiting France's power projection in the Eastern Mediterranean. By elevating status in the eyes of France, the Greek FPE was also gaining an important ally

within the EU, and it was also highlighting its capacity to play a leading role in the development of the CFSP and the CSDP.

Greek foreign policy during this period developed a Gulf component for the first time. The economic recession prompted Greek foreign policymakers to engage with the region to attract FDI and increase trade between Greece and the area. Furthermore, the Greek FPE's perception of the Gulf as a region ripe for Greek economic diplomacy resulted from the region's economic potential, the cordial relations Greece maintained with the GCC and Iran, and the established Greek business presence in the region. The economic component of these relations has not yet developed to the level aspired by the Greek FPE despite being the main driver behind Greece's Gulf policy.

By 2022, Greece managed to deepen its ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia on a strategic level due to an alignment of their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece's proactive stance in the Sunni-Shia antagonism in the region under Mitsotakis proved critical in creating further impetus in these relationships. Importantly, Greece's foreign policy in the Gulf was linked to the status-seeking strategy described above. Greek foreign policy highlighted its utility as an agent within the EU that could represent Emirati and Saudi interests and, through its steadfast opposition to Iran post-2019. Greece's stance and its support to US policy in the region, was an attempt by Greek foreign policy makers to elevate their status in Washington. Overall, the political economy and the perception of the FPE are driving Greece's Gulf policy in the absence of a threat in the region. Hence, H2 prevails over H1, highlighting the applicability of the theory set out in Chapter 4 on the two case studies.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to test NcR's explanatory limits on small states using Greek and Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East between 2004 and 2022. The research design was based on a deductive process-tracing approach. The puzzle and research question driving the thesis was “What are the explanatory limits of NcR when applied to small states?.” The project tested NcR's top-down methodology on the two case studies, highlighting that the theory can explain small-state foreign policy up to a certain point. Beyond that point, an *Innenpolitik* approach is needed, with geography playing the defining role in explaining the limits of NcR on small states. Applying the theory developed in Chapter 4 to the two case studies enabled an in-depth account of the drivers and outcomes of Greek and Cypriot foreign policies in the Middle East between 2004 and 2022. In the following pages, I will take stock of the critical arguments and the theoretical and empirical contributions and finish with the limitations of this thesis, which open the possibility of further research in both empirical and theoretical terms.

9.1. Theoretical Contribution

The main theoretical contributions of this project are two. The first is testing NcR's explanatory scope on small states and the second is developing an NcR-inspired theory capable of explaining small-state foreign policy.

The thesis begins with the assertion that most international states are neither Middle nor Great powers. Therefore, small states provide an important testing ground for NcR's utility as a theoretical framework. This thesis aimed to test NcR's top-down causal mechanism on small states and explore its limits. If those limits were reached, it would seek to account for the factors driving small-state foreign policy beyond these limits. To do so, in Chapter 4, I theorised the connection between NcR and small states, outlining an NcR-inspired framework to explain small-state foreign policy. This provided an interconnection between NcR and the literature on small states' foreign policy, especially the part of the literature that seeks to outline security and economic vulnerabilities and strategies to overcome them.

The two Hypotheses formulated in the Introduction, further elaborated in Chapter 4 were designed and articulated to pit NcR's top-down causal mechanism against a bottom-up *Innenpolitik* causal mechanism. As the case studies illustrate, geography and distance play an important role in determining whether NcR's top-down methodology is useful in explaining small-state foreign policy. A small state rarely must deal with threats outside its immediate geographic environment at a sub-regional level. In that environment, NcR's top-down approach

works. Both Greece and Cyprus' policies in the Eastern Mediterranean viewed Türkiye's threat as the starting point of their foreign policy. The intervening variables moderated their foreign policy choices, but they did not drive it, except in Cyprus, between 2017 and 2022. Here, despite the clarity of the Turkish threat, the Cypriot FPE disregarded systemic inputs and paid greater attention to internal developments linked to Cyprus' political economy. Specifically, to the preferences of economic interests connected to the Cypriot business model that also affected Anastasiades' re-election. The foreign policy outcome was suboptimal, as expected by NcR and H1, illustrated by the complete inability of the Cypriot FPE to progress with its hydrocarbon discovery program and edge closer to a solution of the Cyprus Problem. Instead, Cyprus' position deteriorated concerning these interests. In short, NcR is a useful for the foreign policy of small states when they are faced with a threat, which is much more likely to exist in their immediate geographic environment.

When Greek and Cypriot foreign policies were directed outside their immediate geographic environment, the impact of the independent variable was limited. In their Gulf policy, the drivers were not linked to a threat from the region. While Türkiye's threat in the Eastern Mediterranean was a factor, it was subservient to economic and diplomatic considerations. In economic terms, both states sought to attract FDI and trade from the Gulf. In diplomatic terms, they pursued a status-seeking foreign policy which shared some commonalities. Both states aimed at becoming a “bridge” linking the Gulf and the EU. There were some differences since Greece, especially under Mitsotakis, firmly positioned itself with the Saudis against Iran, providing military support, thus tarnishing Greece's long-standing ties with Iran. Mitsotakis' policy sought to bolster Greece's status as a reliable US ally. In the case of Cyprus, status-seeking foreign policy developed out of Cyprus' “traditional” anti-secessionist foreign policy, which sought to prevent any international recognition of the 'TRNC' that initially drove Cyprus' involvement in the Gulf. The intervening variables within the NcR's top-down framework – the FPE's perception and the political economy – were able to account for these foreign policy choices in both cases, transforming into independent variables in the absence of a systemic threat.

Finally, the framework outlined in Chapter 4 can be applied to and tested in other case studies that fit the criteria of smallness outlined in Chapter 2. Therefore, it can serve as a starting point for anyone seeking to explain the foreign policy of a small state. Moreover, the theory can also be used in a policy-prescriptive manner since it outlines what factors should be considered by a small state's FPE when seeking to understand its position at the sub-regional,

regional, and international levels. Based on this position outlined by the independent variable, a small state's FPE can determine whether it faces any threats. Depending on the threat level, it can enact various strategies outlined in the dependent variable section. The important advantage of the framework is that it can offer a holistic approach to a small state's foreign policy rather than treat small state foreign policy as a series of asymmetries disconnected from one another. Simultaneously, it offers a constructive critique of Realist approaches that have only looked at security when treating small states without acknowledging their economic vulnerabilities – an essential component in the calculus of any small-state FPE. In this respect, the work follows the call by Thomas Juneau(2023) that NcR should not simply account for foreign policy choices and their outcomes but outline tools that can help the FPE to make sound decisions. NcR and more broadly FPA should not only seek to account for mistakes but also correct them, according to Juneau.

9.2. Empirical Contribution

The analysis in Chapters 7 and 8 provides important empirical contributions to the study of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy. The case study analysis has provided a comprehensive account of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy drivers in the Middle East. These accounts diverge considerably from existing interpretations related to Greek and Cypriot Middle Eastern policies. Existing analyses of Greek foreign policy related to the Middle East either focus on Greco-Turkish relations or the Middle East without involving Türkiye. To illustrate this, the three works available on Greek foreign policy in the Middle East either do not consider Türkiye as part of the Middle East or include it in their analysis(Athanassopoulou 2010; Rossis 2020; Grigoriadis & Tsourapas 2022). Some works look at aspects of Greece's foreign policy in the Middle East, predominantly its relationship with Israel or focus on the Eastern Mediterranean. Unlike these accounts, the analysis in Chapter 8 incorporates all of these aspects of Greek foreign in the Middle East into a cohesive narrative incorporating Greece's fledgeling Gulf policy that has so far received very little scholarly attention(Athanassopoulou 2010; Rossis 2020; Grigoriadis & Tsourapas 2022).

A similar trend can be traced in the study of Cypriot foreign policy. The study of Cypriot foreign policy has been limited despite some recent important contributions(Tziarras 2019b; Ker-Lindsay 2008). Works that deal with Cypriot foreign policy pay limited attention to the Cyprus Problem(Tziarras 2016; 2019b; 2022; Zachariades & Petrikkos 2020; Christou & Kyris 2017). Moreover, works focused on the Cyprus Problem rarely incorporate Cypriot foreign

policy in their analysis(Ker-Lindsay 2011; Coufoudakis 2006).¹⁷⁰ In the analysis provided, I seek to bridge that gap, drawing a connection between the two, arguing that due to Cyprus' power disparity with Türkiye, it cannot provide a hard-balancing response.

In contrast, due to the existence of the Cyprus Problem, a bandwagoning response would be impossible. In addition, as with Greece, Cyprus' foreign policy in the Middle East has not received a comprehensive account that connects the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus-Türkiye relations, and the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf. Concerning the Gulf, the account offered here is the first in the literature that seeks to account for Cypriot foreign policy in this sub-region of the Middle East.

9.2.1. Greek Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Greek foreign policymakers aimed to counter Türkiye's threat via a hard balancing strategy to maintain the balance of power in the Aegean. The adverse effects of the economic crisis made this task increasingly challenging. Greece's military spending plummeted while Türkiye's armed forces and military industry were modernising. Once the Greek FPE had greater fiscal room under Mitsotakis, Greece embarked on an extensive military modernisation program. Greece established alliances with the UAE and France and deepened its security relations with the US. Greece combined its hard balancing with soft balancing measures like establishing trilateral strategic partnerships with Israel and Egypt.

Greece also pursued a status-seeking foreign policy directed at three levels. The Greek FPE sought to act as a bridge between the Middle East and the EU to elevate its status within both groups. Greece also elevated its status as a reliable US ally in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greek foreign policymakers capitalised on the growing perception among US foreign policymakers that Türkiye was an unreliable ally. Finally, Greece's status-seeking was directed at France, seeking to gain French support vis-à-vis Türkiye, gaining an important ally within the EU, and highlighting Greece's capacity to play a leading role within the CFSP and the CSDP context.

Greek foreign policy was also able to break through in the Gulf. The economic crisis(2009-2018) prompted Greek foreign policymakers to increase their diplomatic involvement, hoping to attract FDI and increase trade between Greece and the area.

¹⁷⁰ The exceptions are the works on counter-secession and works dealing with Cyprus' EU accession pre-2004(Kyris 2012; Theophanous 2004; Joseph 1997)

Nonetheless, economic relations remain limited at the moment of writing and have not yet developed to the level aspired by the Greek FPE. Greece deepened its ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia strategically due to aligning their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Mitsotakis' choice to firmly support Saudi Arabia in its antagonism with Iran created further impetus in Greek Gulf policy. Status-seeking was also prevalent in Greece's Gulf policy and linked to status-seeking in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greek foreign policy highlighted its ability to promote Emirati and Saudi interests in the EU, seeking to increase Greece's standing in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Greece was also a firm supporter of US Gulf policy, attempting to elevate its status in Washington.

9.2.2. Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Despite some successes that allowed Cyprus' foreign policy beyond the “traditional” policy of focusing overtly on the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus has not achieved its objectives. Although Cyprus' FPE aimed to construct military alliances with regional states in the early 2010s when the relations between Türkiye and states like Egypt and Israel turned sour, Cyprus could only construct strategic partnerships in the context of a soft balancing against Türkiye. Cyprus has so far been unable to exploit its hydrocarbons due to poor strategic choices and Türkiye's belligerence. Cyprus also missed significant opportunities to act as the link between the EU and the region, particularly in connection to the Syrian civil war, hampering its attempt to aggrandise its status as a link between the Middle East and the EU.

In the Gulf, Cyprus established a foothold despite its minimal presence pre-2004. In doing so, Cyprus hoped to gain partners within the Gulf to boost its anti-secessionist foreign policy in the OIC. Building on this, Cyprus sought to deepen its relations with Gulf states in the emerging anti-Türkiye camp in the aftermath of the Arab Spring Uprisings. Cyprus's FPE hoped to increase FDI from the Persian Gulf towards Cyprus's economy. Despite some minor success, FDI from the Gulf do not constitute a primary source of investment in the Cypriot economy. Overall, Cyprus has deepened its relations with all Persian Gulf monarchies without disturbing its relationship with Iran. Cyprus's foreign policy has gained support within the GCC ranks vis-à-vis Türkiye and the 'TRNC'. Despite some positive developments, there has been very little economic cooperation.

9.3. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

It is important to acknowledge that this study has certain limitations that open up the future research pathway. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 4 has only been applied

to the two case studies. Therefore, the framework's applicability on small states must be tested on other cases. Despite their size differences, Greece and Cyprus share important similarities – EU membership, common language, and common regional challenges. Therefore, the theoretical framework must be tested on other cases that do not share these common characteristics. For instance, does it apply to small island states in the Caribbean or the South Pacific which prioritise climate diplomacy in their foreign policy? Is it helpful to explain the foreign policies of small states in other geographical regions like Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, or Latin America? Answering these questions will test the framework's analytical capacity, enabling the refinement of the theory and testing the key theoretical argument regarding NcR's scope condition when applied to small states.

Empirically, certain aspects of Greek foreign policy in the Gulf can be further elucidated with more targeted research on the Greek shipowners. Based on the available data, Greek shipowners have especially played a role in Greece's economic diplomacy with the GCC and the Saudi monarchy. Nonetheless, at this point, we cannot establish the direction of causality. Simply put, was the Greek state spearheading the effort, or was it the shipowners utilising their position of economic and political power to push the Greek FPE in that direction? To answer the question, the researcher would need to go beyond the politicians, and unfortunately, the pressing time frame of the Ph.D., in conjunction with the challenges of conducting research during the pandemic and just before an electoral campaign, has not allowed me to conduct interviews with a broader range of political actors and with Greek shipowners. Notably, there is very little work on the interconnection between Greek foreign policy and economic interests, more importantly, the Greek shipowners. This thesis has shown that more work is needed down this avenue.

Despite these limitations, this thesis has contributed to the study of small-state foreign policy, the connection between NcR and small states and elucidated the limits of NcR's when applied to small-state foreign policy. In empirical terms, the thesis has offered comprehensive accounts of Greek and Cypriot foreign policy in the Middle East since the turn of the century, articulating the drivers behind these policies and their outcomes.

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ANNEX: QUESTIONS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

These were the standardised questions used in the semi-structured interviews. On most occasions a series of follow-up questions ensued which were based on the answers of the interviewee, in line with the semi-structured method. As indicated below certain questions were slightly rephrased depending on the capacity of the interviewee.

General Questions

- 1) What are the main pillars of Greek/Cypriot Foreign Policy?
- 2) How important is the Middle East for Greek/Cypriot Foreign Policy?
 - a. What are the aims Greek/Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean?
 - b. What are the aims Greek/Cypriot Foreign Policy in the Gulf?
- 3) What was the impact of the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arab Spring on Greek/Cypriot foreign policy making?
- 4) Did the economic crisis have an impact on the country's foreign policy? If so, in what way?

Questions to politicians

- 5) Is there a difference in the process of foreign policy decision-making in your government compared to the previous or subsequent governments? If so, in what way?
- 6) Did the ruling party(parties) have a strong influence on the executive regarding foreign policy making?

Questions to diplomats and analysts

- 7) To what extent there is change or continuity in the foreign policy decision making process of Greek/Cypriot governments?