KINNAIRD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, LAHORE

ANALYSIS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (2014-2022)

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ANALYSIS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (2014-2022)

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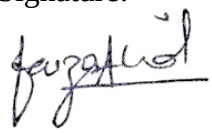

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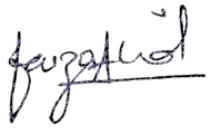

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ABSTRACT

Since the founding of the republic in 1923, Turkish foreign policy has transformed considerably. The logic of interdependence, which constituted a driving force for AKP foreign policy during its first decade of rule, has been replaced with a quest for strategic autonomy characterized by coerciveness and unilateralism. In 2016, Ankara entered into a new phase of strategic orientation, indicating the spirit of the Blue Homeland doctrine. It is a concept that expresses Turkey's maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, a distinct geopolitical space with immense geopolitical and geo-economic significance. This research summarizes Turkish foreign policy literature and proposes a formal model of Erdogan's decision-making process between 2014 and 2022. The significance of this research is that it presents a holistic decision matrix by integrating multi-level variables and analyzing their utility across economic, political, and military dimensions to explain the shifting nature of Turkish foreign policy. On the domestic level, the blue homeland doctrine represents Erdogan's vision of a "New Turkey" based on an inflated self-identity; moreover, it is used as legitimizing discourse to mobilize the electoral support base at home. On the external front, Turkey's drift away from the west along with the formation of alliances amongst regional and extra-regional players in the Eastern Mediterranean has promoted Ankara to deconstruct the regional state of affairs to its advantage. The methodology of this research is qualitative. Geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean has contributed to instability in the region which undermines the economic potential of hydrocarbon resources. Moreover, it has isolated Turkey on the international stage and generated new forms of dependencies for the state, prompting Erdogan to re-evaluate its policy of precious loneliness.

Keywords: Foreign policy, Strategic Autonomy, Strategic depth, Blue Homeland, Poliheuristic Theory, Justice and Development Party (AKP)

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List of Abbreviations

AIP- Air Independent Propulsion

AKP- Justice and Development Party

AIIB- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

ASW- Anti-Submarine Warfare

BRI- Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

EEZ- Exclusive Economic Zone

EIB- European Investment Bank

EMFG- Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum

EU- European Union

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

FPA- Foreign Policy Analysis

FPDM- Foreign Policy Decision Making

GCC- Gulf Cooperation Council

GNA- Government of National Accord

IMF- International Monetary Fund

KRP- Kurdistan Regional Government

LNG- Liquefied Natural Gas

LON- League of Nations

MENA- Middle East and North Africa

MFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MNCs- Multinational Corporations

MOU- Memorandum of Understanding

NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization

PKK- Kurdish separatist movement

PYD- Democratic Union Party (PYD)

RoC- Republic of Cyprus

SCO- Shanghai Cooperation Organization

SLOC- Sea Lanes of Communications

SSB- Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries

TANAP- Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline

TFSP- Turkish foreign and security policy

TPAO- Turkish Petroleum Cooperation

TRNC- Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

UAVs- Unmanned Ariel Vehicles

UNCLOS- United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy decision-making is believed to be one the greatest instrument of statecraft to attain national goals and acquire a rightful place among the comity of nations. In the contemporary era, president Erdogan's sway over the political process in Ankara has reached a dramatic level; Erdogan has engineered an assertive shift in foreign policy that emphasizes on state's diplomatic and military clout. Structural variables, such as the state's perception of constraint and opportunities and national image, as well as conjectural variables, that are subject to shift in international power balance play a significant role in Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey, a state having the second largest army within NATO, has always remained the vanguard of strategic debate within its immediate neighborhood, extending from Balkan to the Caucasus and Greater Mediterranean to the Middle Eastern region. The geopolitical vision of the Turkish foreign policy has considerably evolved since the founding of the state in 1923 in the aftermath of the national war of independence. From 1923-1938, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk undertook a series of revolutionary reforms to modernize Turkey in line with Western standards. During the Cold War era, Turkey's strategic orientation favored the American-led capitalist camp; therefore, with the exception of a few cases of raptures between Turkey and the West, including the Cyprus crises in 1974, and military coups in 1960 and 1980, the state was regarded as an essential part of Western security architecture. However, with a radical transformation in the global security paradigm in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the debates surrounding the Clash of Civilization thesis between Islam and the West, a new period of strategic attachment was unleashed.

From 2002 onwards, the doctrine of 'strategic depth' became a significant component of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) foreign policy. The doctrine offered valuable probabilities to Ankara in maintaining across the wider Muslim world. To promote this geostrategic vision, Ahmet Davutoğlu propagated the policy of 'Zero problems with the neighbors.' While initially, many appreciated the policy, it proved to be a failure in the wake of the transforming nature of realpolitik and found itself with 'precious loneliness' within the international system. In 2016, Turkey entered in a new phase of strategic positioning, reflecting the spirit of *Mavi vatan* or the Blue Homeland Doctrine, a term widely used to express Turkey's maritime stakes in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Simultaneously, Erdogan's foreign policy has adopted a more aggressive and militarized tone. There are several factors that contributed to Ankara's quest for greater strategic autonomy, including an increasingly multipolar world, deterioration of Turkey's Europeanization agenda, growing ties with Russia and China, and an increase in Ankara's material capabilities.

The Eastern Mediterranean region has always remained the hub of significant political and cultural developments, dense migration, and a hotspot of international relations. The Discovery of hydrocarbon resources off the course of Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt, and Turkey's rising posture under the AKP government has given rise to a geopolitical space defined by three dynamics: Firstly, the determination of maritime boundaries according to the desires of regional actors. Secondly, extraction of energy resources and their delivery to the markets. Thirdly, the protection of the state's existing sphere of influence and the desire to enhance it amid the regional and international power struggle. These three factors are closely interrelated; therefore, a change in one has the probability to impact the other.

The inter-state rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean have altered the regional balance of power; Cyprus-Greece-Israel and Cyprus-Egypt-Greece have formulated alliances to balance against the Turkish threat. Turkey has carried out various attempts to engage in a reconciliatory process with Israel in terms of energy cooperation; both states have the potential to deliver Israel's natural gas to Europe in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Turkish diplomatic gestures seem improbable to convince Tel Aviv to culminate a comprehensive deal that could barricade the rights of Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean. The ramifications of the Eastern Mediterranean conundrum go beyond the regional parameters. Turkey's issues with Israel and Cyprus are highly dependent on its relationship with the USA, a staunch Israel ally, and the European Union (EU), the whose member nation is Cyprus.

This research employs the framework of the Poliheuristic theory of decision-making to analyze the strategic reorientation of Erdogan's foreign policy. Poliheuristic theory, postulated by Alex Mintz, is among the leading theoretical attempts to bridge the divide between rationalists and cognitivist; the difference emanates from a two-stage decision-making process. In the first stage, the leader rejects alternatives that are unacceptable on vital dimensions. In the second stage, the leader selects an alternative from the subset of remaining options while maximizing gains and minimizing costs.

This research argues that various domestic and external factors are driving Erdogan's strategic reorientation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Ankara's internal politics are facing political, religious, and ethno-nationalist fragmentation; moreover, as the economy faces a severe economic downturn, Erdogan is employing several measures to sustain power, which include assertive rhetoric directed toward the Eastern Mediterranean powers, military expansionism, and adventurism. Under the lens of Poliheuristic theory, strategic reorientation can also be viewed as an important junction in Turkish politics ahead of the election in June 2023.

1.1 Significance of the Study

In the contemporary era, the Eastern Mediterranean region has emerged as the epicenter of geopolitical competition between regional and extra-regional players. The immense importance of the region lies in its location at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa; moreover, the nature of the region favors continental control; it is a sea of passage and land powers. The significance of this research is that it analyses the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, which has become an international crisis in the regional dimension over the years, from the perspective of Turkish foreign policy decision-making. Moreover, by employing the Poliheuristic theory of decision making, this research seeks to extend the existing literature on Turkish foreign policy, and the Blue homeland doctrine as an expression of its maritime stakes in the Eastern Mediterranean. The latter provides insights into Ankara's worldview and how Turkish president Erdogan's foreign policy is transforming formally to adopt a more securitized perception as opposed to maximalist claims cultivated by him. Lastly, this study is significant because it argues that alliances are forged not only by great power but also by regional powers to assert their dominance in their region of interest.

1.2 Purpose and Design

1.2.1 Aims and Objective of the study

- To trace the evolution of Turkish foreign policy since the founding of the republic in 1923.
- To evaluate how the Poliheuristic theory of decision-making explain assertiveness in Erdogan's decision making.

- To analyze how the Blue Homeland doctrine expresses Turkey's maritime stakes in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- To highlight the role played by regional and extra-regional players to counter Turkey's action in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- To assess the regional implication of the geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean.

1.2.2 Research Question

- How has Turkish foreign policy evolved since the founding of the republic in the 1923?
- How does Poliheuristic theory of decision making explain Erdogan's assertiveness in the Erdogan's foreign policy decision making?
- How does Blue Homeland Doctrine express Turkey's maritime stakes in the Eastern Mediterranean?
- What is the role played by regional and extra-regional players to counter Turkey's action in the Eastern Mediterranean?
- What are the regional implication of the geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean?

1.3 Nature of the Study

The methodology used for this research study is the Qualitative method of research, while the type of research is exploratory. For this purpose, books, journal articles, reports, and newspaper articles will be consulted. Some secondary sources of data, such as the official reports published by the governments of regional actors, including Turkey, will also be utilized. The duration of the research is from 2014 to 2022

1.4 Literature Review

Oğurlu (2012), in his article "Rising Tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy," analyses the rising competition between regional actors in the Eastern Mediterranean. In particular, the author emphasizes Ankara as being an increasingly assertive power with perceived hegemonic aspirations. Amongst various disputes, conflict over exploration rights off the coast of Cyprus has challenged Turkey's image as a constructive state. The author

contends that in order to fulfill its claim of embodying a benign model of secular Muslim democracy, Ankara must avoid indulging in what he terms 'emotional reactions.' Eastern Mediterranean conundrum, however, cannot be confined to the energy sector; it is a multi-dimensional dispute associated with conflicting claims over sovereignty among dominant regional actors. The implications of Turkish assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean go beyond the parameters of the region. Turkey's disputes with Israel and Cyprus directly impact its relations with the USA, and the EU, respectively.

Redd, Brule & Mintz (2017), in their article "Poliheuristic Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis," discusses the basic characteristics of the Poliheuristic theory of decision making. The theory bridge two opposing schools of thought - the "rational actor" approach and the "cognitive approach." By emphasizing the validity of the process, Alex Mintz and his teams put forth the Poliheuristic theory. The authors identify five major characteristics of the theory, which include non-holistic search, processing based on dimension, non-compensatory decision-making rules, satisfiers behavior as opposed to maximizers behavior, and order-sensitive research. Moreover, the theory refers to the political aspect of foreign policy decision-making and can be applied to individual, national, and international levels of analysis. The authors argue that in spite of being a relatively new disciplinary approach, the theory has enriched the understanding of foreign policy decisions and their outcomes.

Tziarras (2019), in the report "The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security," examines the evolving geopolitical dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean. The author specifically on the emergent trilateral alliances between Israel-Greece-Cyprus, as well as Greece-Cyprus-Egypt. Tziarras highlights the drivers and motivations that bought these states together, along with their prospect for conflict and cooperation in the East Mediterranean, taking into consideration the mutual interests of the participating countries. The authors identify Eastern Mediterranean dynamics as being shaped by four interrelated dynamics: discovery of hydrocarbon resources, geopolitical rivalries and the imbalance of power relations, human security imperative, and the involvement of extra-regional powers. Drawing on the seminal works of Alexander Wendt on constructivism and international anarchy, the author concludes that the future of the Eastern Mediterranean is highly dependent on what regional countries make of it.

If states opt for polarization over cooperation, the future of the region does not seem much distinct from its turbulent history; thus, by no means peace is given the outcome of the region's geopolitics.

(Proedrou, 2020) his article "A geopolitical account of the Eastern Mediterranean conundrum: sovereignty, the balance of power and energy security considerations" provides a geopolitical perspective to account for escalating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The author highlights three factors that drive competition and pipeline politics in the region by providing rationale underpinning the behaviors of regional and extra-regional players. Firstly, uncovering new hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean has generated a serious Turkish challenge to the sovereignty of Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt. Secondly, Greece and Cyprus have allied with both Egypt and Israel to balance against the Turkish threat. The countries that promote designated pipeline infrastructure serve as a means to strengthen their sovereignty and cement their alliances and joint posture against Ankara. Thirdly, Russia's increasing geopolitical assertiveness in East Mediterranean has prompted European Commission to back energy projects to ascertain energy security. Altogether, these three prime goals account for the Eastern Mediterranean conundrum. Proedrou contends that geopolitical competition and increased stakes bought into picture countries, such as the USA, France, and Italy, due to economic and geopolitical interests.

Seeberg (2021), in his article "Neo-Ottomanism beyond the borders of modern Turkey: Erdogan's foreign policy ambitions in Syria and the Mediterranean," reflects upon a centuries-long transformative process from the multinational Ottoman empire to the present-day Turkish nation-state that found its legal basis in the Treaty of Lausanne. In the 21st century, this historical reality has increasingly come under question by Turkish President Erdogan. The authors highlight how Turkey's strategic goals in the seas surrounding Turkey constitute a significant part of Erdogan's foreign and security policies, which commenced as a national plan for emphasizing the significance of the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, termed Blue Homeland doctrine. Seeberg utilizes the case study of Turkey's intervention in the Libyan civil war to explain Erdogan's pursuit of offshore hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, which could strengthen Ankara's positioning in the geopolitical competition to emerge as the regional hegemon. The author has explained the autocratization of Turkish foreign policy from two different perspectives, which include internal and oppositional pressure, as well as immaterial factors, such as religion and glorious past to maintain a degree of legitimacy behind the policies of

AKP. Turkey's expansionist agenda has the probability to deconstruct regional affairs via changing patterns of alliances and territorial control by redrawing boundaries and balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Yapar (2021), in his article "From Strategic Depth to Blue Homeland and Beyond: Understanding Turkey's Drift towards Greater Strategic Autonomy," provides a historical assessment of Turkish geopolitical vision and strategic orientation. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey embarked on a process of westernization and modernization and integrated itself into Western-led institutional apparatus, such as NATO. However, with the end of the Cold War, Turkey began to reposition itself in the new world order. Initially, the doctrine of strategic depth, propagated by Ahmet Davutoglu, emerged as a guiding principle for Turkish foreign policy; the doctrine rested on the policy of "zero problems with the neighbors." the doctrine proved to be a strategic failure as soft power approach alone deprived Turkey of realizing its geopolitical vision in the Eastern Mediterranean. Resultantly, the Blue Homeland doctrine has proliferated into Erdogan's foreign policy agenda. The authors highlight four major factors contributing to Turkey's drift towards greater strategic autonomy; it includes the change in international order from US hegemony to multipolarity, deterioration of Turkey's Europeanization agenda in recent years, increases in its material capabilities, and decisive reorientation of its relations with non-Western states, such as Russia and China. Thus, by exerting a degree of strategic autonomy, Turkey seeks to rise up to the challenges of multipolarity and ascertain the legitimacy of its international status vis-à-vis the West.

(Gürzel Aka, Engin Bozoglu, Hashimov, & Pulhan, 2021) in their article "The 'new great game' in the Eastern Mediterranean," examines the transformation of regional affairs in the Eastern Mediterranean and their ramifications on the region's geopolitical and geo-cultural realities. The authors explore different scenarios, ranging from the importance of global supply chains, the impact of Israel's emergence as a regional energy supplier, Turkey's undetermined position as an energy barrier or bridge, and the role of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in the generation of the 'new great game' in the Eastern Mediterranean. The article concludes that Israel's geopolitical posture in regional affairs is in line with its wider economic objectives.

Özdamar & Ciyas (2021), in their article "Turkey and Cyprus: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Decisions during the Crises of 1964, 1967, and 1974," systematically examines the decision-

making calculus of Turkish leadership and its outcomes. The author presents evidence from both primary and secondary data sources to confirm that Turkish leadership employed a two-staged process during each crisis. Firstly, the Turkish leaders employed non-compensatory rule to eliminate outcomes that could sustain losses. Secondly, they aligned their calculations to maximize the expected utility. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, the response of the Turkish PM at the first stage was to avoid options that could disturb the domestic political balance. After the elimination of non-compensatory alternatives on the basis of leaders' perceptions, beliefs, and constraints, during the second stage, they weighed up different options under political, military, and diplomatic dimensions.

Kadan (2021), in his article "The formulation of the Blue Homeland Doctrine," argues that Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine highlights the state's legal maritime rights within the jurisdiction of international law. Attempts to uphold these rights contribute significantly toward international and regional peace in terms of execution of international law and the probability of regional states reaping benefits from resources equally. The author asserts that as opposed to allegations made by the critics of the doctrine, aside from Ankara, other countries in the region can attain immense benefits from its full execution. Moreover, the Blue Homeland policy is far from being 'expansionist,' particularly because it anticipates the formulation of a cooperative mechanism with riparian countries in the region. Execution of the Blue Homeland doctrine could potentially enhance global trade and efficient utilization of hydrocarbon resources. Superior Turkish naval fleets and military-industrial infrastructure could also prove beneficial in dealing with the issue of maritime piracy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The author concludes that the preservation of peace in the region is highly dependent on other states' ability to cooperate with Ankara because the Blue Homeland struggle is the Turkish struggle for existence.

Ghafar (2021), in his article "Between Geopolitics and Geo-economics: The Growing Role of Gulf States in the Eastern Mediterranean," assesses the role played by the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Eastern Mediterranean. Ghafar asserts that interference by Gulf players could potentially flare the existing geopolitical rivalries in the region. As a result of political uncertainty, poor governance, demographic pressure, and economic downturn, the relative strength of traditionally powerful Arab capitals has declined. Economic and political power has been transferred to Doha, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi, due to their hydrocarbon revenues and wealth funds.

Resultantly, these countries seek to deconstruct the affairs of the MENA region, taking hold of the "Gulf's moment." Currently, the most prominent role is being played by UAE in the Eastern Mediterranean, which includes elements of both hard and soft power. Lastly, the author contends that the USA and the EU must aim to deescalate regional tensions by constraining the ambitions of GGC countries and Turkey.

Tziarras (2022), in his book "Turkish Foreign Policy: The Lausanne Syndrome in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East," highlights the evolution of Turkish foreign policy towards a more revisionist paradigm. In particular, the author analyses the verbal and political context of the 'Lausanne Syndrome' By employing the theoretical framework of Neoclassical Realism, it has been stated that various ideational factors have prompted Turkey to drift away from 'Sevres Syndrome' that calls for a more cautious brand of foreign policy, even though both syndromes emerged out of similar historical circumstances and geopolitical factors. The case studies of Cyprus, Libya, Syria, and Iraq, are utilized to test the implications of the Lausanne Syndrome on Turkish foreign policy decision-making. With regard to Eastern Mediterranean, the author emphasizes Turkish maritime vis-à-vis Cyprus and Libya.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY (1923-2022)

2.1 Introduction

Turkey is strategically placed at the intersection of European, Asian, and African continents, in the vicinity of vital trade routes, energy corridors, and conflictual zones, such as the Balkan, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern regions. Passing through Anatolia and Thrace, the Turkish strait connects the Black Sea in the North to the Mediterranean in the South through the Marmara and the Aegean Seas (Aydin, 2006). Since the founding of the republic in 1923, Turkish foreign and security policy (TFSP) has been largely shaped by its geostrategic location, history, the structure of domestic policies, and broader international context. Turkey's Ottoman past has had a considerable influence on the formation and evolution of Turkey's contemporary foreign policy discourse (Okman, 2004).

In the initial years after the independence of Turkey, it embarked upon the path of modernization; the policies of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk placed the emphasis on its relationship with the West, especially relating to the USA and NATO. During the Cold War era, Turkey aligned with the capitalist bloc and maintained a distance from communism. The post-cold war witnessed the diversification of relations; Ankara sought to strengthen its projection in the Balkans, the Middle Eastern and Caucasian region, along with the attainment of its historical objective of accession to the EU. Turkish foreign policy has undergone a radical transformation under the Justice and Development Party; from a passive presence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, an eager aspirant of the EU, and a close ally of the USA, Turkey has emerged as an active player in regional affairs (Yapar, 2021). Its foreign policy represents a clear break from a tradition that characterized the republican era for more than 80 years. The transformation is a result of numerous factors, which include a permissive global arena and an increase in Tukey's material capabilities. However, the most important factor has been the rise of a circle of new political elites with a distinct world and an emerging response to exhaustion towards the founding ideology of Kemalism.

In general, Turkey's foreign policy can be characterized as the maintenance of the status quo between states and the protection of its current borders. This chapter seeks to analyze the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in terms of historical periods: The Republican era (1923-1938), World

War II era (1939-1945), Cold War era (1945-1990), Post-Cold war era (1990-2001), and Justice and Development Party's era (2002-2014), and strategic reorientation under President Tayyip Erdogan (2014-2022).

2.2 Establishment of the Republic of Turkey and strategic alignment with the West (1923-1945)

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founding father of Turkey, served as the president of Turkey from 1923 till his death in 1938. He embedded the principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" in Turkish foreign policy discourse. As an infant state, the objective of Turkey was to ascertain stability and break free from its Ottoman predecessor; therefore, it embarked on the process of Westernization. Sweeping modernization reforms were carried out in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres (Jung & Piccoli, 2001). In 1923, Turkey became a member state of the League of Nations, representing an important step in its rapprochement with the West. However, Ataturk based all international contracts and collaboration on the notion of "full independence and territorial integrity of the Republic." It was imperative because economic capitulation threatened the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, leading to its collapse. Therefore, realism was the dominant paradigm of Turkish foreign policy in the Republican era. Overall, this era was mainly characterized by isolationism in Turkish foreign policy, with the exception of some peaceful irredentist advances that were made possible due to the favorable global environment.

The official ideology of Turkey during this period was Kemalism; According to the Turkish nation, Ataturk's thoughts and revolutionist mindset was highly shaped by the French Revolution (Yavuz, 1997). Kemalism consists of six sub-ideologies depicting six arrows of Turkish foreign policy.

1. **Republicanism:** It was meant to substitute the elitist social order of the Ottoman empire that vested full power in the sultan and his immediate entourage. Republicanism meant that sovereignty unconditionally belonged to the nation, and Ataturk emphasized the significance of the republic by deeming it the most appropriate way of preserving Turkic character and traditions.
2. **Populism:** Populism emphasized democracy and a classless society, free from discrimination or privileges pertaining to a certain class. It called for the state to promote the welfare of its people and enact the division of labor.

3. **Secularism**: Ataturk favored the separation of religion from state affairs, which meant that decisions concerning education, judiciary, and government policies were solely based on the constitution (Jung & Piccoli, 2001). To this end, Ataturk adopted Western tradition and science, abolished religious education in schools, legalized drinking, etc.
4. **Revolutionlism:** It was an imprecise doctrine that was utilized to justify abrupt, instead of gradual transformation, from the Ottoman system (Yavuz, 1997). Ataturk not only abolished obscurantist orders but opposed stereotypical views in face of new developments.
5. **Nationalism:** Ataturk's nationalism did not mean fascism or chauvinism; he aimed to hold up a distinct Turkish identity, replacing the Ottoman empire's Pan-Islamism.
6. **Statism:** it favored a state-led development pathway as opposed to private ownership. Its purpose was to strengthen and nationalize the economic sector to promote modernization.

2.2.1 Resolution of disputes left unresolved by the Treaty of Lausanne

Even after the culmination of the treaty of Lausanne, several problems were left unresolved between Turkey and foreign powers. Turkey's strategic significance was enhanced due to the borders generated by the treaty; Turkey had borders with European nations, such as USSR, Britain, France, and Italy. Therefore, the establishment of normal relations called for the resolution of foreign policy problems. When allied forces left Turkey, Christians immigrated to Greece; the problem arose when the Greek minority wanted to remain in Turkey. Talks were held between Greece and Turkey to reach an agreement, but issues over the interpretation of the text of the treaty, the status of archbishops, and the exchange of property stalled the negotiations. However, agreements were signed in 1923 and 1925, officially granting the status of the Greek minority in Istanbul and the Muslim community in Thrace, and resolving legal and financial issues arising from property issues, respectively (Alexandris, 1994).

Another issue that arose after independence was 'the Mosul Question.' Turkey claimed Mosul as a part of National Pact boundaries; on the other hand, the Lausanne treaty stated that Iraqi frontier must be settled with Britain on mutual grounds. Despite resistance from Turkey, Britain referred the issue to the League of Nations. The council allowed Iraq to retain Mosul, and in spite of popular

reaction, Turkey agreed to abide by and signed the Frontier Treaty in 1926 (Coşar & Demirci, 2006). One of the major reasons for Turkey to accept the treaty was the fear of Kurdish rebellion, as the symbol of the Kurdish-Turkish brotherhood disappeared with the abolishment of the Caliphate. Turkey also signed a treaty with Britain, which granted 10% royalties from Mosul oil deposits for twenty-five years (Coşar & Demirci, 2006). The Mosul Question promoted Turkey to revive the foreign policy that it followed during the War of National Liberation; it felt the need to acquire the support of a major power, prompting it to establish a cordial relationship with the USSR. As early as 1925, the two countries signed a security pact and agreed to mutual non-aggression (Gökay, 2021). Both sides decided to observe a neutral stance towards one another in case a military action is carried out by one or more countries against one signatory party. The two countries enjoyed cordial relations between 1933 and 1936; their relations began to deteriorate after Turkey steered a path of closer ties with the West. Turkey also apprehended that the Soviets might have harbored imperialistic claims towards Turkish straits and capital.

2.2.2 Diplomatic successes in international affairs

Turkish foreign policy witnessed paralleled success and peace in the global arena during this period. To escape the negative consequences of the Great Depression of 1929, nearly all countries attempted to find solutions and applied distinct policies. Resultantly, two groups emerged: The Revisionist, which included Germany and Italy, and Anti-Revisionist, which included Britain and France; Tukey was part of the latter, paving its way for entry into the League of Nations (LON). Amongst Turkey's foreign policy successes was the Balkan Entente between Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Turkey against the revisionist states (Aslan & Selcuk, 2014). It served as one of the significant documents aiming to preserve peace in the region; it was a political system supplemented by a military annex, providing for collaboration between member-states in defense of the existing Balkan borders. Balkan Entente proved vital for Turkey both internally and externally. Not only did it stabilize Turkey on local ground, but it was viewed as a defensive mechanism against German imperialism.

The resolution of the Mosul Question led to the stagnation of Turkey-Britain relations; however, their relations improved with the signing of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1930. In 1935, Italy's attack on Ethiopia provoked fear among Turkey and Greece of Italian imperialism in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a means of Franco-Italian détente, the French proposed a

Mediterranean Pact, and an agreement was signed between Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Britain in 1936. Britain declared that should the other member state be the victim of unprovoked aggression in violation of the LON charter it would provide its support and assistance. The international environment in 1936 was such that Germany began re-militarization of the Rhine region; Japan, in violation of the treaty of Lausanne, invaded Manchuria and withdrew its membership from the LON. Amid this, Turkey feared that if Italy succeeded in invading Ethiopia, it might turn its attention to Turkish straits as a means to ascertain oil supplies from the Black sea. Therefore, Turkey resorted to diplomatic action and presented a formal note to the signatories of the Lausanne treaty. Resultantly, Britain, France, Japan, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and USSR signed the Montreux Convention in July 1936, affirming the "principle of freedom of transit and navigation by the sea in the Straits (Buzan, 1976). This was one of the biggest diplomatic successes of Tukey during the two World Wars. With regard to acquiring rights in legal ways, Turkey occupied a distinct position in international relations.

Another noteworthy event in Turkish foreign policy during this era was the signing of the Saadabad Pact between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan in 1937. Its essence lies in the fact that it extended Turkey's influence over a vaster region, ascertaining its stability and security along its Eastern frontiers (Islam, 2020). One of the most insecure frontiers of Turkey was its Southern border with Syria. More than 90,000 Turks lived in Sajnak of Hatay, which came under the National Pact frontier, with the trusteeship of France (Sancak, 2019). The border became a source of discord with the signing of the Franco-Syrian accord in 1926, as Syria interpreted its article as the incorporation of Hatay into Syria. However, after several deliberations, a decision was made that Hatay would be politically separate from both countries until elections were held. In the September 1938 election, Turkey won the majority seat in the assembly and proclaimed autonomy. Hatay was annexed to Tukey in 1938, the only exception in Turkish foreign policy that otherwise preserved the status quo (Sancak, 2019).

2.3 Foreign policy during the World War II (1939-1945)

With the death of Ataturk 10 months prior to World War II, Ismet Inonu led the republic through uncertain times; he became president in 1923. The most significant and tenacious aim of Turkish foreign policy during World War II was survival and continuation of the ability to practice sovereignty and independence. Therefore, Therefore, Ankara exhibited pro-status quo tendencies

and undertook action to balance its vulnerabilities, including economic and military position (Aslan & Selcuk, 2014). A key determinant of keeping Turkey out of the conflict was a realistic evaluation of its military; military modernization was stated as late as the 1930s. By 1937, only half of the planes among 131 were modern, and the largest warship possessed by Turkey was the one given by Germany during World War I. Therefore, resorting to belligerency was neither rational nor realistic for Turkey. The reigning policy was cautiously and mindfully crafted. During the war, Ankara did not attempt to partake in the creation of a powerful alliance, nor did it try to maintain dilution of power and influence between states to ascertain its security and stability (Deringil, 1989). Therefore, Turkey negated formulas, such as "traditional friendship," "hereditary enemy," or "long-lasting history of cooperation" in favor of practical policies that inevitably triumphed over idealism and sentiments. It was vital for Turkey to accumulate strength, power, and influence as agreements and treaties had the potential to break amid the rapidly transforming international situation. Maintaining neutrality seemed a much more viable option than sustaining economic and political relations with Axis and the allied powers. Foreign policy tools employed by Turkey during this era include bargaining alignment, downplaying the state's strategy as a military ally, and conducting go-between actions (Aydın, 2021).

2.3.1 Active neutrality and non-adventurism

In May 1939, in the wake of German aggression and to strengthen its position in the Mediterranean, Britain and Turkey signed an agreement of mutual cooperation and assistance; similarly, with the resolution of the Hatay problem, Turkey and France signed a similar agreement (Güçlü, 2003). In June. These declarations subsequently transformed into a tripartite pact in October. Protocol No. 2 of the agreement absolved Ankara from any action calculated to bring it into conflict with the USSR, and Article 6 asserted that Turkey was not obligated to fulfill the provisions of the treaty unless it receives delivery on all outstanding war material on order, the new order that would be decided by the commission, and the gold loans (Hakki, 2006). These provisions proved beneficial for Turkey in maintaining neutrality during the later stages of the war. During the early stages, Turkey resorted to delaying tactics to avoid confrontation; however, 1940 proved to be a year of unforeseeable events and crises. On 10th June 1940, Italy entered the war as an axis power, which triggered Turkey's obligation under a tripartite pact to aid Britain. However, Tukey was able to retain its neutrality on legal grounds. Firstly, France had already withdrawn from the war;

secondly, Additional Protocol No. 2 precluded Ankara's participation since Poland's invasion enhanced Turkey's threat perception vis-à-vis the USSR; lastly, Turkey asserted that arms aid was insufficient to wage a war.

Furthermore, Turkey successfully kept Germany away from its borders between 1941 and 1943; a Turco-German neutrality pact culminated in June 1941. For Germany, Turkish neutrality was significant to protect the right wing of the German army in case of an attack against the Soviet Union, thereby impeding Britain's help to the Soviets. Turkey also agreed on supplying chromium, a critical raw material for the manufacturing of weaponry, to Germany for the next three years. However, November 1942 was a turning point for Germany's advancement in Europe, prompting the Anglo-American front to think about the Balkan invasion via Germany (Çaliş, 2007). It increased the pressure on Inonu's regime. As a part of its delaying strategy, Turkey handed a list to Churchill, requesting military equipment which could take years to be supplied. In this way, Ankara managed to convince the allies that it was not ready to undertake such a major operation. However, as the war was approaching an end, Turkey was approaching closer to the allied powers in the latter half of 1944. In order to particularly appease the USSR, Turkey banned pro-German Turanist activities and ceased commercial and diplomatic ties with Nazis on the demand of the USA and Britain (Çaliş, 2007). On 23rd February 1945, Turkey officially declared war against the Axis power; it was merely a "procedural formality" to be a part of decisions concerning the future global order and become a member-state of the United Nations (Hakki, 2006).

2.4 Foreign policy during the Cold War era (1945-1990)

While the principle of neutrality proved beneficial during World War II, it immediately had drawbacks for Turkey after the end of the war. On 19th March 1945, the USSR unilaterally withdrew from the Treaty of Non-aggression concluded with Ankara in 1925. For the revival of the agreement, the Soviets demanded solutions to three main problems: altering of Turkish-Soviet borders, providing military bases for joint defense of the Straits, and revising the Montreux Convention. In the wake of active menace, Turkey sought international support and turned towards the USA and Britain; Ankara argued that Soviet aggression could also barricade Western interests in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean region (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). America and Britain did not react to the situation; however, the Moscow Conference of 1945 put an end to Anglo-American optimism about collaboration with the USSR in the post-war international order.

2.4.1 Alignment with the West bloc

In March 1946, Britain declared the Treaty of Alliance (1939) with Turkey was still in pace; similarly, America decided to take the remains of the Turkish ambassador, Ahmet Munir Ertegun, who died in Washington, to Turkey. This mission led to the appearance of America's most powerful battleships in the Mediterranean region, a clear signal to the USSR that the USA is ready to defend the Straits. This ended the isolation of Turkey in face of the Soviet threat. To pressurize Turkey Soviet Union took several actions, such as the Armenian repatriation scheme to annex Turkey's territory, initiating of a campaign to find an autonomous Kurdistan, and increasing demand for revision of the Montreux Convention (Aydin, 2006). The USA was of the view that Soviet control of the Strait could also consolidate its control over Greece as well as over the whole Near and the Middle East. At the same time, Turkey was in dire need of political, military, and financial assistance to respond to Soviet aggression. Britain has also cut the cord to Turkey due to its economic crises; therefore, the USA had to intervene.

With the primary goal of constraining Soviet expansionism, in March 1947, President Harry S. Truman formulated the Truman Doctrine. Turkey received $100 million in aid, signaling that Ankara was not out of the scope of Western interests (Seydi, 2006). In 1948 and 1949, Turkey became a member state of the Organization of European Economic Cooperation and the Council of Europe, respectively. In October 1948, Ankara applied for membership of NATO and became a full participant in February 1952. Due to this, Turkish became military and economically dependent on the West, directing its foreign policy choices, which was the result of its natural alignment with the West. For example, turkey become the first Muslim state to establish formal diplomatic ties with Israel; it extended support to the Western states during the Suez Crises in 1956 and opposed a military coup in Iraq in 1958.

2.4.2 Cyprus issue: disenchantment with the Western allies

In the early 1960s, the problem of Cyprus emerged, which became a lasting factor in Turkey's foreign policy. Cyprus Island acquired independence in 1960 as a result of negotiations between the UK, Greece, and Turkey on both sides of Cyprus in London and Zurich in 1959 (Bolukbasi, 1993). A bi-communal state was formulated, and both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were vested with equal rights; the former was given the presidency, while the latter was accorded the

vice presidency. However, Greek officials in the government were not satisfied with the situation, resulting in the initiation of violence between the two island communities in 1963. Turkish minatory was devoid of its constitutional rights and had to face majority violence. Turkey bought the issue to the forefront of NATO and the UN numerous times, but a solution could not be reached. In June 1964, the Cypriot parliament pronounced to formulate general conscription for the Greek Cypriot's defense forces; this promoted Turkey to unilaterally intervene and occupy the northern part of the island, refusing to withdraw forces unless a new agreement regarding the status of Turkish Cypriots was agreed on. America responded to the situation with the Johnson letter, warning Ankara not to rely on NATO members for protection in face of Soviet aggression that could be triggered by Turkish intervention in the Cyprus issue (Bolukbasi, 1993). Additionally, the US president stated that America would not provide a weapon to Turkey. The letter generated a shock among Turkish officials, raising deep speculation over Western commitment to defend Turkey in general, particularly regarding the support of the USA. The incident made it clear that Turkish national interest no longer fully converged with that of the USA and other Western allies. Therefore, Turkish political elites began criticizing Ankara's dependency on the West. This disappointment impelled Turkey to seek closer relations with other blocs, including the Third World, Islamic states, and the USSR. Therefore, the two decades between 1960 and 1980 were relatively autonomous in terms of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's experience with Cyprus compelled it to broaden its option, while remaining faith to the West. For example, from 1964 onwards, it sought to enhance with relations with the USSR, which culminated in a friendship agreement in 1978 (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). Similarly, in 1971, Turkey offered recognition to mainland China, and enhanced with Balkan nations, as well as the Islamic world.

2.4.3 The 1980 military coup and attempts to integrate within the Western world

Amid the cold war, Ankara witnessed several social and economic issues that resulted in severe polarization within the country. In 1950, the military increased its weight in economic and foreign policy, due to which Turkey witnessed military interventions into democracy in 1960 and 1971, subsequently followed by another one in 1980. In the 1970s, ideological clashes between rightist and leftist movements bought the country to the brink of civil war, thereby prompting a military intervention on 12th September 1980. The military junta formulated a constitution, entering into

force in 1982. In 1983, civilian rule was revived in the aftermath of the general election. Military coups and divergence from democracy proved disastrous for Turkey's international image. In this regard, issues such as rights pertaining to minorities and religion, which were considered domestic matters, gained prominence and became a problematic factor in Turkish foreign policy, particularly with European countries.

In response, Turkish foreign policy was devised to integrate it with the Western world; therefore, radical policies in economic liberalism were carried out, such as privatization and big business enterprise. During this time, Turgut Ozal was the Deputy Prime Minister, overseeing economic affairs (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). In the latter half of the 1980s, Ankara, seeking to strengthen its position and resolve political issues regarding the progression of democracy, applied for membership in the EU. Nevertheless, the EU refused Turkey's application for full membership in 1987. In 1981, Ozal become the eighth Turkish President, placing economic parameters central to the state's foreign policy.

2.5 Turkey's foreign policy in Post-Cold War era (1990-2002)

Under the conditions of the cold war, Turkey was regarded as a valuable ally by the West. Turkey, owing to its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, had a stronghold within NATO's southern flank. Along with Ankara's relative economic and military shortcomings, the bipolar world order did not give much for independent foreign policy decision-making. Therefore, the end of the cold war impacted turkey in various domains and forced it to transform its foreign policy from passive and dependent to a comparatively active autonomous style. However, to enhance its sphere of influence and attain its goal, Turkey emphasized multilateralism and acted within alliances in its military strategy and foreign policy (Center for Security Studies, 2000).

Changes in the global balance of power presented opportunities for Ankara to increase its influence. With the end of the Cold war, Tukey gained renewed significance, emerging as a key state along with new centers of global politics, such as the Balkan, the Middle Eastern, the Caucasian, and the Eastern Mediterranean regions. Due to the declaration of independence by former Soviet Republics, Turkey no longer had a border with Russia, diminishing the Threat of the Soviets. Turkey, which strictly adhered to Ataturk's motto of "peace at home, peace in the world," joined the allied coalition in opposition to Saddam Hussain in Iraq in 1990 (Altunışık, 2004). The

US-Turkey relations remained close during this era; America utilized Turkey's military bases for the Iraqi bombing in 1991. The US strategic partnership with Turkey was based on the former's containment strategy of Iran and Iraq. The Gulf war generated a power vacuum in Iraq's northern region, which could benefit the Kurdish separatist movement (PKK). This bought about serious security threats for Turkey, especially with regard to the Kurdish issue. In addition to launching interventions in Iraq against PKK and urging Syria to halt its support for Abdullah Ocalan, leader of PKK, Turkey formulated a partnership with Israel, culminated in an energy agreement with Iraq, and carried out efforts to resolve issues in Palestine and Lebanon by serving as a mediator. Therefore, due to the significance of energy channels for Europe, Turkey also laid foundations for the transfer of energy from the Caucasus and the Gulf during this era. This shows that Turkish foreign policy transformed from merely being shaped by political and military factors to include economic and social interests.

Furthermore, in the initial years of the 1990s, Turkey carried out ambitious foreign policy towards newly independent states, such as Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Croatia. In this regard, Greece was an exception; both states had problems in the Aegean Sea over the de-militarization of islands, maritime boundaries, territorial waters, disputed islets, etc., and the Cyprus issue. To maintain strategic balance vis-à-vis Greece and preserve the status quo, Turkey stationed its troop in Northern Cyprus. In the aftermath of the disintegration of the USSR, several ethnic issues and intrastate conflicts emerged in the Balkan and the Caucasus region, resulting in problems such as refugee crises, environmental issues, human and drug trafficking, illicit arms trade, etc. Therefore, Turkey carried out several attempts to stabilize the region, suffering from ethical issues (for example, in Bosnia and Kosovo), under the auspices of the UN and NATO (Sayari, 2000). Turkey contributed as many as 300 troops to UN peacekeeping missions as well as humanitarian assistance in international and bilateral efforts. Moreover, in the Balkan wars, Turkey successfully influenced international organizations and America over Balkan policy.

Another Turkey's foreign policy agenda during this period was renewed vigor for accession to the EU. In 1995, EU-Turkey signed a Customs Union Agreement, and subsequently, in December 1999, Turkey was officially acknowledged as a candidate for full membership at Helsinki Summit (Sertoglu & Ozturk, 2003). In 1999, a severe Earthquake occurred, hitting both Greece and Turkey; this led to Earthquake diplomacy between the two as this period marked mutual help and

assistance. Ever since, issues such as the Cyprus problem, human rights incursion, minority rights, and claims regarding the Armenian genocide have emerged as the EU pressure points on Ankara.

2.5.1 The challenge of 9/11

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the US-led War on Terror, the international community unanimously lent support to American operations. As a member-state of NATO, Turkey assumed the command of the International Security forces in Afghanistan, first between June 2002 and February 2003 and later between February and August 2005. The American foreign policy severely affected Turkey; for example, the alliance with the USA resulted in two terrorist attacks in Istanbul in 2003 (Cline, 2004). Therefore, the policies of President Bush, which classified the world into "good vs. evil," left little room for maneuvering for US allies whose national interests were harmed (Müftüler-Bac, 2005).

In March 2003, Turkey made a historical decision of not allowing American troops to utilize their soil to carry out an attack on Iraq from the North. In the aftermath of the Hood event on 4th July 2003, anti-American sentiments peaked in Turkey, as American troops detained Turkish military personnel in Northern Iraq based on incomplete intelligence. The terrorist infiltration from Iraq in the post-war phase greatly impacted Turkey's domestic security and levels of economic activity (Cline, 2004). The main contentious area between the US and Turkey has been that the former has depicted reluctance to fight against the PKK, preventing the latter carry out unilateral cross-border operations to mitigate domestic insecurity. This is because Turkey refuted American demand for the use of their territory, increasing the USA's dependency on Kurdish separatists in the North; secondly, instability in Northern Iraq had the potential to lead USA operations towards failure in Iraq (Salmoni, 2004). Another issue that arose for Turkey was Iranian nuclear ambitions, which surged after 2003. Acquisition of nuclear arms by a regional state like Iran could disrupt the strategic military balance between Turkey and Iran with regard to constituents of their power bases.

Altogether, Turkey occupied a central position in world politics after 9/11, being a state with a 99% Muslim population, but at the same time being a secular state with an orientation towards the West. Therefore, it had the potential to act as a geographical and cultural bridge between regions and civilizations and play a conducive role in refuting the notion of a "clash of civilizations."

2.6 Foreign policy under Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Governments (2002-2014)

With the emergence of the APK government in 2002, Turkish foreign policy underwent a radical transformation. Erdogan remained the PM of Turkey between 2002 and 2014, and Ahmet Davutoglu was the advisor to Erdogan until 2009, when he assumed the office of foreign minister (Yapar, 2021). Davutoglu enjoyed an influential position and shaped the strategic and foreign policy outlook of Turkey during this era, marked by the concepts of "Strategic Depth" and "Zero problems with the neighbors."

2.6.1 Doctrine of Strategic Depth

In his book "Strategic Depth," published in 2001, Davutoglu elaborated his vision of Turkey's strategic outlook. The doctrine of Strategic Depth sought to reposition the country from the periphery to the center of the international system due to its positioning at the crossroads of multiple regions. He enlisted Turkey among a group of states which he referred to as "central powers." According to Davutoglu, Turkey is "a country with a close land basin, the epicenter of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, the center of Eurasia in general and is in the middle of the Rimland belt cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific" (Murinson, 2006). In the same vein, Davutoglu asserted that Turkey is not an ordinary nation-state that was created due to the power play of external states, like, for say, the emergence of new countries in Central Europe after World War I. Instead, Turkey is a regional actor in its own right, possessing secure traditions of statehood and a wider strategic outlook. He rejected the percipience of Turkey as a link between the Islamic and the Western world, as this could potentially relegate the state to a tool for the propagation of other countries' strategic interests. Therefore, Davutoglu's imagined strategic model, which while not void of geopolitics, is more adaptable to liberal international order. He called for a multidimensional foreign policy to commensurate Turkey's historic and geographic depth, augmented by the legacy of the Ottoman Empire (Yapar, 2021).



Figure 2.1: Doctrine of Strategic Depth

Source: Yapar, H. (2021). ***From Strategic Depth to Blue Homeland and Beyond: Understanding Turkey's Drift towards Greater Strategic Autonomy*** **(pp. 1-15, Opinion paper). Madrid, Spain: Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos. Retrieved from https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2021/DIEEEO40_2021_HAKYAP_Turquia_ENG.pdf**

In figure 1, the Green area depicts land basins (the Balkan, Middle Eastern, and Caucasian regions), disconnected dots show Maritime basins (Persian Gulf, Black Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean), and the yellow area represents Continental Basins (European, North African, South Asian, Cantal Asian and East Asian regions). According to the Strategic Depth doctrine, Turkey must seek active engagement in all these areas.

Davutoglu put forth two conditions for Turkey to attain success in its international strategic ambitions. Domestically, he focused on the resolution of the Kurdish problem and bridging the increased rift between society's Islamist and secularist factions (Tanchum, 2020). Davutoglu advocated conflict resolution based on liberalism; the state's strategic potential could only be unleashed through a long-lasting and just solution to the Kurdish question, which would guarantee the right of the Kurdish minority and the attainment of liberal consensus on the divide between

different segments of the society. While the Kurdish issue has cost more than 30,000 lives and constrained economic growth in a large swath of territory in eastern and southeastern Turkey, the unprecedented confrontation between Islamist and secularist elements in the aftermath of 2007 presidential election has jeopardized the social fabric and functioning of the state. On the global front, Davutoglu emphasized the resolution of bilateral disputes with a neighboring state (Özcan, 2012). He deemed this a prerequisite for Turkey to rise as a global actor; maintaining close relations with powers such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia is significant in this process.

2.6.2 Zero Problems with the neighbor's policy

In 2009, after he was appointed foreign minister, Davutoglu further published his policy by adding three more methodological principles: First, the adoption of a visionary approach to crises as opposed to crises oriented attitude; second, the formulation of foreign policy on the basis of a consistent and systematic framework globally; third, the realization of soft power potential to bypass militaristic perception of the state bequeathed by a history of military tutelage over politics (Özcan, 2012). Additionally, five operational principles were put forward to guide the course of Turkish foreign policy, including:

1. Maintenance of balance between democracy and security;
2. The policy of zero problems with the neighbors;
3. Peace diplomacy based on proactive measures and preemption;
4. Multidimensional foreign relations;
5. Rhythmic diplomacy.

Among these, the 'zero problems with the neighbor' policy was deemed as the leading principle for the state's foreign policy by April 2011. Prior to June 2011 elections, the AKP manifesto applauded the policy as one of the party's major achievements by stating, "We made friends, not enemies."

The zero-problem policy exhibited itself in Turkey's relations with many countries, particularly Syria. Due to historical issues regarding the province of Hatay and the Euphrates and the Tigris river, both countries were on a brink of war in 1998. However, in 2003, to mend its ties with Syria, Turkey initiated peacekeeping missions, which also included repeated attempts of mediation between Syria and Israel to return the Golan Heights to the former (Grigoriadis, 2010). The period

between 2003 and 2010 is referred to as the 'honeymoon period' between Turkey and Syria, characterized by bilateral visits, an increasing volume of trade, and unprecedented three-day joint military exercises to enhance the capacity of border troops to train and work together. In 2009, both states also agreed to lift the visa requirement for tourists, which positively impacted public opinion within both countries. However, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, relations between the two countries deteriorated significantly.

Turkey's relations with Iraq also witnessed a significant improvement during the AKP era with the transformation of policy from containment to engagement in Northern Iraq. Ankara acknowledged the legitimacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRP), recognized it as a federal unit within Iraq, and deepened political and economic cooperation with Baghdad. In October 2009, the Turkish consulate was opened in Erbil. While Kirkuk question and PKK operations in northern Iraq persisted, Davutoglu's policy exhibited a radical departure from previous mistrust. Davutoglu perceived cordial relations with Iraqi Kurds as vital to Ankara's entry into the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the Zero-problem policy enhanced Turkey's energy collaboration with Iran beyond buying and transit of Iran's natural gas via Turkey to the development of Tehran's hydrocarbon fields by Turkish enterprises. Turkey also assumed the role of mediator in the Iranian nuclear issue; Davutoglu paid a visit to Iran in February 2010 in an attempt to culminate a deal regarding uranium enrichment.

Davutoglu foreign policy also carried out efforts to heal ties with Armenia; both countries downgraded their diplomatic relations in the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabagh war. Armenia's attempts for international recognition of the 1915 massacres against Ottoman Armenians as 'genocide' was an additional area of contention. Despite these circumstances, both countries culminated in a historic accord on 10th October 2009 to mend diplomatic relations and open a common border (Grigoriadis, 2010). However, these efforts eventually faltered; the process of ratification was suspended by Armenia's ruling coalition after repeated assertions by President Erdogan that Turkish ratification depends on the deal in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Asymmetry can be observed with regard to the Cyprus issue, one of Turkey's long-standing and protracted disputes. Davutoglu's foreign policy represented a striking change in rhetoric; in spite of high levels of political risks, Erdogan extended support for the UN comprehensive plan for settlement in 2004, known as the Annan Plan, and also chastised Turkish for its authorization. A

partial retreat of Turkish troops from Cyprus can be deemed as the tangible manifestation of the former's persistence for a breakthrough in the Island; nevertheless, it did not transform in Ankara's bilateral issues with Greece (Askerov, 2017).

The only country that suffered deterioration of relations with Turkey under the AKP government is Israel; Ankara's foreign policy regarding Palestine often resulted in fierce opposition from Israel. For example, outright denunciation of Israel in the Lebanon and Gaza wars led to a confrontation between Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and Israeli President Peres amid the yearly meeting of the World Economic Forum in 2009. Although this depicted incompatibility with Turkey's zero-problem policy, it did align with Ankara's regional ambitions. Turkey's role as a mediator in the Middle East was no longer dictated by external actors, such as the USA, EU, and Israel (Askerov, 2017). Turkey capitalized on its Muslim identity under AKP rule to establish close relations with Muslim countries; for example, Turkey culminated visa exemption and free trade agreements with Tunisia and Palestine (2005), Morocco (2006), Syria and Egypt (2007), and Jordan (2011) (World Trade Organization, 2010). Furthermore, Turkey established a business council in various states, including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Libya, and Israel. The volume of trade between Turkey and Arab states increased as much as eight times during the AKP era, from US$ 8 billion to US$ 64.2 billion (Grigoriadis, 2010). Moreover, in 2008, GCC acknowledged Turkey as a strategic partner. While Davutoglu's doctrine contributed towards a transformation of Turkey's foreign policy and enhanced its diplomatic role, particularly in the Middle East, development such as the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil war promoted Turkey to adopt a hard power policy.

2.7 Strategic Reorientation under Erdogan (2014-2022)

While various scholars appreciated Davutoglu's doctrine in the wake of changing realpolitik, it turned out to be a proven failure. Since Recep Tayyip Erdogan assumed the office of Presidency in 2014, and more importantly, in the aftermath of the attempted coup in July 2016, Turkish foreign policy considerably transformed to adopt a hard power approach. In May 2016, Davutoglu was forced to resign due to his squabble with Erdogan. This period is marked by three prominent features: first, reconciliation between Turkey and Eastern states, particularly Russia; Second, growing disenchantment in Turkey with the Western allies. Delays in negotiations for Turkey's membership in the EU, and lack of political settlement in the case of Cyprus, loom large in the

background (Haugom, 2019). Third, Ankara has assumed a more autonomous and proactive role in the Middle East, as manifested in the spirit of the Blue Homeland Doctrine. Omer Taspinar terms this as the third strategic vision of Turkey - Turkish Gaullism. He compares Erdogan's foreign policy with that of France under President Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s; he asserts that Turkish foreign policy integrates components from both Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalist ideology to create a new strategic vision, whereby Turkish perception of greatness and regional ambitions are interconnected with a great emphasis on threats on sovereignty and national interests (Taspinar, 2016). In other words, Turkish foreign policy has transformed to emerge as overtly nationalistic, autonomous, self-reliant, and defiant.

2.7.1 Assertive Diplomacy and transactional relations

Erdogan has adopted a distinctly assertive foreign policy, exhibited in both diplomatic maneuvers and the state's willingness to project power beyond its borders. Additionally, Turkey has preferred relations with states based on interests. Ankara has adopted a sharp tone when it comes to diplomatic disputes with other states, notably in the face of western states, such as the USA, Germany, Netherlands, and France. In some instances, the Turkish stance could be referred to as threatening, as opposed to defiant. For example, amid the NATO Exercise Trident Javelin carried out in Norway in November 2017, Turkey pulled out its officers from the exercise in the aftermath of an event where Turkish president Erdogan and the state's founding father, Ataturk, were depicted as enemies of NATO (Reuters, 2017). Turkish media has termed Turkey's new conception of security as the 'Erdogan doctrine'; it calls for the state to pursue proactive security policy, as well as preemptive measures beyond the national border, and when required, it even means disregarding alliances. The military operation in Syria and Iraq in 2016 is the best practical manifestation of this concept. To project power further afield, Turkey has set up military bases in Qatar and Somalia and plans to establish bases in Sudan and Djibouti as well (Rossiter & Cannon, 2019). The underlying motive is to protect Turkish interests in the Middle Eastern and African regions.

Turkey has also depicted its preference for a transnational foreign policy, which is directed by converging goals and opportunities rather than affinity to a particular institution of a community of states. Turkey's refugee agreement with the EU in 2015 serves as a case in point here. The agreement represents pragmatism in Turkish foreign policy, based on the assessment of interests:

while Europe’s aim was the divert the migrant wave, Ankara sought to reap other benefits, such as exemption from visa restrictions within the Schengen region and resumption of the EU-Turkey talks for accession (Haugom, 2019). Therefore, this deal stands in striking contracts to Ankara’s past negotiations with the EU over the membership, which was associated with Turkey’s acquiescence to the Union’s criteria. Another emergent trend in Turkish foreign policy is the principle of reciprocity. An example of this is Turkey's approach towards NATO; since 2017, Ankara has systematically impeded Austria's involvement in NATO's partnership program and the state's progress toward full membership. Turkey has overtly declared that it has employed veto power to diplomatically retaliate against Austria's resistance to Turkey's membership in the EU.

2.7.2 Quest for Strategic Autonomy

Ankara has also sought to attain greater strategic autonomy vis-à-vis external powers. There are two significant aspects of this quest: First, Turkey is carrying out attempts to construct a technologically advanced defense industry with the broader goal of enhancing its self-sufficiency in the procurement of arms. To attain this, Turkey has carried out collaborative ventures with other countries; for example, Ankara participated in the EUROSAM project along with Italy and France for the development of long-range missiles for the Air Force. Turkey’s decision to acquire Russia’s S-400 system can also be viewed in the same light; the deal could be deemed a political pawn in Ankara’s tumultuous ties with its western allies (Haugom, 2019). Moreover, the Turkish Armed Forces have developed an expeditionary military force capable of projecting powers in regions that are influenced by countries such as the USA and Russia. For example, in October 2019, Turkey defeated the USA on strategic grounds when its incursions disrupted the American forces’ ground lines of communications carrying out operations in northeastern Syria, causing the troops to retreat Central to the Turkish Armed forces buildups are the TCG Anadolu and MILGEM Project; the former is a ship aimed to carry out amphibious attacks, and the latter will provide the Turkish Navy a new surface combatant annually until 2030, along with unmanned missile boats (Mevlütoğlu, 2020). Stimulating these military reforms is the Turkish Blue Homeland doctrine, known as Mavi Vatan, advocated by President Erdogan in 2019. As per the doctrine, Ankara aims to gain additional maritime boundaries in the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Seas at the cost of other states, including Greece and Cyprus (Yapar, 2021). Second, Turkey seeks to formulate flexible alliances with several states on distinct issues to attain determined foreign policy objectives. For

example, Turkey formulated an alliance with Moscow and Tehran on Syria via the Astana process; through this strategic partnership, Turkey has been able to advance its national agenda in the northwestern part of Syria, which includes displacement of terrorist forces, resettlement of Syrian refugees inhabiting in Turkey, and ascertain its stakes in the region.

For the governing coalition of Turkey, whose binding ideological framework is Nationalism, anti-Western perception has served as a useful glue for driving its quest for greater strategic autonomy. Intellectual cadres in Turkey are of belief that the world has moved into a post-Western order; therefore, the state ought to recalibrate its foreign policy and capabilities accordingly. The autonomous posture of Turkey compliments its balancing strategy between different centers of power, particularly the West, Russia, and China (Dalay & Keyman, 2021). Simultaneously, it has been emphasizing hard power and initiating flexible alliances to strengthen its regional clout. Western capitals view Turkish foreign policy as 'abnormal,' while Ankara perceives it as adapting to the new normality in Global affairs (Dalay & Keyman, 2021).

CHAPTER III

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The process of Foreign Policy Decision Making (FPDM) is crucial to comprehend the role of organizational processes, bureaucratic culture, dynamics of group thinking, and the role of the leader in selecting policy alternatives. In the extensive field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), research has invariable emphasized either the process or the outcome of the decision-making. The former approach mainly focuses on cognitive or psychological factors to evaluate how decisions are taken inside the "black box" of a country, whereas the latter prioritizes rationality (Vertzeberger, 2002). Nevertheless, it has become increasingly transparent that neither of the two approaches sufficiently accounts for how foreign policy decision-making takes place, necessitating the need for an integrative model of decision-making processes and outcomes.

Among the attempts to bridge this gap is the Poliheuristic theory of decision-making, which comprehensively explains that the rational choice model and cognitive psychology theory must be integrated in order to reach a more realistic conclusion. As a dynamic approach, Poliheuristic theory represents a major leap forwards in the field of FPA, providing a comprehensive explanation of variations in the decision-making process. It accounts for key variables, such as beliefs, perceptions, values, the personality of the leaders, domestic situations, systematic pressures, and psychological factors (Mintz & Geva, 1997). Precisely, individual leadership characteristics and cognitive processes enable the simplification of alternatives for the leader in the initial stage. Later, decision-makers evaluate domestic and systemic factors, among other things, in accordance with rational calculus to determine the best possible outcome.

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework of the research, serving as progress toward the main argument. This research employ's Poliheuristic theory of decision-making, first presented by Alex Mintz, to analyze both domestic and international variables that have influenced the foreign policy of Turkey under President Tayyip Erdogan.

3.2 An overview of the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) Literature

FPA recognizes the point of theoretical convergence between significant determinants of state behaviors, including material and ideational factors; here, the intersecting point is not the state but the decision maker (Hudson, 2007). Therefore, FPA seeks to explain how global politics stems from particular human beings that make decisions, individually or in a group. FPA models allow

the identification of distinct patterns of decisions, generating insights about varying leadership styles- one of the shortcomings of a systematic approach to FPA. Furthermore, the field goes beyond the debate of agency and structure, asserting that causation involves both agency and structure and that "the two kinds of phenomenon help to constitute each other in a perpetual process of interaction" (Hill, 2003).

The origination of FPA lies in three generations of scholarships, building on the foundational works of scholars. While Richard C. Snyder, Henry W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin gave the field its direction towards decision-making and called for multi-casual and multidisciplinary explanations, James Rosenau encouraged the formulation of middle-range theory to intercede between grand principles and complex reality (Hudson, 2008). Furthermore, Harold and Margaret Spout called for the evolution of decision makers' psycho-milieu as well as their operational environment to fully comprehend the context of decision-making.

The first generation of FPA scholarships lasted from 1954 till the 1970s. This wave made headways in conceptualizing, collecting data, and methodological experimentations, in four investigative areas: dynamics of group behavior, bureaucratic politics, comparative foreign policy, and formulation of the cognitive approach (Anderson, 1987). This generation of scholarship sought to tactfully explain what constitutes a dissatisfactory process of decision-making, highlighting pitfalls to enhance prospects for future decision-makers. The second generation of FPA scholarship lasted from 1974-1993; during this period, scholars utilized various historical case studies to identify patterns that could be generalized to modern policy formulation (Walker, 2011). The most important contribution of this era to the FPA discourse was that it conceptualized a two-level game, highlighting the significance of domestic politics in comprehending foreign policy decision-making (Putnam, 1988). The third generation of FPA scholarship began in 1993 and continues to date; it addresses the complexities of the Post-Cold war international system. The research emphasizes questions such as how is situation is framed by the leaders and how alternatives are identified.

3.3 Weaknesses of the rational choice and cognitive approach to foreign policy decision making

There exist two broad approaches to FPA: the rational actor model and the cognitive model. The principle underpinning the former is that decision-makers are rational beings, which makes their

choices transitive; they utilize rationality in an instrumental manner instead of a procedural way. The rational choice model leans towards validity of outcome at the cost of the decision-making process; it addresses the "why" of foreign policy decision making, but neglects "how" (Kelly, 2008). Therefore, it offers a generalized theory lacking descriptive quality that are the reflections of complex realities. Nevertheless, Milton Friedman argued that human behave "as if" they maximize utility- this, seemly, is a valid point bearing in the mind the success enjoyed by rational choice model in academia (Beckerman-Boys, 2014). The cognitive approach challenges the rational choice, asserting the decision are not solely based on cost-benefit analysis; cognitivist incline towards prospect theory, highlighting the inadequacies of rational choice. Therefore, it does not consider decision-makers are goal-oriented maximizers. It features heuristics and mental shortcuts, and other processes that indicate the incapability of the human mind to carry out complex calculus of rational models (Simon, 1985). The critique of cognitive model lies in the fact that it advocates "how" of decision process validity over the "why" of outcome validity.

Due to the apparent incapability and ostensible rivalry between the two models, currently, the field of FPA is undergoing another methodological refinement, with scholars aiming to fill the void between them. This is a relatively new development and calls for a formation of a neo-behavioral model "in which the concept of rationality is informed, defined, and modeled by the concepts of beliefs, emotions, and motivations in applications to the study of international relations and foreign policy" (Walker, 2011). One such model that has the potential for the flexibility required to deal with these is the Poliheuristic Decision Theory.

3.4 Poliheuristic theory of decision making

Poliheuristic theory emerged in 1933, which makes it relatively new; yet, it has been published in more than forty articles in leading international journals, such as "The American Political Science Review" and "International Studies Quarterly," as well as in book chapters and various conferences. Alex Mintz, one of the leading scholars of Poliheuristic theory, states that the word "Poliheuristic" can be deconstructed into roots 'poly' meaning 'many,' and 'heuristic' meaning 'shortcuts,' implying that decision makers use cognitive mechanisms to streamline and rationalize key foreign policy decisions (Mintz, 2005). The Poliheuristic theory has been applied to various decisions, such as the use of force, nuclear tests, formation of coalitions and rivalry between parties, decisions during war and peace times, conflict resolution, military revolts, etc. It puts

forward a model to demonstrate how and why leaders make certain decisions with regard to foreign policy and identify the factors that impact calculation amid the process. In essence, the theory emphasizes both the "process" and the "outcome" of the decision-making (Mintz, Redd, & Tal-Shir, 2017). Different methodologies have been utilized to test the theory, such as case studies, statistical models, and experimental evaluations. By theory application and testing, the theory has built its basic assumptions and put forward steps to construct a model of decision-making.



Figure 3.1: Poliheuristic theory as a bridge between rationalist and cognitivist FPA models

Source: Author's own figure

3.4.1 Stage 1: Identification of the decision matrix or the decision-maker and the non-compensatory principle

This stage emphasizes the identification of options that are regarded as viable for consideration instead of reaching a final decision. A decision matrix comprises a set of alternatives the decision maker has, the policy dimensions along which these alternatives are analyzed, and an evaluation of the impact of each dimension for each alternative (Mintz, 2005). These dimensions serve as the criteria for assessing the alternatives and can range from political, economic, and social to military and diplomatic. Accordingly, Weights or points can be accorded for each dimension to reach an outcome; for example, the analyst can rate implications from -10 (very bad) to 10 (very good). Alternatives with negative or low points in one dimension that can neither be compensated nor replaced by positive points of one or more of the other dimensions are stamped out. The most crucial task during the application of the theory is to justify the points accorded to proposed foreign policy alternatives across different dimensions; it is essential for the leader to bypass biases and subjective evaluation to provide a more accurate analysis of the decision process (Mintz, Redd, & Tal-Shir, 2017).

Complex situations in foreign policy decision-making are simplified by the use of the non-compensatory principle. According to Poliheuristic theory, decision-makers dismiss certain options based on one or a few crucial non-compensatory dimensions before evaluating in detail other alternatives put forward by rationality-based decision-making models. It means that decision-making is unlikely to pick options that will be politically unfavorable, depicting that domestic political factors occupy a central place in the highest level of decision-making (Brecher, 1999). Leaders measures successes and failures, costs and benefits, and risks and rewards within political units. Poliheuristic theory asserts that one of the prerequisites of force in the international system is that it must not supersede the non-compensatory principle. The conflict between different groups, electoral competition, intraparty rivalries, and the composition of political coalitions - are all deemed non-compensatory in international relations (James & Zhang, 2005).

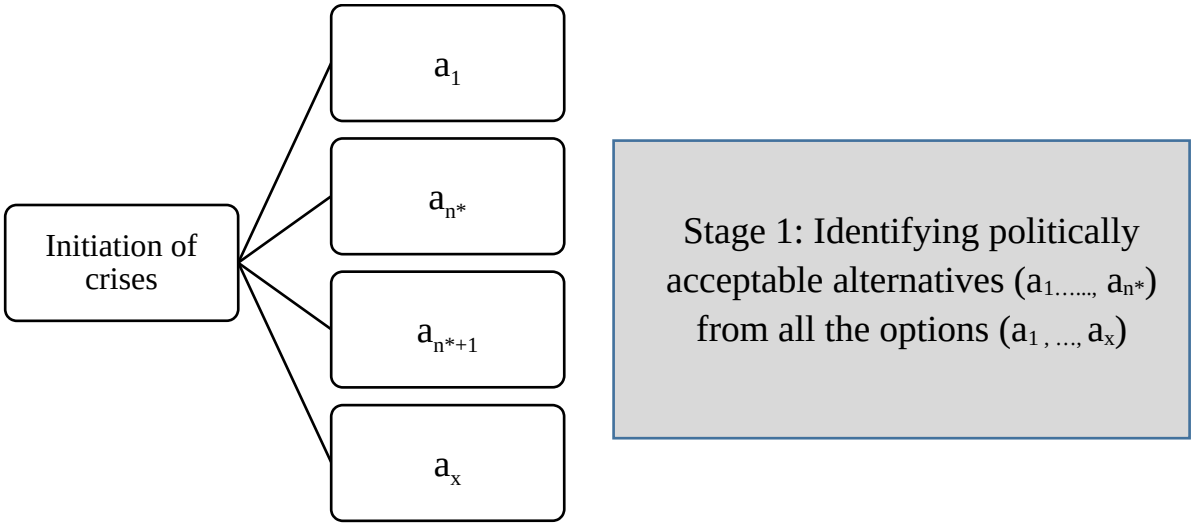

Figure 3.2: Non-compensatory approach to political decision making

Source: Author's own figure

The figure depicts that all the options that fall between a1 and an* are politically acceptable from broader policy alternatives. Therefore, based on the non-compensatory dimension, the leader is likely to rule out unacceptable alternatives at the first stage.

Policy Alternatives	**Dimensions**			**Weight (Total expected utility)**
	Economic	**Political**	**Military**	

A_1	1	3	1	5
A_2	3	1	3	7

Table 3.1: Hypothetical example of a simple decision matrix in crises situation

It is supposed that the decision maker has policy alternatives A1 and A2, and each has three different utility dimensions: economic, political, and military. Values are attributed to each option along each dimension between 0 to 3. Table 1 depicts that the leader has accorded the highest points to A1 in the political aspect, but in economic and political dimensions, A2 is awarded the highest value. If the analyst employs a compensatory strategy based on the total sum of values, he will choose A2 to acquire seven units of utility. However, a non-compensatory approach might lead to a different outcome. For example, if the leader deems the political dimension as crucial, he will select A1 because it provide greater utility than A2 in that particular dimension. In such a case, additional units of utility provided by A1 and economic and military dimensions are not likely to compensate for the loss of utility in the most crucial dimension.

Thus, during the initial stage of decision-making, biological constraints in the capability of the human mind to process data, as well as personal values, belief systems, preferences, and near-improbability of acquiring complete information, impede rational choice. Furthermore, due to complexity of situation and internal or external pressures at the onset of crises, the decision-making employ short-cutes for simplifying the decision making. To explain this phenomenon, Mintz stated, “a person who suffers from high levels of cholesterol is unlikely to buy himself items rich in cholesterol, even if these are offered at a huge discount.” Thus, cognitive heuristic is deemed significant as opposed utility maximizing at the first stage; resultantly, comparatively straight political deliberation come to the forefront.

Thus, key characteristics governing the first stage of Poliheuristic decision-making are:

1. **Non-holistic or Non-exhaustive search**: during the first stage, the leader derives from heuristic decision rule instead of analysis and comparison across all available alternatives across the distinct dimension. Therefore, alternatives are adopted or rejected based on one or a few criteria.
2. **Processing based on dimension**: attributes of the problem, including values and aspects, drives the search as opposed to alternatives. Options that are unable to fulfill basic

standards across crucial dimensions are rejected. Dimensions are applied according to a sequence, which is heavily influenced by the accessibility of information that is construed in a way that directs analytical attention to a specific dimension or causes the shift of focus to another.

3. **Non-compensatory decision rule:** awarding low points on a particular dimension cannot be compensated via a higher score on another. This means it is imperative to fulfill a minimum criterion; otherwise, the option will be discarded.
4. **Satisficing behavior:** the search finishes with the finding of an acceptable alternative that survives scrutiny on crucial dimensions. Factors such as uncertainty, ambiguity, and value complexity, along with practical and cognitive limitations, are likely to rule out "maximizing" (Mintz & Geva, 1997).
5. **Order-sensitive search:** as opposed to the rational choice model, Poliheuristic theory argues that variations in the manner in which alternatives are described and the order in which they are presented has a profound impact on the choices and preferences of the decision maker.

3.4.2 Stage 2: Logic of rationality

During the second stage of decision-making, the logic of rationality is significant for the leader instead of cognition and politics, altering the decision-making process accordingly. After simplification of the decision matrix by discarding alternatives that could be politically damaging, the leader is more likely to choose between the remaining options in a more rational manner, minimizing associated costs and risks.

At this stage, the leader selects from the option based on either of the two types of alternative-based strategy:

1. An expected utility calculus- alternative with the highest overall expected value;
2. Lexicographic choice- optimization is among the most significant dimension.

The first strategy seeks to compute and analyze the costs and benefits attached to each alternative, whereas the second strategy entails that the final outcome must attain the goal of utility maximization across the dimension that is considered as most significant for the decision maker. In the lexicographic scenario, dimensions are not equally weighed; the most crucial dimension is

rigorously evaluated for each option and therefore, the ultimate decision needs to be best in this way, but it does have to be optimal in an overall sense. This depicts maximization on a limited as opposed to a grand scale.



Figure 3.3: application of logic of rationality during the second stage of decision making

Source: Author's own figure

3.5 Modeling Erdogan foreign policy (2016-2022)

In the contemporary era, Turkish foreign policy has emerged as a topic of significant interest, evident by recurrent media coverage, policy papers, and rigorous academic attention. This can partly be explained by Ankara's centrality of pressing global and regional problems as well as its standing as a rising power. The transition from the presidential system in the aftermath of the July 2018 elections has led to the concentration of power in the hands of president Erdogan and his close entourage (Kirişci & Toygür, 2022). The elimination of the system of checks and balances and the exclusion of traditional mechanisms have resulted in weakened institutions, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Therefore, Turkish foreign policy has visibly shifted away from the longstanding emphasis of the West towards a more robust Eursianist, nationalist, and neo-imperialist agenda (Kubicek, 2022). This transition cannot be explained by the rise of AKP in 2022 because, during 20 years of its rule, the party itself has witnessed notable changes. In particular, it initially focused on zero problems with neighbor policy, featuring a push for EU membership, emphasis on mediation attempts in regional conflicts, democracy, and soft power projection. However, this approach has given away, from 2016 onwards to a more assertive, anti-Western, and revisionist foreign policy based on the quest for strategic autonomy and hard power. This section seeks to apply the Poliheuristic theory to analyze the shift in Turkey's foreign policy outlook. In doing so, it will analyze a myriad of domestic and international factors across key dimensions, such as economic, military, and strategic.

3.5.1 Foreign policy alternatives and utility dimensions

At least three distinct foreign policy alternatives can be identified when the foreign policy vision of Turkish decision-makers is combined with the literature.

A1: First Alternative can be termed as status quo foreign policy, referring to the foreign policy orientation of AKP governments between 2002 and 2014.

A1 could be summarized as consisting of the following components:

1. Commitment to EU membership and transatlantic alliance- NATO;
2. Adoption of non-confrontational posture and emphasis on establishing cordial relations in its neighborhood;
3. The emphasis is on Turkey's significant role as a bridge between civilizations due to its cultural and ideational assets.

A2: Second Alternative can be termed as revisionist foreign policy, referring to foreign policy orientation of AKP government between 2016 and 2022.

A2 could be summarized as consisting of the following components:

1. Regional activism without emphasis on relations with the EU;
2. Adoption of confrontational postures with emphasis on naval power and military might;
3. Quest for strategic autonomy vis-à-vis West and geopolitical balancing between different power centers.

A3: This Alternative can be termed as the foreign policy of the opposition i.e., table for six, ahead of 2023 elections.

A3 could be summarized as consisting the following components:

1. Normalization of relations with the EU;
2. Recalibration of international alliances;
3. Neutrality in regional conflicts as opposed to Ideological and partisan foreign policy.

According to Poliheuristic theory, domestic politics is "the essence of decision making," making it an essential dimension of each foreign policy alternative. Therefore, the first dimension (D1) is the "domestic political dimension," followed by the second dimension (D2) as the "military/strategic dimension," the third dimension (D3) as the "economic dimension."

3.5.2 Implication across utility dimensions

- **Political dimension (D1)**

AKP's decision rule serves as a cognitive shortcut for its decision-makers to reject certain alternatives based on domestic politics consequences. Given that the decision rule of AKP is to ensure legitimacy and political survival, policy alternatives will be analyzed on the basis of the answer to the following question: "Is Ax (x=1, 2, 3) expected to result in the political survival of AKP?"

An emphasis on Turkey's accession to the EU was regarded as a source of political legitimacy for the AKP government, whereby the EU-led process of democratization was viewed as providing a protective shield for the government in its domestic political activities. However, the weak commitment of the bloc has caused serious doubts among the Turkish political elites, especially in the aftermath of failed 2016 military coup. The transition to conservative democracies in key European states in the 21st century has resulted in the weakening of the pro-Turkey coalition within the EU (Benedetto, Hix, & Mastrorocco, 2020). For instance, Germany and France have viewed Turkey as a significant 'outsider' and a privileged partner in terms of mutual economic and security interests as opposed to a natural 'insider' sharing collective European identity. Simultaneously, emergent non-western states as alternative allies have led to the diminishing credibility of the EU in the current global order, paving the way for pragmatic transformation in Turkey's domestic political discourse. While the prospects of Ankara's accession to the EU remain remote, the former must not shut its door to the latter. Putting an end to the accession process would potentially eradicate ambiguity in the EU-Turkey relations, as well as a weapon from the arsenal of anti-EU populist parties and even make the domestic political situation a less shore point in their bilateral relations, but it will not contribute towards the resolution of disputes between Turkey and EU-member countries and push Ankara further away from the West (Scazzieri, 2021). Therefore, based on this discussion, A1 provides lesser utility than A3.

The maximum utility acquired by A2. Erdogan as an all-powerful head of presidential government has led Turkey towards an incremental path to democratic backsliding and authoritarianism. To evaluate shifting trends in Turkish foreign policy, it is essential to comprehend Erdogan's mindset and the significance he attaches to attaining domestic popularity in sustaining a monopoly over

power (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). First, Erdogan's foreign policy can be viewed as an extension of his vision of a "New Turkey" built on an inflated sense of self-identity. Second, Erdogan has used adventurous foreign policy moves to avert attention from domestic governance crises (Smith, 1996). For example, Turkey carried out a cross-border military incursion into northern Syria immediately in the aftermath of the 2016 military coup. According to Mansfield and Snyder, assertive foreign policy pays off in the domestic sphere for leaders who capitalize on populist nationalism, securitizing political agenda to gather massive support by exerting control over media, framing public debates, and deeming opposition as docile (Smith, 1996). In Turkey, strategic autonomy has been used as discourse to legitimize public discourse and has appealed to broad-based nationalists. Third, Erdogan has utilized its foreign policy narrative to fragment the opposition. His power base rests on the alliance between AKP (43%) and ultra-nationalists MHP (9%), and opposition presents a grave challenge to his monopoly (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). However, he utilizes 'strategic autonomy' discourse to move attention away from domestic problems and polarizes the opposition by stigmatizing critics of his regime as actors who are not "domestic and national." In this regard, Eastern Mediterranean depicts how autonomy has been used as a discursive instrument of foreign policy, enabling the creation of an improbable political coalition between religious-conservative AKP and ultra-nationalist and secular Eurasinaist. Thus, with regard to maximizing the populist dividend, Erdogan's autonomous and unilateral foreign policy, based on hard power and national autonomy, seems sensible.

Thus, given the domestic political conditions of Turkey, preference ordering in D1 is A2>A3>A1

- ## Military/strategic dimension (D2)

The strategic or military implication of foreign policy is dependent on the grand strategy formulated by the decision-makers. The attainment of a grand vision calls for the mobilization of all available resources towards a particular goal, including the military. Ahmet Davutoglu's zero problems with the neighbor policy and emphasis on soft power initially bought success for Tukey. For example, it led to the establishment of cordial ties with Armenia, reconciliation with Assad's regime in Syria, and enhanced ties with Russia. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of social power in Turkish foreign policy is overestimated; the optimistic phase ended with the beginning of the Arab Spring protests. Turkey has not only become a party to the raging civil war in Syria for more than a

decade, but it has also fueled intra-Turkish conflict with the Kurds. In 2017, in spite of NATO's resistance, Turkey bought the S-400 air defense system from Russia, prompting western sanctions and the banishment of Turkish participation in the construction of F-35 fighter aircraft. Therefore, the zero problem policy had transformed into "fault lines everywhere." Turkey has developed a robust national defense sector that fulfills 60% of its demands; this self-sufficiency has enhanced the state's confidence in power projection. On the strategic front, governing coalition of Turkey believes that global order is no longer centered on the West, which calls for a recalibration of its policies of geopolitical balancing vis-à-vis different centers of powers, particularly Russia, China, and the West. What Western capitals view as "abnormal foreign policy" can be deemed an adjustment to new normality within international affairs, whereby A1 seems incompatible. Turkish foreign policy is an expression of a transforming world whose poles are losing their clearly defined contours.

Turkish activism can be witnessed in international alliances and regional organizations. For example, in September 2022, Erdogan expressed his wish to become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a body whose charter specifically states containment of NATO as its policy. Moreover, in Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey is perceived as a disruptive actor, raising American concerns over the breakdown of the status quo in the Aegean Sea. Currently, in the Ukraine war, Erdogan is attempting to pull off a balancing act: fulfillment of its NATO obligations and maintaining its alliance with Russia. However, assuming the role of a neutral mediator in the wake of desired endgames pitched by both sides seems unrealistic. In this regard, Turkey can employ strides such as anti-war rhetoric to support stability in the Black sea region, use of diplomacy, etc.

Thus, Turkey's foreign policy and strategic vision are tightly interwoven with its national interests and its geopolitical realignments, depicting that the state has grown out of the conventional East-West binary, with strides in defense, security, and military a major component to preserve its objective.

Based on the analysis, preference ordering in the strategic dimension is assumed as such A2>A3>A1

- **Economic dimension (D3)**

The purpose of this section is to highlight the preference ordering of AKP leaders on the basis of the economic consequences of policy options. Currently, the primary reason behind widespread disenchantment with AKP is Erdogan's economic policies. Under extreme duress, consumer inflation in Turkey has increased to 80%, gravely impacting the living standards of the population (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2022). On the Economic ground, Turkey's dependence on European markets and foreign investment is high (Piri, 2021). In 2019, Turkey's annual import bill amounted to $30 billion and it requires tens of billion in FDI or hot cash flow annually to experience a growth of 4% (Cagaptay, 2019). As far as Turkey's trade with China, Russia, Iran, and the border Middle East is concerned, it is asymmetrical in nature and does not come close to supply chains from the "Strategic West." For instance, in 2018, Ankara's imports from Beijing were worth $20.7 billion, whereas its exports amounted to $2.9 billion. Similarly, its imports from Moscow amounted to $22 billion, and exports totaled only $3.4 billion (Cagaptay, 2019). Although Erdogan has diversified Turkey's trade partners, in 2018, non-Western partners accounted for only 44% of its trade. On the other hand, the EU alone constituted 42%, and the West as a whole 56% (Cagaptay, 2019). Therefore, it is premature to view the economic outlook of the state with a major shift away from the West. In October 2022, the Turkish Foreign Minister stated that Ankara possesses the potential to emerge as an energy hub for natural gas directed toward Europe. Russia has called for redirection of its gas supplies intended for the EU from the Nord Steam pipeline to the Black Sea and further to Europe via Turkey (Ackerman, 2022). However, the Russian proposal negates the core philosophy of energy diversification- independence in decision-making via an autonomous institution. In contrast, Putin's proposal has the potential to increase Ankara's reliance on Moscow, which in turn could expose Turkey to mounting pressure from the EU and USA over heightened concerns that Moscow could use energy collaboration to circumvent sanctions. Turkey can still emerge as an energy hub if it turns to alternative suppliers. For example, it could enhance the capabilities of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) and Southern Gas Corridor (Ackerman, 2022). Moreover, Eastern Mediterranean gas reverse, hydrocarbon exploration, and pipeline deals could allow Turkey to address its chronic economic issues. However, Ankara's strained relations with the majority of the states bordering the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Greece and Cyprus, make this option unviable. Commercial logic suggests that Europe will no longer remain a major market for Russian gas; therefore, exploration of phantom energy collaboration opportunities at the expense of getting exposed to Western sanctions is unlikely to

transform turkey into an energy hub. Therefore, it is crucial for Ankara to recalibrate its international alliances in terms of their economic implications.

Based on the analysis, preference ordering in the economic dimension is assumed as such A1>A3>A2

3.5.3 Ratings and the decision matrix

Policy alternatives	**Dimensions**			**Total expected utility**
	Political (D1)	**Military/strategies (D2)**	**Economic (D3)**	
A1	1	1	3	5
A2	3	3	1	7
A3	2	2	2	6

Table 3.2: Decision matrix of Erdogan's foreign policy and expected utility of alternatives

According to the table, A2 provides the maximum overall utility. Although A1 provides maximum utility across economic dimension, it can be ruled out on the basis of the non-compensatory principle. Therefore, Turkey's drift towards the strategically autonomous foreign policy is the result of a two stages process, which takes into account both domestic and international contexts.

CHAPTER IV

BLUE HOMELAND DOCTINE AND TURKISH MARITIME CLAIMS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

4.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Turkish navy began to transform its strategic policy. The groundwork for the new naval policy was laid during the time when the navy was undergoing modernization. Under its littoral approach, Ankara seeks to sustain a strong coastal defense of its maritime boundaries and asserts that the littoral water surrounding the states is, in effect, an extension of its borders. Therefore, it needs to protect it in the same manner as its land borders. Turkish military activism in the Eastern Mediterranean appears to be directed by an enthusiastic legal and geopolitical doctrine established on the claim of the vast maritime domain, known as the Blue Homeland doctrine, which amalgamates components of the security dilemma, prestige, and power projection. The concept is formulated by admirals of the Turkish navy, who are well aware of the strategic significance of the sea. Blue Homeland approach enjoys considerable influence among the state's military, political, economic, and intellectual elites. Even though the doctrine contradicts the traditional perception of the Islamic conservatives, the Blue Homeland has been embraced by Turkish president Erdogan, providing him the chance to strengthen his alliance with the nationalist movements. It also provided a legal framework for justifying its actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, in the long run, the success of the Blue Homeland depends on Ankara's propensity to modernize its navy, an effort that would require sustaining secure international partnerships. Although there exists no sanctioned policy that explicitly addresses the Blue Homeland doctrine, there are innumerable actions that depict its influence in the navy.

This chapter highlights Turkish maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, guided by its ambitious Blue Homeland doctrine. Moreover, it traces the origin and the influence of the doctrine among Turkish elites, as well as its impact on policy changes in relation to Turkey. The chapter also discusses Turkey's actions that practically manifest the Blue Homeland doctrine in the Eastern Mediterranean. Lastly, it analyzes the domestic and international factors, as well as the role of leadership in the consolidation of the concept.

4.2 Significance of Eastern Mediterranean

The importance of the Eastern Mediterranean lies in its strategic location at the crossroads between the North-South and East-West geopolitical axes. The region connects Europe, the Levant, and the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, it serves as a maritime gateway for European-Asian trade through the Suez Canal, as well as a passage to the Middle East (Ongun, 2020). Therefore, regional and extra-regional players have attempted to supersede one another by employing economic and political tools, particularly via military-based power projection. The geopolitical dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean are largely shaped by communication between Middle Eastern and European regions. The significance of the Eastern Mediterranean, besides its geopolitical potential, is due to its vast deposits of oil and natural gas. According to the US Geological Survey conducted in 2010, Leviathan Basin, comprised of the open sea of Israel, Palestine, Southern Cyprus Island, and Lebanon, consists of 1.7 billion barrels of crude oil and 3.5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (Schenk, 2010). Moreover, estimates suggest that Nile Delta Basin, situated in Egypt's maritime zone, holds 1.8 billion barrels of crude oil and 6.3 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (Kavaz, 2021). The hydrocarbon resource potential of the Eastern Mediterranean has escalated by gas discoveries from 2009 onwards, which made the region of great interest to energy markets. The first major gas discoveries were made in Tamar and Leviathan offshore from Israel between 2001 and 2010 (Zhang et al., 2019). This was followed by the discovery of the Aphrodite gas field in Southern Cyprus between 2011 and 2014, as well as the Zohr field off the coast of Egypt in 2015. As much as 2.5 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves were found in the whole region between the period of 2009 and 2019, which accounts for 25% of the global gas reserves, having an economic worth of US$ 460 billion (Stanič & Karbuz, 2020). The overall resource potential of the Eastern Mediterranean corresponds to approximately US$ 1.8 trillion (Kavaz, 2021). The economic magnitude and significance of the region have led to increased competition between states at local and international levels. Apart from its vast energy resources, the Eastern Mediterranean region plays a crucial role in the transportation of the Caspian basin's energy, which includes oil from Central Asia and the South Caucasian region through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

For Turkey, the geo-political and geo-economic significance of the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be overstated. Firstly, the resources of the region are significant for Ankara to reduce its energy dependency on international markets; in 2018, Turkey's hydrocarbon imports amounted to US$ 45

billion, inflicting serious pressure on the state's budget. Secondly, Turkey aspires to emerge as a hub for the transfer of energy from the East to the West; according to analysts, Ankara is the most viable option to supply Mediterranean oil and gas to the European markets. Thirdly, Eastern Mediterranean is significant for Turkey due to political rivalries in the region based on differing strategic calculations of the states, including Israel, Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus. These states have been attempting to isolate Ankara from political and economic developments in the region by formulating alliances and creating formal institutions (Telci, 2019). In response, Turkey has enhanced its efforts to partake in the Eastern Mediterranean power struggle. Lastly, the region holds immense value for Turkish national security; it views Eastern Mediterranean as a line of defense against imminent threats that may arise from the South. The involvement of external states, such as China, Russia, the USA, and the EU, have altered the geo-political map of the Eastern Mediterranean and the scope of its relationship with regional neighbors.

4.3 The Blue Homeland doctrine as the centerpiece of Turkish foreign policy

4.3.1 Admiral Cihat Yaycı as the architect of the concept

The roots of the blue homeland doctrine can be traced back to the mid-2000s when Erdogan and AKP had the intention to move closer toward the EU and reduce tensions with Greece. Therefore, Turkey extended its support for the Annan Plan in order to reunify Cyprus, whose northern region had been occupied by the Turkish army since 1974. This represented Turkish goodwill, although the Greek part of the Island refuted the plan in 2004 (Michael & Vural, 2018). However, this approach lacked consensus; nationalist elements in Turkey feared that their interests were being compromised in return for hypothetical membership of the EU. Resultantly, an intellectual current emerged within the Turkish navy, representing ambitious Turkish claims: Thus, the blue homeland is a legal vision with a geopolitical vocation.

The chief architects of the doctrine were Admirals. Despite rejecting the Annan Plan, Cyprus accessed the EU on 1st May 2004. During this time, Cypriots carried out the process of delineating and claiming their own EEZs, drawing on the principles of the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also referred to as the Montego Bay Convention (Gürel, Mullen, & Tzimitras, 2013). In October 2004, two geographers, namely Juan Luis Suárez de Vivero and Juan Carlos Rodríguez Mateos, from the University of Seville in Spain, published an article specifying

the maritime borders of the EU. It also included a map, known as the "map of Seville," that highlighted the EEZs of its member states and validated Cypriot claims. The map claims that the Greek continental shelf, which begins from Meis Island, moves southward to the middle of the Mediterranean Sea (Cetin, 2020). It draws Greek's continental shelf as the basis of the island's border, regardless of its proximity to Turkey. The Seville Map reduces Turkey's maritime jurisdiction to a small region in the Gulf of Antalya. This map received widespread criticism from Turkey, particularly from the military. Ankara asserts that the map unjustly barricades its rights, emphasizing that the formation of a continental shelf area of 40,000 km2 by an Island with a surface area of only 10 km2, that too 2 km from Anatolia and 580 km of the Greece mainland, is invalid under the international law (Cetin, 2020).

As a response, during a symposium moderated by Turkish Naval Forces Command on 14th October 2006 in Ankara, Admiral Cem Gürdeniz, in charge of strategic planning at sea, condemned the EU for embracing a map without legal rationale. Resultantly, he called on Ankara to defend a larger EEZ, which he termed the "Blue Homeland" (Denizeau, 2021) After 2009, Admiral Cihat Yaycı embarked on delineating Turkey's EEZ and called for a common maritime border with Libya. Over the years, various publications have been produced which have popularized the Blue Homeland Doctrine within the Turkish armed forces. Figures that adhered to and defended the doctrine publically included Admirals Soner Polat, Özden Örnek, Mustafa Özbey or Cem Aziz Çakmak (Polat, 2019).

4.3.2 Turkish territorial claims in the Eastern Mediterranean

The Blue Homeland pertains to Turkey's all declared and undeclared maritime jurisdiction zones. According to Gurdeniz, these zones prevail between "25-45 E longitudes and 33-43 E latitudes" (Yurtsever, 2021). Moreover, he asserts that the doctrine is symbolic, emphasizing the redirection of the state's thinking from being land-centric to being focused on the seas.

First and foremost, the Blue Homeland doctrine is the refutation of Greek and Cypriot affirmations in the Eastern Mediterranean region and, therefore, of the "Seville map." Its designers assert that UNCLOS has no legal significance for Turkey since it has neither signed nor ratified it; moreover, Turkey is the only member-state of the UN that does not offer diplomatic recognition to Cyprus (Erdogan, 2021). Turkey rejects the Convention's principles, arguing that they are not suited for the

geography of the Mediterranean Sea; it lays claim to a portion of Cyprus's EEZ on the basis of its definition that no island can possess a full 200 nautical mile EEZs authorized to coastal countries (Denizeau, 2021). Such an arrangement would give huge maritime areas to states, such as Greece; for example, the Kastellórizo archipelago, located a few km off Kaş, allows Athens to assert ownership over the vast maritime zone between Rhodes and Cyprus, and by that means, impeding Turkey's only opening into the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, Blue Homeland doctrine argues that by extending territorial water to 12 nautical miles from a country's baseline, UNCLOS unduly favors countries possessing several nearby islands, of which Greece is the archetype (Denizeau, 2021). Therefore, rejecting the principles of UNCLOS, admirals stand up for a special regime in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Blue Homeland doctrine also denies Greece the continental shelf it claims, which, in turn, is used by Athens to justify its extension of the EEZ. Turkey fears Greece's aspiration to become an archipelagic state, which would allow it to expand its territorial seas 12 nautical miles beyond all of its coasts. In spite of no official claims from Greece over this, Turkey portrays such as situation as casus belli (Hurriyet Daily News, 2020). Moreover, Admiral Yaycı deems some of the Greek Island, especially those in close proximity to Turkey's coast in the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas, belonging to continental shelf discrete from Greek territory. Therefore, he asserts that Kastellórizo island is the portion of an Anatolian continental shelf rather than that of Greece. While the Blue Homeland doctrine does not question Greek sovereignty over the territory, it establishes that the island alone cannot serve a maritime claim for Athens, let alone for an EEZ.

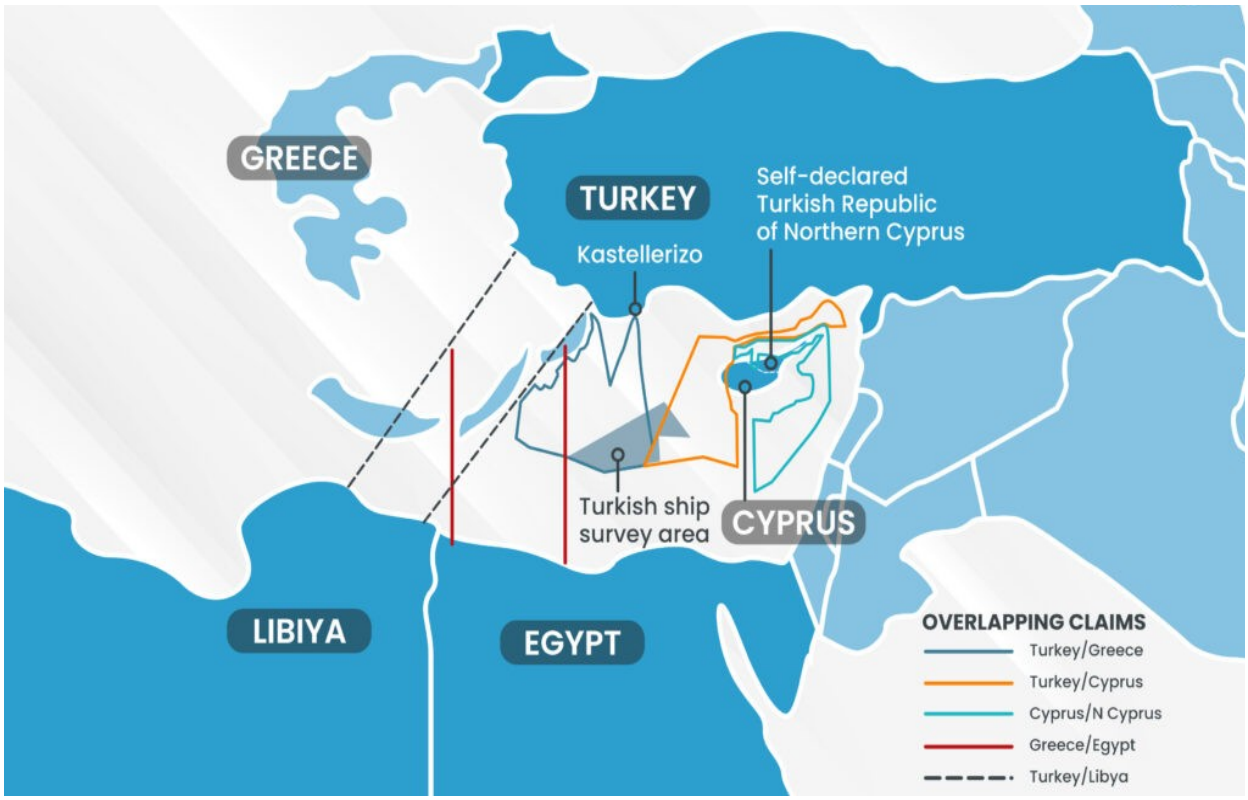

Figure 4.1: Overlapping maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean

Source: Tallberg Foundation. (2020, September 08). Talking Turkey: Power in the 21st Century. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from https://tallbergfoundation.org/articles/talking-turkey/

Furthermore, Cihat Yaycı called for these islands to be demilitarized: "which state is being targeted by the weapons there, if not Turkey?" he argued. He drew on the Treaty of Lausanne, which culminated in 1923, and established the borders of present-day Turkey. According to Admiral Yaycı, Treaty ceded the Islands to Greece; however, it forbade its militarization. This represents a divergence of perception as Greeks assume the regime of complete demilitarization of the Limnos and Samothraki islands, put forth by the Lausanne treaty, to be associated with the total demilitarization of the Straits. Nonetheless, the Montreux Convention of 1936 permitted these states' rearmament, enabling the remilitarization of the two concerned regions. Furthermore, regarding other islands, Athens view the Treaty as only forbidding the installation of naval bases instead of the deployment of weapons (Antonopoulos, 2020). Additionally, Greeks summon the treaty to be not applicable to Dodecanese islands as they were under Italy's sovereignty at that time.

As a result of ambiguities in the interpretation of the Treaty of Lausanne, the adherents of the Blue Homeland doctrine aims to inculcate the clause of the demilitarization of Greek Island in any probable negotiations.

On the basis of these elements, Cem Gülast and Cihat Yaycı, the naval doctrine clearly identify territory claimed by Turkey. Therefore, the Blue Homeland doctrine is "the name of the zone of [Turkish] interests and jurisdiction over fresh and sea waters between the 25th and 45th eastern meridians and the 33rd and 43rd northern parallels" (Gurdeniz, 2020). This zone is compatible with Turkish-owned EEZ in the Black Sea based on the propositions of equidistance along with other riparian countries. On the contrary, it widely trespasses Cypriots and Greeks EEZs. The Blue Homeland doctrine would therefore expand to the Eastern front of the Aegean Sea without annexation of Greek islands there, but leaving them with territorial waters expounded by their present width of 6 nautical miles. In the Mediterranean Sea, the doctrine would border the EEZs of Libya and Egypt, demarcated on the basis of the principle of equidistance between coasts. Lastly, parts of the waters lying between Cyprus, Syria, and Lebanon are also claimed by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Altogether, Turkey and its northern Cypriot ally would have a naval range expanding over 463,000 km2. In accordance with the Blue Homeland doctrine, their maritime territorial claims must serve as the foundation of any probable negotiation with Eastern Mediterranean states.



Figure 4.2: Area encompassing Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine

Source: Yanarocak, H. E. (2022, June 15). Turkey's 'precious loneliness' vs. Greece's multilateralism. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from https://dayan.org/content/turkeys-precious-loneliness-vs-greeces-multilateralism

4.3.3 A maritime vision to serve geopolitical interests

In the 21st century, the Blue Homeland theorist attaches great significance to the sea and calls on Ankara to carry out investment in the space that has historically been neglected. In particular, the Eastern Mediterranean surface is the focus of major power concerns. Firstly, there exists a security concern, especially with regard to Greece, which is viewed by Turkey as an instrument of imperial powers; for instance, the US is recognized as aiming to instrumentalize the rivalry between Turkey

and Greece to assert its dominance in the region (Gurdeniz, 2021). Moreover, Greece is also viewed as an expansionist power seeking to unify with Cyprus.

The Turks fear the revival of the Megali idea, a type of Greek irredentism that first appeared in the nineteenth century, leading Greece to lay claim over the territories of the Ottoman empire. This, coupled with the mistrust of the West, has led Turkey to justify the creation of a maritime zone of interest that would permit Turks to safeguard themselves if required (Aydin, 2003). In this regard, the creation of a common maritime border with Libya has emerged as a significant part of Ankara's nationalistic discourse and security (Telci, 2020). On the one side, it opens up Turkey to a neighborhood where it is viewed as an ally; on the other side, it constrains the establishment of a concurrent Cypriot-Hellenic maritime zone, which could encircle most of the Anatolian peninsula and enclose Turkey to a confined land space. The Blue Homeland doctrine is, therefore, an assurance against the probability of Cyprus joining Greece- the Enosis, a movement associated with the Pan-Hellenic ideal and is demonstrated by nationalists in Turkey as a recurring threat.

While they are not the sole incentive for Turkish claims, Ankara's economic objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean region are real. With the discoveries of vast gas fields, competition between states to delimit EEZs have intensified, and oil and gas exploration ships have been increasingly sent to patrol its waters for hydrocarbon resources. Turkey has sent its ships to disputed regions under the navy's protection to reaffirm its maritime claims. Admirals have also asserted the importance of energy resources in the region; the discovery of the Sakarya gas field in the Black Sea has relativized the significance of the East Mediterranean as a hydrocarbon-supplying area (Özertem, 2020). Nevertheless, the aim is not only to exploit the resources but to control transit passage and the gateway to Europe.

Certainly, these goals formulate a part of a broader geopolitical vision for Turkey. While Ahmet Davutoglu, former foreign minister of Turkey, viewed Anatolia as the hub between European, African, and Asian regions, the Eastern Mediterranean assumes the same role in the concept of Blue Homeland; it straddles the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific region (Ongun, 2020). Located at the mouth of the Suez Canal, it is a significant transit route for trade linking the European continent to the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Moreover, it is the primary maritime interface between the near East and the Mashriq. Resultantly, Cyprus, located at the central point of the EEZ over which Turkey lays claim, becomes a strategic region. In the words of

Cihat Yaycı, it is “the most important island in the Mediterranean in geopolitical and geostrategic terms.” He describes Cyprus as a “veritable aircraft carrier,” permitting easy access to states, including Turkey, Israel, Joran, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt (Moudouros, 2021). Taking into consideration that the hub of the Middle East is structured around a “triangle between the Gulf of Alexandretta, the Gulf of Basra, and the Suez Canal,” Admiral Yaycı asserts that Cyprus controls the Alexandretta-Suez side of the triangle. This effectively explains the involvement of the major powers in the region as well as the resoluteness of Blue Homeland doctrine’s supporters to prevent the reunification of Cyprus to retain the Turkish position in the North and safeguard the EEZ that corresponds to it. Doing so will retain Turkish control over the Eastern Mediterranean basin and intercontinental maritime shipping routes (Moudouros, 2021). While the Blue Homeland doctrine primarily serves to defend a specific territory, it is also an instrument to fulfill strategic, economic, and geopolitical goals. Thus, the doctrine forms the foundation of a comprehensive foreign policy whose orientation impacts distinct ideological movements within Turkey.

4.4 Power-based foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean: Blue Homeland in action

Although there exists no sanctioned naval policy in Turkey that addresses the concept of Blue Homeland, there are multiple examples of its impact on the navy. While the doctrine has been around for fourteen years, it has gained prominence in the last decade.

4.4.1 Turkey’s Naval Forces Strategy 2015

While the Turkish navy has not officially authorized the Blue Homeland, the Naval Forces Strategy 2015 consists of directives and strategies determined by the concept’s littoral and peripheral approaches to its doctrinal objectives. The naval strategy 2015 dedicated an entire chapter to security concerns, with 75% of it emphasizing the surrounding seas of Turkey, including the Black, Aegean, and Mediterranean seas (MSI, 2016). Moreover, it has called for an increased presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The document enlists nine major goals of the Turkish navy: two completely emphasize the littoral defense of the Blue Homeland to safeguard the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) carrying Turkey’s maritime trade and contribute towards the creation of a balanced security perimeter in Ankara’s vicinity (Yükseltürk & Evers, 2018). To attain these goals, the Turkish navy has continued its Operation Mediterranean Shield, which began in April

2006. The operation seeks to secure Turkish interests in the Eastern Mediterranean- establishing situational awareness in maritime jurisdiction, deterring probable illegal activities, and ascertaining the safe transportation of oil from the Yumurtalık and Ceyhan terminals.

4.4.2 The Blue Homeland Exercises 2019 and 2022

Between 27th February and 8th March 2019, the Turkish Navy conducted the Blue Homeland exercise, which involved 103 warships and 20,0000 military personnel across three seas surrounding Turkey: The Black Sea, The Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. This marked the first time in the history of the state that an exercise with such a magnitude was conducted (Kasapoglu, 2019). Moreover, the exercise was the practical manifestation of the Blue Homeland doctrine, envisioned by retired admiral Cem Gurdeniz; he stated that the exercise depicted Ankara's naval prowess as it promoted domestically produced naval vessels. The goal was to denote the interoperability of the Turkish army and exhibited the new weapons system of the Navy, such as the MILGEM ship's targeting system and deployment of Unmanned Ariel Vehicles (UAVs) in naval operations. According to admiral Gurdeniz, the exercise depicted that Ankara has emanated as a maritime power, even though there are debates over the validity of this claim (Hurriyet Daily News, 2019). However, it advanced Turkey's political objective of projecting power both regionally and globally. By referring to the drill as the Blue Homeland Exercise, the aim of Turkey was to reinforce the popularity of the document and solidify its place within the Turkish naval policy, even in the absence of official government authorization. Currently, the Blue Homeland has emerged as the vanguard of the Navy's self-defense doctrine. The most robust reaction to the exercise was the trilateral maritime exercise – Medusa 8 - between the military forces of Greece, Egypt, and Cyprus, aimed at strengthening the partnership between these countries (Shay, 2019). Several reports designate that exercise was planned in advance, occuring a month after the 2019 Blue Homeland exercise. Since 2014, Ankara has been vocal about its condemnation of the trilateral alliance and may have contributed towards an upsurge in naval exercises in the region by the involved states. Between the 11th and 21st of April 2022, the Blue Homeland exercise was once again held concurrently in the Black Sea, the Marmara, the Aegean, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Military personnel amounting to 12,000, 122 warships, 21 aircraft, and 14 domestically produced armed drones took part in the exercise (Turkish Minute, 2022) Moreover, the newly developed Turkish drone, Aksungur, was launched, and SAS underwater

defense teams were deployed, during the operations. During the last phase, which lasted from 18th-21st April, as many as 72 ships visited ports that surrounded regions encompassing Turkey (Turkish Minute, 20200). The timing of the operations coincided with the war in Ukraine, which bought to the forefront of NATO's response to Moscow's attacks. President Erdogan addressed the exercise via a video link and highlighted that Turkey conducts humanitarian assistance operations across various locations globally and simultaneously defends its homeland.

4.4.3 Eastern Mediterranean power play

The strategic vision of the Blue Homeland doctrine inherently depends on militaristic logic, entailing the use of force; this is apparent in Turkey's diplomatic categorization of littoral countries into three distinct groupings: allies, structural adversaries, and occasional adversaries. Among the structural adversaries are Greece and Cyprus, as the "Blue Homeland" is throttled by their waters and EEZs (Denizeau, 2021). To attain its objectives, the Turkish navy has resorted to denial tactics in the Blue Homeland region. Moreover, it uses warships to harass scientific research vessels and impede their work. Ankara's modern gunboat diplomacy is escalating as it seeks to assert control via its power to disrupt (Jonathan, 2020). In the aftermath of multiple incursions by Turkey's research vessels into Cyprus' EEZ, in 2018, a Turkish warship warned that it would sink every survey ship within the Cypriot EEZ. Therefore, to avoid confrontation, a vessel contracted by an Italian oil enterprise had to undertake last-minute evasive actions (Paraskova, 2018). In January 2019 and 2020, accompanied by a frigate, Turkey's research ships: Barbaros and Oruc Reis encroached on the Cypriot and Greek EEZ; it put Turkish and Greek navies on high alter after the former's frigate came into collision with a Greek naval vessel in August 2021 (Trofimov & Gauthier-Villars, 2020). In June 2020, the French frigate, Courbet, was targeted by a Turkish warship's fire-control radar three times off the Libyan coast. Courbet was part of a NATO-led mission to enforce the UN arms embargo; it was also trying to find a cargo ship managed by a Turkish enterprise (Guez, 2020). Turkey maintains that international law cannot block its access to hydrocarbon resources. This is apparent in the activities of Turkey's seismic and drilling vessels. On 9th August 2022, President Erdogan inaugurated Turkey's newest drilling ship- Abdul Han; it is the largest hydrocarbon drilling ship and would be deployed in the region northwest of Cyprus, which is considered by Turkey as its sovereign dominion.

In this context, Turkey is rapidly expanding and modernizing its navy; this is aided by Ankara's indigenous defense industry. The goal evidently is to convert its fleet into a fully capable blue water navy with an ability to project power beyond its immediate neighborhood. Central to Turkey's buildup is the Spanish-designed TCG Anadolu, a ship whose explicit objective is to carry out amphibious assault operations (Daily Sabah, 2022). It is the leading ship of the MILGEM project, which will provide the navy with a new surface combatant every year until 2030, along with unmanned missile boats. TCG Anadolu is unique as it hosts unmanned aerial vehicles; additionally, six Reis class submarines are all set to become the part of the fleet by 2027. Their air-independent power allows them allows them to operate for a week without atmospheric oxygen, an ideal condition for Eastern Mediterranean flashpoints (The Economist, 2021).

Furthermore, Turkey, according to its operational needs, frequently abuses the 'NATO' status of its warships in the region. A French naval officer stated, "If a French warship is on a national mission, it will not suddenly declare herself to be a NATO ship in order to justify an action that has nothing to do with NATO or that is directed against another ally. The Turks don't play fair on that." Via employing tactics, such as abusing the seabed warfare strategies and NAVTEX services, Ankara puts into effect a status of implicit ownership over vast sea zones.

Although not immediately, the global community has begun to monitor the situation. The EU and the USA have deemed Turkey's action as illegal; moreover, the former has withheld financial assistance to Turkey, and France's fighter jets have carried out overflight of Turkey's drilling vessels. Nevertheless, these actions lack substance; among a few responses with substantial ramifications for Ankara is the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, the purpose of which is to reorganize the gas market and send a clear message to Turkey that regional players would circumvent the state until it is willing to change its actions.

4.4.4 Turkey-Libya Maritime deal 2019

Amid rising tensions with other regional countries, Ankara has turned its emphasis towards other countries in order to reap global support for its drilling operations. As early as 2011, officials in Turkey attempted to initiate agreements with Egypt and Libya; however, the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011 impeded progress. In the aftermath of Muammar Gaddafi's death in Libya, Turkey continued to evaluate the situation because it was aware that the state presented the opportunity for Ankara to enhance its influence in both the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions. Turkey

openly extended its support for the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) since January 2020. As a goodwill gesture between the two states, Libya and Tukey signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which delineated their maritime boundaries (TRT World, 2019). This deal was utilized by Ankara to prove to the global community that Turkey cannot be isolated in the exploration of Eastern Mediterranean resources. The deal sets forth an 18.6 nautical mile broad stretch of Turkey's and Libya's coastline (Hacaoglu, 2019). As depicted by the figure below, in accordance with the deal, the sea area encompassing the four points is exclusive to Ankara and Tripoli; Erdogan stated, "other international actors cannot conduct exploration activities in the areas marked in the memorandum." The deal enables joint exploration of natural resources between the states and permits Turkey to defend Libya's maritime goals.

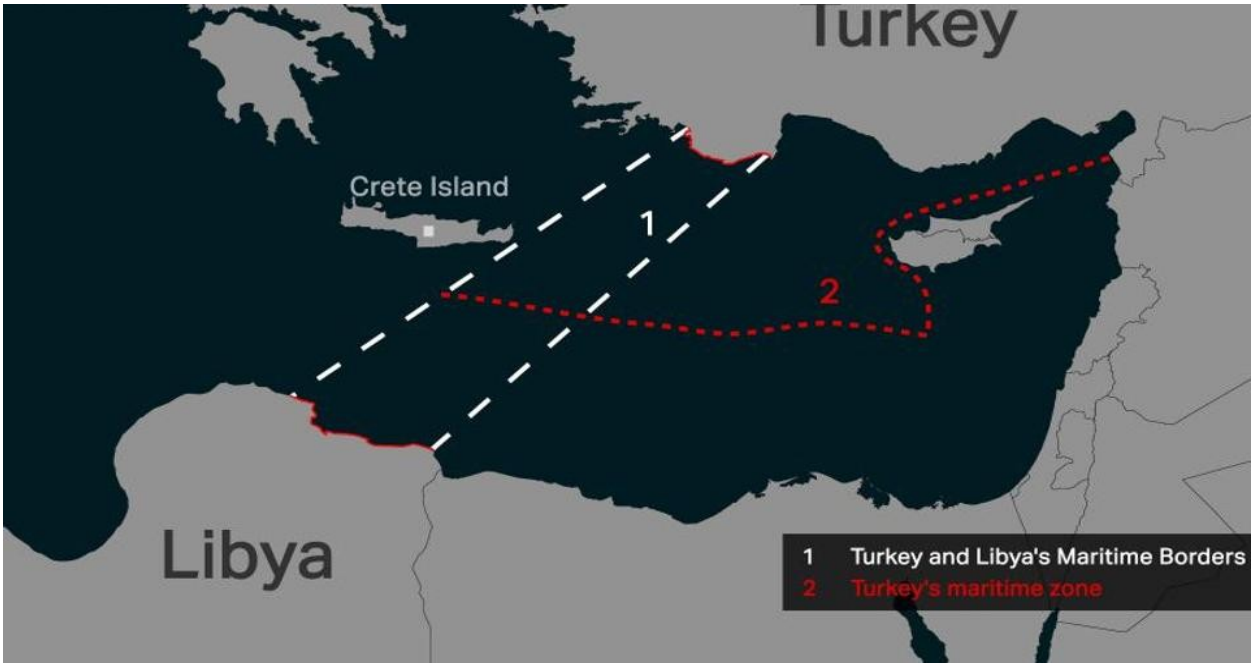

Figure 4.3: Potential shared maritime zone between Turkey and Libya

Source: TRT World. (2019, December 10). Why Did Turkey Sign a Maritime Deal with Libya? Retrieved February 28, 2023, from https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/why-did-turkey-sign-a-maritime-deal-with-libya-32064

Nevertheless, the region covered by the agreement overlap with Greek EEZ, particularly around Crete island (Conley & Ellehuus, 2020). It is widely believed that via this deal, Turkey is playing a long-term game to force the global community to agree towards equitable maritime settlement in

the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkish actions have had significant consequences; upon signing the deal, Greece expelled Libya's ambassador to Greece and submitted an official complaint to the UN. Regional states have also continued to circumvent Ankara in the natural gas sector; for example, in January 2020, a trilateral agreement was signed between Israel, Greece, and Cyprus to construct a pipeline that could potentially supply the European region with 4% of its natural gas needs. The proposed pipeline will be 1900 km long, running from Eastern Mediterranean to Italy through Greece (Kavaz, 2021). The construction plan depicts that the pipeline would run via Turkish claimed EEZ, but Ankara was not consulted or called for participation in this joint venture. The major response to the MOU has been military cooperation between the navies of regional states. Turkish support for the GNA, along with the maritime deal, has made it a significant player in the civil war in Libya. Even though the UN authorizes the GNA, other states, which include Egypt, Russia, UAE, and France, lead their support to LNA led by Khalifa Haftar (Grigoriadis, 2021). To curb the conflict, the UN has inflicted an arms embargo on Libya; the EU, NATO, and the UN have assured its enforcement via Operation Sea Guardian and EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. Nevertheless, Turkey provides GNA with drones and an air defense system in violation of the embargo, asserting that the embargo is not applicable to arms from states other than Turkey. As a result, The US has called the EU to reevaluate the particulars of the naval missions. Moreover, the maritime deal between Turkey and GNA has generated tensions among NATO partners due to the stipulations that Turkey will preserve Libyan maritime interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

4.5 Blue Homeland: a doctrine in the hands of President Erdogan

While the support of nationalist and Kemalist objection to the Blue Homeland doctrine has certain ideological coherence, Turkish president Erdogan has made it one of the top priorities of its foreign policy. Compliance with this maritime doctrine stems from two sets of instantaneous considerations: on the domestic front, it includes reconciliation with military and nationalist elements; on the external front, the regional environment of the Eastern Mediterranean is flared with tensions.

4.5.1 Domestic politics

President Erdogan's adoption of the Blue Homeland doctrine can be perceived as the rendition of an extensive reversal of political alliances in Turkey. In early 2010, intending to expel old Kemalist

elites from the state institutions, Erdogan formed an informal alliance with the supporters of Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic preacher living in America since 1999 (Tee, 2021). The Gulen movement gained considerable influence over the Turkish Police and the Judiciary, with its supporters attaining high-ranking posts within the government, armed forces, and academia. In their goal to drive out Kemalists, shared by the AKP, these active militants ran up in opposition to traditional army leaders. However, the Blue Homeland theorists saw Fethullah Gulen and his followers as a threat because they believed that the group was working to weaken Turkey by targeting its military and fulfilling "Euro-Atlantic" interests. This latent conflict had severe repercussions. In 2011, in the aftermath of the discovery of a presumed plot by Kemalists, known as the Balyoz affair, as many as 200 personnel were subjected to prison sentences, including Cem Gürdeniz and Soner Polat. Beginning in 2012, the ties between the Gulen movement and AKP became complex; their growing antagonism came to a crescendo with the failed military coup in 2016, which is directly equated by AKP to the Gulen and his supporters (Tee, 2021). Since then, there has gradually been a reconciliation between AKP's powerful elites and the Turkish military. The Judiciary refuted the judgments of the Balyoz trial, and in June 2014, all those imprisoned were released from jail. Moreover, the failed military coup led to the takeover of the military institutions, allowing the followers of the Blue Homeland to enter into the power circles. Resultantly, a multitude of Gulen followers were ousted from the government ministries, enabling the entrance of Eurasionists and nationalists, who urged the Blue Homeland doctrine to be at the forefront of the defense agenda. At a wider level, the failure of peace talks with the Kurdistan Worker's Party, cooperation with the military, and the nationalist turn within the presidential discourse have enabled the formation of an alliance between AKP and MPH, allowing the latter to propagate its strategic and diplomatic perceptions (Denizeau, 2021). Furthermore, Erdogan has instrumentalized his foreign policy, and his actions have frequently been directed toward pleasing different factions of the Turkish electorate. For instance, in the 2000s, Erdogan embarked on the Europeanization process, which enjoyed significant popularity amongst the liberals at that time. Similarly, opening up to Arab countries, particularly Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, was triggered by geopolitical interests and was a reaction to the Turkish small conservative business community that wished to enhance the region's exports. Through the Blue Homeland doctrine, Erdogan is not only targeting the adherents of MHP but is also advocating a sovereignist vision, which has immense popularity within Turkey, including the opposition.

4.5.2 A favorable strategic context for the Blue Homeland doctrine

The rise of maritime issues to the forefront of Turkish foreign policy can also be deemed as Erdogan's response to regional developments. The discovery of hydrocarbon resources by Israel and Cyprus in 2009 and 2011, respectively, depicted the energy potential of the Eastern Mediterranean region. In 2015, the Egyptian discovery of the vast Zohr deposits evoked other states to formulate a water-control strategy (Kavaz, 2021). For Ankara, the crises emerged when Egypt's foreign ministry declared the formation of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum on 14th January 2019. Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, and Palestine joined the discussion forum as producers and Greece, Jordan, and Italy as importers, leading to a sense of isolation within Turkey (Sukkarieh, 2021). In August 2017, Cihat Yaycı assumed the role of chief of staff of the Naval Forces Command. Under these conditions, the EEZ proposal drafted by him 10 years' prior gained immense popularity; it viewed Turkey as an important transit route between the forum's producing states as well as European consumers. This was welcomed by the Turkish president because it was compatible with Erdogan's policy towards Libya. Certainly, Libya was an intersecting point between admirals-backed Blue Homeland doctrine and the AKP. After the fall of Qaddafi, Ankara supported Libya's Muslim Brotherhood. Despite being a minority power during the 2014 general election, they accomplished the creation of an autonomous government in Tripoli (based in the western region of Tripolitania), and the newly-elected parliament was located in Tobruk (based in the eastern region of Cyrenaica) (Gurpinar, 2015). In 2019, Field Marshal Haftar began a military offensive in Tripolitania, which led Turkey to increase its support for the Tripoli regime. Within this context, the territorial division between Turkey and Libya devised by Cihat Yaycı gained interest in the eyes of Erdogan. 2019 deal with Libya allowed Turkey to attain two sets of objectives: first, it allowed Erdogan to position himself as the flagbearer of Turkey's national interests by impeding the formation of the Helleno-Egyptian axis, and second, it formalized Ankara-Tripoli cooperation. The Blue Homeland doctrine, therefore, became APK's instrument to support the Muslim brotherhood against Marshal Haftar, who received diplomatic, logistical, and military support from Egypt (Telci, 2020). Turkish administration views the conflict in Libya as an opportunity to halt the plans of President El-Sisi. In early 2020, Turkey deployed its troops in Libya in order to back Fayez al-Sarraj's regime and safeguard the EEZ agreement, resulting in what is deemed by analysts as a "great Mediterranean game."

The emerging pattern of alliances in the region does not favor Turkey, as only Libya and TRNC explicitly support Turkey. Therefore, on the recommendation of Blue Homeland theorists, Erdogan seeks to reach out to Mediterranean powers, such as Israel and Egypt, to consolidate its power. For example, in March 2021, Turkey announced a rapprochement with Egypt, which led president El-Sisi to contemplate a new strategy towards maritime boundaries; in return, Ankara called for the Muslim Brotherhood members exiled in Turkey to abate their criticism of the Egyptian administration. These developments greatly pleased the admirals, who saw them as a success of their ideas. In particular, the Blue Homeland doctrine has helped Erdogan in navigation the geopolitical landscape and generate a response to the strategic situations in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

CHAPTER V

ROLE OF REGIONAL AND EXTRA-REGIONAL ACTORS IN COUNTERING TUREKY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

5.1 Introduction

In the contemporary era, the Eastern Mediterranean region has attained unprecedented significance as well as a definite geopolitical space with changed global and security dynamics. The emergent geopolitical order of the region is majorly constructed by international and regional power transformations, along with domestic developments, such as the course of Turkish foreign policy and the discovery of hydrocarbon resources. Resultantly, a change in regional interstate conflict and collaboration has emerged. On the one side, states including Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel, backed by the USA and France, have formulated a part of an emerging security network in the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other side, Turkey, due to being largely excluded from regional mechanisms, such as Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) and the EastMed pipeline project, has attempted the "deconstruct" the regional state of affairs to its own advantage. Although Turkey-Israel cooperation has the potential to transfer the region's gas to the European market in a more cost-effective and feasible manner, it is unlikely that Tel Aviv would barricade the rights of its regional ally- Cyprus. Furthermore, Turkey's suppositions that Russia and China would play against the EU and the US as a balancing actor has gone largely unrewarded due to their multidimensional ties with the regional actors. As such, the Eastern Mediterranean state of affairs, amid a period of geopolitical polarization, is conducive to conflicts, which often transcend its borders.

This chapter seeks to examine the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the regional actors, their agendas, as well as policies directed against Turkey to contain its increasing assertiveness under the Blue Homeland Doctrine. In doing so, this chapter emphasizes the role played by both regional and extra-regional players, including Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, France, the USA, China, and Russia, and discusses Ankara's response to its ongoing containment and isolation.

5.2 Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF): An energy alliance to isolate Turkey

The Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which culminated in January 2019, is a collaborative attempt headed by Israel and aided by the USA to unify the littoral countries in the region with the broader goal of preparing, coordinating, interacting, and developing and mutual posture against Turkish aggression (Mitchell, 2020). The objective is to encircle Turkey and restrict its EEZ from a probable 145,000 km^2 to less than one-third, which is merely 41,000 km^2, and supply gas through alternative routes to demand centers globally (Çubukçuoğlu, 2021). As a reaction, Ankara has condemned what it deems as a 'provocative stance,' sharply criticizing the bloc's complete exclusion of its legitimate interests and indifference to its equitable delimitation of maritime boundaries. Therefore, Turkey has resorted to the use of coercive power to tip the regional balance in its favor. The notable transformation in Turkish defense posture, facilitated by an arsenal of homegrown high technological platforms, elicited sharp admonishment for leading EMGF states i.e., the EU, the USA, and the Republic of Cyprus. Similarly, The Greek Cypriot administration concurrently enhanced its ties with regional states, such as Saudi Arabia, via high-level talks, visits, and interaction in order to augment the capability, influence, and decision-making power of the EMGF in an attempt to corner Ankara into *fait accompli* (Gurcan, 2019).

Against the backdrop of these geopolitical developments, the EMGF was instituted at a critical juncture amid the discovery of vast hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey scrambled to send off two exploration ships and drilling platforms, accompanied by a navy frigate, to partake in the great game. Ankara's militaristic tendencies signaled to the concerned global capitals as to what Turkey would do if the push comes to shove on crucial issues of national interests. According to Greece, Greek Cypriots do not possess enough power to constrain Turkey's action alone; however, a coalition of states can exercise greater power than any of them could individually. Therefore, EMFG members, which comprises Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Italy, and Palestine, entered into an alliance as a geostrategic measure to oppose Turkey's asymmetric economic, military, and diplomatic clout in the region (Youness, 2019). The aims of the bloc are to generate a common vision, enhance efforts to delimit maritime zones and foster energy collaboration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, due to the variability in the levels and intensity of conflict of EMGF's member states with Turkey, the alliance is clearly not intended to be solely an economic initiative aimed to regulate the region's gas market but is a platform with a broader scope to coordinate political, military and diplomatic collaboration about member states to send clear signals to Ankara. In the words of the Ex-Israeli ambassador to Nicosia, the forum intends to provide backing to Greek Cypriots, which includes a defensive shield vis-à-vis Turkey. One of the EMGS's objectives is to formulate an OPEC-like cartel bloc to phase out unsought intervention as confine gas trading to an elite group of producers with allocated quotas (Gurcan, 2019). The forum enjoys global support to leverage its potential to transform the Eastern Mediterranean region into an energy supply center and particularly in the case of Cyprus, a transit hub. On the other hand, Ankara aims to acquire an equitable share of gas trading, be it with its conduit potential or via exploitation of probable reserves in the EEZ it lays claims. This has resulted in an impasse, partly become "groupthink," which involves overestimation of the EMFG's stability, contributing to entrenchment into its own position. While the group's focus on the issue of hydrocarbon resources has resulted in high levels of coordination among member states; however, until the scope increases materially into a bloc-like formation, the cohesion of the group will remain fragile in the face of internal and external threats, costly tradeoffs, and state's national priorities.

5.3 EastMed Pipeline project: Energy triangle between Israel, Greece, and Cyprus

The Energy Triangle refers to the natural gas exploration plan between the three allies: Cyprus, Israel, and Greece. This term was first used at Cyprus-Israel Business Association held in Cyprus in 2010. As a result of the joint establishment of EEZ between Cyprus and Israel, this signified the initiation of increased cooperation between the two Eastern Mediterranean states; both agreed on mutual extraction of natural gas via the US enterprise Noble Energy to decrease financial costs for both states (Stavris, 2012). Greece joined the alliance in 2011 with the goal of exporting natural gas to the European region by 2015 via a power plant near Limassol (Cyprus Profile, 2021). In August 2013, the three countries signed a Tripartite energy MOU in the aftermath of yearlong negotiations. The 2000MW Euro-Asia interconnector was designed to lift Nicosia and Tel Aviv out of energy isolation via cost-effective electricity production (Joffre, 2022). This represented a systematic attempt on behalf of the three countries to formulate mutually beneficial collaboration across various activities, including intelligence sharing, joint military exercise, and the usage of UAVs and satellites.

The Israel-Cyprus-Greece Energy Triangle was reinforced in January 2020 with the signing of the Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline accord in Greece by the leaders of the three countries; this geo-economic bloc was facilitated by the USA. The EastMed project is a proposed onshore/offshore pipeline that seeks to directly connect the resources of the region to Greek mainland through Cyprus and Crete; from Greece, an overland pipeline would transfer gas to the EU markets. The proposed length of the pipeline is 1900 km, with a depth of 3km and the overall capacity to transfer 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually (NS Energy, 2021). Nevertheless, in January 2022, the US withdrew its support for the pipeline based on three reasons: the technical and economic viability of the plan, ecological concerns, and exacerbating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The pipeline would likely be redirected via Egypt in order to bypass Cyprus. There are several obstacles to the realization of this project; the major confounding variable here is the ongoing dispute between Turkey and Cyprus, due to which the project has to take a costlier route to avoid Ankara's territorial waters (Karbuz, 2021). The Greek Cypriot maintains control over Aphrodite and Calypso deposits and has utilized these as leverage in asserting that Turkish Cypriots would be able to acquire a share in profits only in case of reunification. Turkey, on the other hand, asserts that energy development projects must be reached after a joint agreement between both sides. Ankara has gone far as to interfere in extraction activities by European enterprises in Cyprus's waters.



Figure 5.1: Proposed route of Eastern Mediterranean pipeline

Source: Ajdin, A., & Ajdin, A. (2020, April 28). EastMed pipeline project seeks offshore EPCI players. Offshore Energy. https://www.offshore-energy.biz/eastmed-pipeline-project-seeks-offshore-epci-players/

Turkey has strongly resisted this project, claiming that its barricades its maritime rights as well as of the TRNC. Turkey's exclusion from both the EastMed pipeline and EMFG coincided with its deteriorating negotiation with the EU and military adventurism in the Eastern Mediterranean (Sukkarieh, 2021). Overcoming the shortcomings of the project would require concerted action to include Turkey and transform the “Energy Triangle” into “Energy Square” because of Ankara’s ideal geostrategic location and gas infrastructure (Robinson & Jeakins, 2019). However, in the wake of the Geopolitical environment of the Eastern Mediterranean, this seems unviable. The project embodies a strategic partnership between three countries that maintain poor ties with Turkey.

5.4 Regional and extra-regional stakeholders and their strategies to counter Turkey

5.4.1 Greece

Complex Greece and Turkish historical and geopolitical objectives surrounding the Eastern Mediterranean are factors shaping their relations in the contemporary era. Competing EEZ claims and the Cyprus issue have remained the bone of contention between the two states for decades (Aydın & Ifantis, 2015). Energy resources in the region insect with both states' geopolitical imaginations and objectives; they view energy as a strategic asset to enhance their political clout. Greece is located between energy-sufficient Middle Eastern and energy-consuming European regions; Furthermore, it is relatively a stable country in the "triangle of instability" between Libya, Syria, and Ukraine (Tsardanidis, 2019). Therefore, Greece aims to emerge as a global energy hub, with natural gas playing a significant role in its energy strategy; the gas infrastructure within the state is diverse, which includes natural gas storage and an LNG terminal. Moreover, it possesses diversified gas supplied via pipelines from Russia through Bulgaria and Azerbaijan through Turkey, as well as LNG from Qatar and Algeria. Resultantly, the EastMed pipeline has the potential to immensely enhance Athens's energy profile and entrench its gas supplies.

Both Greece and Turkey have tactfully utilized the "politics of axes" in the Middle Eastern region to their advantage. In the wake of Turkish actions in the Eastern Mediterranean, Athens's active foreign policy has allowed it to make a resurgence in the region by fostering close ties with countries such as Egypt, Israel, UAE, and Saudi Arabia (Gorvett, 2021). In 2020, Greece and UAE formulated a direct "strategic partnership," anticipating collaboration in various fields, which includes coordination in military and defense; it also signaled their eagerness to surpass the EU-GGC framework (Dimou, 2020). It also gave UAE a place in Eastern Mediterranean's geopolitical space. Resultantly, Athens has become implicated in Middle Eastern rivalries; for instance, it extended its support for Khalifa Haftar, cutting its ties with the UN-backed GNA of Libya. From the perspective of Greece, cordial ties with Middle Eastern states comprise an added value that could not only enhance its influence within the EU but increase its leverage vis-à-vis Turkey. Furthermore, on 11th February 2021, the Philia Forum convened in Greece, which represented an unparalleled effort by Athens to extend the network of its allies from the Mediterranean region to

the Gulf (Ntousas, 2021). The forum involved officials from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain; although a joint statement released by the participants in the aftermath of the meeting used inclusive terminology to tout stability and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean, its implicit purpose was to target states that do not adhere to common values and position expressed, namely Turkey.

Ankara and Greece remain on high alert as clashes over maritime and energy rights precipitate immediate reactions. Turkey justifies its position in the Eastern Mediterranean by pointing out that the length of its coastline exceeds 1700 km, whereas Greece's coastline is less than 200 km, which according to Turkey, renders Athens a marginal state in the region (Badarin & Schumacher, 2022). Greece views Turkey's actions, such as its 2019 deal with Libya, as a direct threat to its sovereignty; therefore, it has responded by aiming to exploit the vacuum generated by the progressive worsening of US-Turkish relations. On 6th August 2020, Greece and Egypt also signed an agreement designating their EEZs in the region with the goal of countering Ankara's blue homeland claims (Marghelis, 2021). Similarly, the EU's perceived failures in the Eastern Mediterranean regions have persuaded Greece to play a bigger, if not leading, role in the EU foreign policy towards the region. In this regard, Greece has approached the bloc's members that have historically adopted an appeasing policy towards Turkey, including Spain, Italy, and Malta; moreover, it has enhanced its cooperation with Cyprus. Greece has also attempted to enhance its diplomatic profile by taking part in EU-initiated diplomatic initiatives and has been willing to pay for European support, as manifested by its buying of Rafale Jets from France (Badarin & Schumacher, 2022). All in all, Greece's attempts to elicit EU support for robust sanctions against Turkey have produced varying results. Largely, Turkey has been successful in thwarting Greece's efforts through its lobbying activities in the bloc's capital with closer ties with Turkey, such as Germany, Italy, Malta, Hungary, and Bulgaria. This indicates that Turkey-EU relations are multifaceted and cannot be forfeited to Greece-Turkey relations.

5.4.2 Republic of Cyprus (RoC)

For a long time, owing to its strategic locations and interests, RoC has suffered due to the great power struggle for influence in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Alongside Greece, it is the RoC whose objectives diverge the most from that of Turkey in the region, particularly due to the conflict over the divided island. Only three years after the independence of RoC, a civil war broke down between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, which ultimately led to the Turkish invasion of the island in

1974 (Tziarras, 2021). Therefore, for decades, the foreign policy of RoC has been focused on addressing political insecurity and existential threats synonymous with Turkey. Cyprus culminated EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel in 2003, 2004, and 2010, respectively, and began its first licensing round for the exploration of hydrocarbon resources; this marked the initiation of a changed geopolitical perception of the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2011, RoC discovered its first natural gas reserves in the Aphrodite field of Block 12 (Tziarras, 2021). The discovery of hydrocarbon resources has geopolitically upgraded RoC, enabling it to formulate alliances with like-minded states on energy issues. Moreover, deposits in the Aphrodite field are regarded as marketable, which not only attacks foreign investors but also enhances RoC's geo-economics value (Evaghorou, 2019). The partial retreat of the US dominance, and in particular Ankara's deteriorating ties with Tel Aviv and Cairo, also provided RoC a geopolitical space to generate a new Eastern Mediterranean security architecture. Therefore, it fostered deep ties with not only Israel and Egypt but also other regional countries, including Lebanon, Joran, and UAE. RoC was also among the initiators of the triangular diplomacy and played an instrumental role in the formation of EMGF; regardless, the state has not been successful in breaking free from the Cyprus problem as well as its threat perception vis-à-vis Turkey. Furthermore, RoC has sought to engage the EU member-states, such as France and Italy, in the Eastern Mediterranean dispute by providing major energy enterprises, including ENI and Total, the right to extract hydrocarbon resources surrounding the island (Jabbour, 2021).

To confront Turkey's aggressiveness, RoC promotes energy issues; it diplomatically aims to reap advantages emanating from energy by linking it with the economic and strategic interests of other countries. Simultaneously, RoC asserts that hydrocarbon exploration within its EEZ is the sole and legitimate right of the state government and that Ankara does not possess the right to interfere. It calls for Turkey to cease the provocations, especially those that flagrantly infringe its sovereignty and maritime rights, which includes the conduct of barbarian Turkish maritime research vessels. On the other hand, Turkey finds it unacceptable for RoC to act as the only representative of Cyprus; it has strived to impede the attempts of RoC via robust military measures by employing exploration and exploitation licenses provided to it by the TRNC. Regarding the resolution of the Cyprus issues, the success of the negotiations depends on Turkey's willingness to cease its violation of Cypriot sovereignty, as well as rejection of the debate that would lead to the co-exploitation of Cyprus's natural wealth. RoC maintains that the UN should play an interventionist role; however,

it should push for a mutually acceptable and constructive solution without putting extortion of any king on the side of Greek Cypriot. Moreover, RoC urges the EU members to exhibit practical solidarity on the matter; it also seeks to exploit its position as the member state of the EU by highlighting the significant role it could play in the diversification of the EU's energy sources supply.

Overall, in its attempt to maintain regional balance in the Eastern Mediterranean, RoC has resorted to the strategy of external balancing by enhancing and extending its network of global partnerships (Tziarras, 2021). To promote regionalism in the Eastern Mediterranean, RoC engages with global oil enterprises for hydrocarbon extraction and operations with its EEZs. However, as opposed to other actors, RoC's position in the region with regard to the balance of power remains fragile; not only is the region's weakest country, it is the only state annexed by an external power. Thus, for RoC, stakes are much higher, but the available means are restricted. For this reason, its foreign policy success remains conditional on favorable systematic elements.

5.4.3 Egypt

For the last decade, the relations been Israel and Egypt have remained problematic, hitting rock bottom in the aftermath of the ousting of President Mohammed Morsi via a military coup in 2013 (Mason, 2017). Immediately, Turkey became one of the vigorous critics of the coup, as well as the new President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi's behavior towards the Muslim Brotherhood. While other regional actors and external powers, including the USA and the EU, formulated ties with al-Sisi, Ankara remained staunch in its condemnation of the Egyptian regime. Additionally, Erdogan used developments within Egypt to centralize its constituency, asserting that there was similar planning against the AKP. Resultantly, on 23rd November 2013, Egypt proclaimed the Turkish envoy as persona non grata and vice versa (Altunisik, 2022). Soon, the bilateral relations between the two states became regionalized, which manifested in the conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean; Egypt collaborated with Greece, RoC, and Israel in the regional geo-economics and geopolitics. Turkey was isolated from the Egypt-initiated EMGF; moreover, in the Libyan conflict, Cairo and Ankara supported the opposing blocs; the former was amongst the major allies of Khalifa Haftar, whereas the latter extended its support for the UN-authorized GNA based in Tripoli.

In 2015, Egypt discovered Zohr offshore field in its EEZ, possessing 850 billion cubic meters of gas reserve, and emerged as a major exporter of natural gas by 2018. Amongst the projects that

transfer the Eastern Mediterranean resources to global markets, Egypt's LNG facility excels in terms of both cost and effectiveness. Therefore, the Egyptian government and the Greek Cypriot administration culminated an agreement in 2018 to transfer natural gas from Cyprus' Aphrodite field to the LNG facility in Egypt's Idku port through a submarine pipeline (Elgendy, 2022). Furthermore, negotiations are being carried out to directly supply natural gas from Tamar and Leviathan fields in Israel to LNG facilities in Egypt. Egypt's alignment with Greece and Israel is the direct result of the state's diplomatic fallouts with Turkey. In 2019, Egypt signed a bilateral agreement with Israel aimed at importing 85 billion cubic meters of Israel's gas over a duration of 15 years via a pipeline constructed in 2008 (Elgendy, 2022). In turn, Egypt could utilize the gas for domestic consumption or re-export it to enhance in profile.

The apparent demise of the EastMed project was most advantageous for Egypt since it incapacitated another alternative path to transfer the region's gas to European markets. In June 2022, a trilateral agreement was signed between the EU, Israel, and Egypt during the 7th ministerial meeting of EMGF, which indicated a wider acknowledgment of this shift (Dawoud, Calabrese, & Connelly, 2022). Under the MOU, Israel and Egypt aspire to boost the exports of natural gas to Europe, and the EU seeks to motivate European enterprises to partake in Israel's and Egypt's exploration tenders. The emergence of the energy landscape in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war has further consolidated the role of Egypt. The Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as an alternative supplier of natural gas, and Egypt is strategically positioned to fulfill Europe's need for short-term exports. Under such circumstances, Egypt appears to have procured its position as the Eastern Mediterranean gas hub.

Egypt, along with Greece, sharply resisted the maritime delimitation agreement between Libya and turkey signed in 2019, deeming it a violation of international law. In response, Egypt and Greece signed an agreement to delimit their EEZ, which according to them, effectively nullified the Libya-Turkey deal. Since 2021, Turkey has attempted to normalize its ties with Egypt in the region; the two states conducted two rounds of talks: one in Cairo in May and the other in Ankara in September. Both countries discussed bilateral and regional problems as well as the need to attain peace and stability in the region. The normalization talks can be viewed as a part of the broader regionalization process. For instance, in 2021, Egypt mended its ties with Qatar and UAE and did the same with Turkey (Altunisik, 2022). Similarly, Turkey has attempted to normalize ties with

both Israel and Saudi Arabia. Against the backdrop of these developments, on 3rd October 2022, Libya and Turkey concluded an agreement for the exploration of Eastern Mediterranean resources in the EEZ determined by the 2019 deal. The situation reached a critical juncture when Egypt's foreign minister asserted that the dialogue to normalize relations between Egypt and Turkey have been suspended, owing to unchanged Turkish practices in the Libyan conflictual zone. Yet, on 20th November 2022, during the opening ceremony of the World Cup in Qatar, an unexpected handshake took place between Sisi and Erdogan, which depicted that both countries are ready to mend the nine-year rift (Turkish Minute, 2022). However, on 13th December el-Sisi proclaimed a decree which unilaterally determined Egypt's western maritime boundary, which included EEZ encompassing the region between Egypt and Libya. In his words, "The borders of Egypt's territorial waters begin from the Egyptian-Libyan land border point No. 1 for a distance of 12 nautical miles reaching point No. 8, and thus Egypt's western maritime borderline launches from point No. 8 in the direction of the north" (El-Assasy, 2022). The decree violates Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine, yet Turkey has restrained from commenting on it.

A probable maritime delimitation agreement between Turkey and Egypt remains the crucial shared interest between the two actors and, if culminated, could prove to be a game changer for the entire region (Altunisik, 2022). Apart from securing Turkey's rights, the deal could grant Egypt 15,000 and 26,000 km^2 and encourage regional states to develop a multilateral collaborative mechanism (Bakeer, 2022). The direction of Egypt and Turkey relations suggests that the latter should make concessions. Currently, Cairo has an upper hand as opposed to turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean as Sisi reaped advantage out of the favorable environment generated after a handshake between the two presidents and proclaimed a presidential decree establishing its maritime border. Decree also aimed to curb turkey from exploration of hydrocarbon resources with Libya by making their MOU contentious under international law.

5.4.4 Israel

Over the past years, Israel-Turkish relations have remained hostile. The primary reason being deep differences over the Palestinian issue, especially Israel's policies towards the Gaza strip, Hamas, and Jerusalem. From 2000 onwards, AKP has been a backer of Hamas, a militant organization ruling Gaza. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy transformed, adopting a pro-Islamist stance in line with the rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was increasingly anti-Israeli (Goren, 2022).

To compensate for the loss of Turkey, Israel began to find alternative partners in the Eastern Mediterranean. The deterioration of Israel and Turkey relations provided the former the impetus to forge closer ties with Cyprus and Greece, which led to the signing of military training and defense collaboration agreements between the three actors. Cyprus' landscape allowed Israeli ground forces to train in a terrain similar to Lebanon, while drills in Greece provided air space for the air force to train in long-distance flying, which might be required in a future confrontation with Iran. Furthermore, the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Tamar and Leviathan fields in Israel and the Aphrodite field in Cyprus served as a catalyst for both sides to collaborate by including the dimension of energy security in their relations (Goren, 2022). Ankara perceives the power block between Israel-Cyprus-Greece as a hostile entity, which it aimed to circumvent, provided that Turkey's relations with most of the Eastern Mediterranean powers were hostile and problematic. Recognizing its growing global isolation, especially after the failed coup attempt of 2016, Turkey moved towards a muscular approach in its foreign relations to impact developments in the region; however, its assertiveness further consolidated the emerging power bloc. Under these circumstances, a normalization deal was signed between Ankara and Tel Aviv in June 2016, yet, it failed to foster genuine normalization (Duren, 2022). In 2018, Israel-Turkish relations hit a record low after Israel's force killed 60 Palestinians on the Gaza border amid a protest against the Trump administration's transfer of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. As result, Turkey expelled Israel's ambassador from Ankara (Nasi, 2022).

In January 2020, Israel started to export natural gas from its newly functioning Leviathan field to Jordan and Egypt, which represented a significant milestone as it generated huge prospects for Israel's economic policy (Lovatt, 2020). The beginning of Leviathan production could make Israel a regional actor in the energy industry; even according to the most conservative calculations, the amount of gas reserves discovered could make Israel energy-sufficient for the next four decades. For this reason, Israel put forth an enthusiastic proposal to construct the deepest and longest pipeline covering the Eastern Mediterranean, permitting Tel Aviv to export gas through Cyprus, Greece, and Italy to the European continent. However, the EastMed pipeline project faces numerous obstacles, ranging from investors' reluctance to the availability of cheaper gas alternatives from Russia. At the same time, the border of Israel's EEZ, encompassing its gas field and export infrastructure, faces contestation from Lebanon and Palestine.

To impart its influence on Eastern Mediterranean geopolitical affairs, on 7th December 2020, Israel proposed a maritime deal with Turkey to establish a shared EEZ cutting through Cypriot waters. The deal made several beneficial offers to Israel, such as the transfer of four areas of resource exploration off the coast of Cyprus into the Israel-Turkish EEZ. Moreover, the delimitation agreement between Turkey and Israel, in accordance with international law, awards 16,000 km^2 of maritime jurisdiction area to Israel (Yayci & Ceyhan, 2020). In addition to the increase in the maritime area, Israel also gets the control over entire Aphrodite field and extends its influence on huge amounts of parcels 8, 9, and 11, along with small portions of parcels 7 and 10. In comparison to Israel, Turkey gains around 10,000 km^2 of maritime jurisdiction area (Yayci & Ceyhan, 2020). Turkey also foresees the opportunity to explore hydrocarbon resources in areas of parcels 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 (Yayci & Ceyhan, 2020). The proposal made clear that Turkey had no intentions to influence Israel's gas exploration rights in the Aphrodite field but to make the most out of its rebirthed maritime potential. Another lucrative proposal was to connect Israel's gas pipelines to already existing Turkish gas pipelines, which could facilitate Israel's plan of exporting gas to Europe (Cook, 2022). This would decrease the construction cost and time, adding to the practicality and efficiency of the project. However, in exchange, Israel would have to recognize Turkey's position on the Greek islands of Rhodes and Kastelloriz.

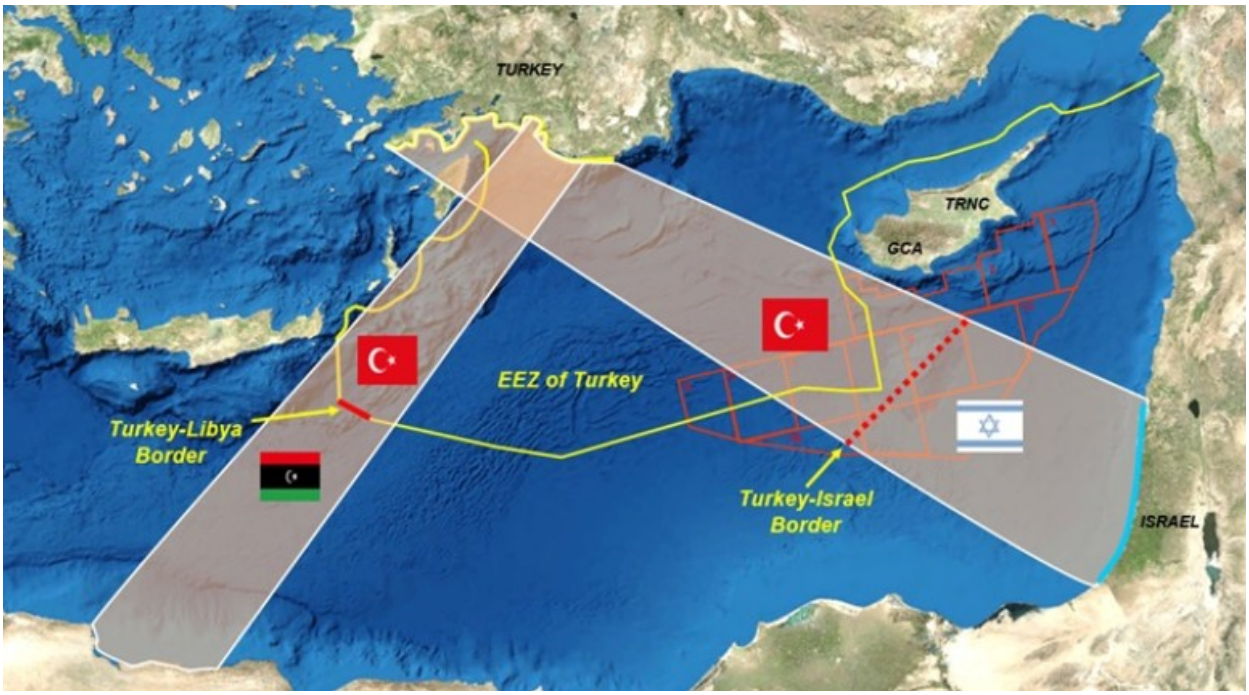

Figure 5.2 The Map of Proposed maritime deal between Israel and Turkey (2020)

Source: Yayci, C., & Ceyhan, Z. (2020). Israel is Turkey's Neighbor Across the Sea: Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas between Turkey and Israel. Insights on Turkish Affairs, 4(8), 1–9. Retrieved from https://dayan.org/content/israel-turkeys-neighbor-across-sea-delimitation-maritime-jurisdiction-areas-between-turkey

The major challenge to the culmination of the deal with Turkey is its implications for Israel's cooperation with Greece and Cyprus. Cyprus has shown an outright rejection of the deal, deeming it a violation of UNCLOS. On the other hand, Israel has reassured its allies Greece and Cyprus that Israel remains committed to the progress it has made with them; therefore, any maritime plan that cuts out Cyprus is unacceptable for Israel (Cook, 2022). This highlights that the trouble with the proposed maritime deal is the existing parameters. Israel and Cyprus are part of maritime agreements that are entirely in line with the internationally recognized maritime law as reflected in the UNCLOS. The UN and the EU also recognize the current maritime border between the two. If Israel entered into such an agreement with Turkey, it would have to annul the previous deals and then deal with the diplomatic fallout. That's an immediate turn-off for Israel, whose reputation is already damaged as it is. Hence, Israeli officials have rejected the deal out of hand

Regardless, in 2022, a new era of Israel-Turkey relations was unleashed as both countries exchanged ambassadors; the reconciliation process gained momentum with the landmark visit of Israel's president Isaac Herzog to Turkey in March 2022. Their exchange of warm messages, high-level talks over the phone call, and visits led to the culmination of an aviation deal between the two states, which paved the way for Israel's national airline to resume flights to Turkey for the first time after 2007 (Goren, 2022). In the wake of domestic and international developments, including the rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the imposition of American sanctions on Turkey over its buying of S-400s, and the EU lining up to enact new sets of sanctions, diplomatic opening towards Israel was a necessity for Turkey. For years, relations between Israel and Turkey were sustained on a limited scale, with low-level interaction between the two states as there seemed no urgency to change the status quo (Efron, 2018). However, in the contemporary era, both actors have specific objectives with regard to the normalization process. For example, the establishment of healthy diplomatic ties with Israel would allow Turkey to reduce its isolation by regional actors, providing it more space to maneuver its foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and re-attain its standing among its rivals. However, there are several constraints to their cooperation; neither would Ankara focus on redrawing the maritime border or rethink its treaties GNA in Libya, nor would Israel sacrifice relations with its long-term allies for improved ties with Turkey.

5.4.5 France

What lies at the core of Franco-Turkish rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean is the conflict between Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey over their overlapping EEZ claims and hydrocarbon exploration. France has been a backer of the Greek position at Turkey's position; in response to Ankara's drilling operation in Cypriot waters, France has called for the formation of a unified front against Turkey's "aggressive" behavior (Jabbour, 2021). In the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine clashes with French President Emmanuel Macron's vision, which views the region as a part of Paris' traditional sphere of influence. Therefore, France aspires to set up Pax Mediterranean, a regional order centered on political collaboration that gravitates around France (Yildirim, 2021). Apart from advocating a reinvigorated Europe, Macro has explicitly backed Greece and Cyprus; for example, France sold Rafale jets to Greece, dispatched Charles de Gaulle nuclear-power aircraft carrier in the region, and participated in joint military operations with the regional actors to challenge Turkey and contain its expansionism. Therefore, a standoff between

Turkey and France is a power struggle between a well-entrenched regional power- France – and an emerging power- Turkey - that seeks to transform the regional order to suit its goals.

Franco-Turkish antagonism in the Eastern Mediterranean is part of a broader geopolitical rivalry between the two actors playing out on different fronts, including Libya, Syria, and Lebanon. In Libya, France intervened in support of Khalifa Haftar; the intervention was driven by interests that directly collided with Turkish objectives. Since the initiation of the Libyan civil war, France aims to establish a pro-Paris government in Libya to attain four main goals. First, the preservation of its influence over the North African region; second, ascertain its share in Libyan oil and gas revenues; Third, constrain the expansion of political Islam in Southern Europe; Fourth, obstruct Turkish ambitions of regional leadership by formulating ties with Ankara's adversaries (Zoubir, 2020). On the other hand, Turkish support for GNA is driven by strikingly opposite motives. Geopolitically, amid its regional isolation, Turkey found a playground in Libya to regain its influence in the region. Simultaneously, the Libyan civil war provides an opportunity for Turkey to advance its Islamist agenda. Most importantly, Turkey aims to secure access to Libyan oil and gas resources by using the state as a counterweight against other claimants in the Eastern Mediterranean (Telci, 2020). Tensions between Turkey and France become an all-time high in June 2020 following the confrontation between a French frigate and Turkey's navy off the coast of Libya. The incident risked transforming a proxy war into a hot conflict.

Syria is another theatre that manifests divergent interests between Turkey and France. For Turkey, Democratic Union Party (PYD) poses a national security threat, whereas France has made a direct connection with it, viewing it as an ally against ISIS. Ankara views PYD through the perspective of separatism and terrorism, whereas Paris views it through the lens of the right to self-determination (Kösebalaban, 2020). France is not likely to give up its support for Kurds due to structural political interests. France seeks to leverage the Kurdish cause to contain Turkey's footprint in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya. Lastly, the Turkish-French rivalry also plays out in Lebanon. On 4th August 2020, Macron visited Beirut in the aftermath of an explosion that took place in the city; France's newfound objective in Lebanon deeply offends Turkey for two reasons. Firstly, due to its strategic depth doctrine in the past, Turkey has carried out massive investments in Lebanon and emerged as an influential actor in the region (Jabbour, 2021). Therefore, Ankara views the French president's Lebanon initiative as interference in Turkey's "backyard." Secondly, Turkey is fearful

of close Franco-Lebanon ties as it would lead to economic agreements between the two, permitting French companies to exploit Beirut’s hydrocarbon resources. Macron’s proposition that the French enterprise 'Total' attains a share in Lebanon’s exploration activities has further exacerbated this fear.

5.5 Turkey vis-à-vis the USA, China and Russia

5.5.1 Russia

From 2015 onwards, Russia has increased its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean region in order to demonstrate its ability to project power outside its immediate neighborhood. Russia's primary objectives are to generate security dependencies in the region, cultivate governing elites, seek financial opportunity, and undermine Western cohesion (Stronski, 2021). However, Moscow's involvement in the region is not a new phenomenon; historically, it has used common cultural and economic ties to promote its agendas in states such as Greece, Italy, Libya, Spain, Algeria, and Syria. Therefore, its contemporary actions are essentially the resurgence of the Soviet approach minus the ideological element. Russia aims to cultivate ties with these countries because it views them as potential avenues via which it can exert influence over European policymaking (Legucka, 2020). This is especially true in the case of Greece and Cyprus because they are EU members, as well as Greece and Turkey, which are NATO allies. Moreover, Ankara, Athens, and Nicosia are relatively less advanced as opposed to other European counties, which provides Moscow an opportunity to attain leverage in the economic sector, especially energy.

Turkey is an important Russian partner in the Eastern Mediterranean region, but their relations lack strategic dept. The significance of turkey lies in its strategic position, which makes it a crucial transit state for Russia's hydrocarbons. The Blue Stream and Turkstream pipelines have formulated an interdependent relationship between Ankara and Moscow (Stronski, 2021). It also allowed stabilization relations in the aftermath of the 2015 incident when the Turkish military targeted a Russian fighter jet. Russia has tactfully engaged in the Eastern Mediterranean; it compartmentalizes its divergence of interests with turkey to develop a working relationship in Syria and the South Caucasian region, although both states are part of a competing bloc in Libya and Ukraine. Putin has also played on Erdogan's disenchantment with the West to facilitate the

selling of Russia's S-400 missile system to Turkey, which led to the latter exclusion from F-35 and Patriot missile programs.

However, Russia pursues a multidimensional foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and maintains relations with other regional actors as well. This lead to speculations that whether Moscow would facilitate Turkey's aspiration to transform the balance of power in the region. Russia has refrained from playing a mediating role in the regional dispute apart from one time in September 2020 (Bardakçı, 2022). This is because of Russia's evaluation that the status quo would increase Ankara's dependence on Russian support; moreover, a tense environment in Eastern Mediterranean could obstruct any plans to deliver the region's natural gas to the European market, thereby competing with Russia (Yackley, 2020). Ankara's expectation of robust Russian involvement in its favor is not likely to materialize. The Discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the region is at odds with Moscow's energy policy because the resolution of technical and political challenges could allow the supply of transfer of natural gas to Europe via the EastMed pipeline or the Israel-Turkey pipeline, which could undermine Russia's position (Legucka, 2020).

5.5.2 China

Over the last ten years, China has firmly established its place on the Eastern Mediterranean shores. It is visible from maritime investment projects in Athens, expansive lending facilities for Ankara, and enhanced cooperation with Israel on the economic front. Therefore, Eastern Mediterranean can be perceived as a conduit for Beijing’s maritime and on-land supply chains from and towards the European region. Turkey remains a crucial variable for China within this region, serving as a link between a broader connectivity plan under Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well as Ankara’s Middle Corridor rhetoric (Bastian, 2021). As a part of BRI, China has carried out investments in Suez Canal industrial zone in Egypt, sustainable and clean energy projects in Greece, and the transportation and technological sector in Israel (Demir, 2021). So far, China’s investment in Turkey’s Emba Hunutlu, a coal-based power plant, is the largest. Furthermore, Beijing is conducting talks with Ankara to invest in the Kanal Istanbul projects, which seek to link the Marmara Sea to the Black sea. Furthermore, in recent times, China has also enhanced its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean; for example, in 2015, it carried out its first military drill in the region in collaboration with Russia. In 2017, China also conducted a live-fire drill in the region.

When it comes to China's role in Eastern Mediterranean disputes, China has chosen to maintain a neutral stance in an attempt to sustain its positive ties in the region and reap maximum gains out of its economic partnerships. This is depicted by Chinese strategies toward various conflicts in the Mediterranean. For example, in Syria, China, alongside Russia, vetoed the UN resolution and did not close its embassy in Damascus throughout the conflict. Similarly, China backed the government of Muammar Gaddafi during the Libyan civil war due to investment in the state worth 20 billion dollars. This shows that Beijing's presence in the region is meant to protect its economic clout whilst avoiding military confrontation (Bastian, 2021). Another consideration is China's dependence on Middle Eastern states engaged in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Turkey is a significant economic partner of China, but the relations between the two have transformed to become highly asymmetrical in favor of the latter, stripping turkey of any advantage it possesses. It has also muted Ankara's criticism of Beijing; along the lines of its "one China policy," China calls for the formation of a unified Cyprus, supporting the presence of UN peacekeeping forces on the island. Many analysts contend that Turkish actions are causing instability in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and in case they continue, China might reassess its policies as well as Turkey's position in the BRI (Demir, 2021). For now, China inclines toward Greece for carrying out trade relations with Europe because its port- Piraeus Port- is situated nearer to the European markets and therefore provides a more cost-efficient transit route than Turkey Kum Port. Nevertheless, the blockade of the Suez Canal that continued for six days in March 2021 showed the need to develop alternative passages. In this regard, Middle Corridor offers the most viable route (Lee & Wong, 2021).

5.5.3 USA

As opposed to Russia and China, the US has been increasingly vocal about condemning Turkish actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. American interests in the region are largely driven by its geostrategic interests as opposed to economic goals, with the most important factors being the rise of China and Russia in the region, followed by instability among its regional allies and the EU due to the Eastern Mediterranean disputes (Özdemir, 2020). Moreover, America considers the formation of a reliable system of energy supply for its allies as crucial to strengthening its security; for this purpose, it has increased its engagements in the region via global oil and gas exploration

enterprises, including Nobel Energy and ExxonMobil. The US-Turkish relations in the region are shaped by the legacy of negative bilateral ties between the two states over the past decade. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, Washington accused Turkey's Halkbank of facilitating the conversion of profits from the sales of Iran's oil into gold, and cashing it to the advantage of Tehran, thereby breaking the US sanctions. Another issue that became a thorn in the two country's bilateral ties was Turkey's detention of Turkish personnel in the US Consulate based in Istanbul for reputedly being an affiliate of the Fethullah Gulen network. The final stroke was Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system in spite of explicit warnings from the US (Ülgen, 2021).

In the contemporary era, Turkey encounters an American containment strategy. Upon calls from regional actors, on 19th December 2020, the US adopted the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act, which lifted the 33-year-long arms embargo on RoC for a period of one year (Bardakçı, 2020). The Act authorized the US to provide new security assistance to Greece and Cyprus and establish an Energy Centre for future collaboration between the US, Israel, Cyprus, and Greece. Under the Act, the US also declared the provision of military education and defense training to the RoC. Washington also deepened its ties with Greece; in May 2019, the former provided the latter with 70 OH-58D Kio Warrior helicopters as well as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter (Özdemir, 2020). Moreover, in October 2021, Greece provided the US with a military base only 45 km away from Turkey's border. In turn, in December 2021, the American state department authorized the selling of four frigates amounting to approximately 7 billion to Greece. In response to these developments, Turkey warned that it would transform "equity and balance between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots" and argued that such moves by the US would further disrupt efforts for a unified Cyprus and violate the "spirit of alliance" between Washington and Ankara.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS OF THE GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

6.1 Introduction

The gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean, followed by long-standing geopolitical rivalries between regional and extra-regional players, have resulted in significant economic, political, and security implications. As opposed to initial hopes and suppositions, gas discoveries have failed to catalyze peace in the region; instead, it has contributed to transforming power balances in the region. The outcome is the reconfiguration of fault lines and the creation of a Cold war like situation- the emergence of the different axis of alliances. Second, energy competition and territorializing of maritime zones have resulted in renewed naval arms races between Eastern Mediterranean states; littoral countries seek to enhance their power projection capabilities and simultaneously invest in UAVs to strengthen control over their EEZs and construct blue water navies. Third, the regional disputes have greatly altered migration patterns in the region, significantly impacting refugees and asylum seekers crossing to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean migration route. Geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean has resulted in significant consequences for Turkey as well. With regards to the maximization of populist dividends in the short term, Ankara's military adventurism, and foreign policy discourse based on hard power, blended with the rhetoric of strategic autonomy, makes perfect sense. However, in the long run, it has had adverse consequences for the state. For example, Turkey has transformed from a reliable NATO power to an unpredictable partner; its nationalist policies and gunboat diplomacy has placed it at odds with its traditional allies, such as the EU and the USA, as well as Israel and Egypt. Not only is Turkey isolated in the region, but the state has also generated new forms of dependence on non-western states, including Russia and China. This chapter seeks to highlight the implications of the geopolitical rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean for both the broader security architecture of the region and Turkey.

6.2 Emergence of a new alliance axis in the Eastern Mediterranean: a new form of cold war

The complex and entangled rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is the manifestation of a two-layered power struggle between great and regional powers, have resulted in a new Cold war in the region. The distinctive feature of power politics in the region is the emergence of benefit-oriented alliances, which is not only desired by great power but is also eagerly embraced by regional actors to advance their national interest and strategic objectives in the region (Güney & Korkmaz, 2021). Regional actors in Eastern Mediterranean are undisputedly bandwagoning parties involved in a severe power struggle. Geopolitical competition has resulted in the emergence of three axes of alliances, as well as alignments at the level of regional rivalry.

1. **Eastern Mediterranean natural gas axis:** The first axis is the emergence of the anti-Turkey bloc, formulated on the basis of cooperation over hydrocarbon resources surrounding Cyprus island between Tel Aviv, Nicosia, and Athens (Kanci, 2020). It was institutionalized after the culmination of the EastMed pipeline project. For the USA, the alliance, which gradually militarized in the aftermath of the Turkey-Israel decoupling, served as means to constrain Moscow and Beijing by using Eastern Mediterranean states, including Israel, Greece, Egypt, and Cyprus, away from Russia and China's sphere of influence. Moreover, Greek Cypriots also instrumentalized the project to exclude Northern Cypriots from regional energy calculus and extend South Cyprus' unilateral claims in the region (Güney & Korkmaz, 2021). Therefore, they declined the proposals for potential cooperation with Turkey and Turkish Cypriots, which, in turn, facilitated the politicization and militarization of energy. Within the alliance, Greece also viewed an opportunity to transform itself into a "European agent of Mediterranean geopolitics." In reality, the energy alliance was centered on Israel; it sought to benefit from the concerns of regional actors to accomplish its own "littoral control strategy" or "connectivity control strategy" (Parry, 2018).

2. **Haftarist Libyan axis of alliance:** The emergence of the second axis coincided with strategic circumstances in Libya. The turmoil in Libya, which began the NATO-led mission, has transformed into a strategic game between states, including European and Gulf states. The US welcomed the developments that aimed to reduce Russian influence in Libya; for this very reason, the USA first seemed not to reject, then support the Egyptian, Israel, French, and UAE alliance to support the regime of Khalifa Haftar (Melmon, 2020).

Within this context, Ankara emerged as a game changer and supported GNA and culminating in the 2019 deal with Libya. Ever since, the exclusion of GNA from the future trajectory of Libya has become nearly impossible (Rubin & Eiran, 2019). As a result, the Libyan axis attained increasingly anti-Turkish rhetoric. Under these circumstances, UAE attained a more maneuvering space in the Eastern Mediterranean, which merged into the already prevailing anti-Turkish stance of the alliance (Mathews, 2020). This strategic landscape also provided the US to extend anti-Iranian rhetoric by authorizing the existence of Abu Dhabi in the region's axis strategy.

3. **Abraham Accord alliance axis:** Founded on the basis of normalization attempts between Israel and Arab states, such as the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, the Abraham Accord sought to curb the rising influence of Ankara and Tehran in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, since America is the major architect of the alliance axis, it most importantly aims to contain the increasing influence of Moscow and Beijing at a strategic level. Moreover, Israel wants to maintain control of connectivity in the Eastern Mediterranean, which includes the gas pipeline, electric cables, internet cables, as well as commercial sea routes from East to West (Güney & Korkmaz, 2021). Economic support of Arab countries would serve as a contributing factor for Israel to extend its control of the region's logistical and financial facilities. While the practical results of the deal will unveil in the future, for the time being, it has led to uneasy relations between the UAE and Ankara; for the latter, the deal proves the readiness of the former to become a party of Eastern Mediterranean boundary dispute, although it is not a littoral country (Yanarocak, 2020).

The emergence of different power centers in the region suggests that Eastern Mediterranean is a fundamental asset of all coastal states. Since the relations between regional states are far from ideal, a hostile environment characterized by power politics has emerged. States have therefore been assertive in advancing and accomplishing their perceived maritime goals. However, this has directly undermined the region's energy potential; gas discoveries, instead of being a potential "game changer" for the region, have generated new sources of conflict or exacerbated already existing tensions (Eiran, & Mitchell, 2018). The positive implications of gas discoveries are also somehow overshadowed by regional developments, such as the Syrian civil war, the resurgence of Russia, domestic politics in Egypt, etc. Therefore, geopolitical competition in the Eastern

Mediterranean has heightened insecurities in the region, marked by uncertainties, economic downturn, social strife, religious cleavages, civil unrest, and drawn into conflict local, regional, and international actors (Gürel, Tzimitras & Faustmann 2014). Thus, Power politics in this "war of all against all cultivate itself in an anarchic order." The region appears to be more fragmented than ever, with diversified national and transnational interests competing to gain influence.

6.3 Emergence of Naval arms race in the Eastern Mediterranean

One of the major implications of the geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean is the emergence of a naval arms race amongst the littoral states, which amalgamates the traditional need for power projection in the sea with the parallel propensity to invest in UAVs. UAVs, by facilitating ISR operations, can strengthen control over other countries' maritime domains.

6.3.1 Construction of blue water navies

In the Eastern Mediterranean, states, including Israel, Turkey, Egypt, and Greece, have embarked on a naval modernization program since the first natural gas discoveries in the early 2010s. In 2016, Egypt's navy acquired French-produced Mistral-class amphibious warships (Eiran, & Mitchell, 2018). Moreover, in 2020, Cairo obtained two FREMM-class frigates from Rome. Similarly, Israel has also carried out efforts to enhance its naval presence in the region. For example, in May 2015, it bought six dolphin-class submarines along with four Sa'ar 6-class corvettes from Germany (Karagiannis, 2021). Enhanced naval capabilities are meant to serve defensive purposes, which include the preservation of energy installation, as well as surveillance of its EEZs. However, the Turkish case is different as it has launched a robust modernization program under its Blue Homeland doctrine to construct a blue water navy capable of projecting power beyond its territory. Designed after Carlos, a Spanish-built multiuse amphibious war ship aircraft carrier, the newly constructed Anadolu is capable of conducting long-range combat operations (Nedos, 2022). Turkish navy has also constructed four Istanbul-class naval vessels with multi-purpose combat capabilities. Furthermore, Greece possesses the largest commercial fleet globally. The Athenian Navy is a green-water navy, possessing the capability to operate safely in the Aegean Sea only; therefore, it lacks the ability to project power in Eastern Mediterranean deep waters. However, the Hellenic government has narrowed down offers from six countries, including the USA, the UK, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, and France, and it is only a matter of few weeks before it will

announce its decision on which state would win the contract of €5 billion to construct four new multipurpose frigates. These assault ships will be delivered to Greek Navy after 2025, which will possess advanced anti-air missiles. Greece aims to utilize these ships to enhance its naval footprint in contended territorial waters of the Eastern Mediterranean.

6.3.2 Submarine race

When it comes to submarine warfare, the Greek navy clearly has an advantageous position vis-à-vis Turkey. Along with Israel, the Hellenic navy has the most modernized conventional submarines in the region. As a result of its system of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP), the four Type 214 Papanikolis-class submarines comprises a significant part of its deterrent capacities (Nedos, 2022). During a military confrontation with Ankara in 2020, Athenian submarines remained unexposed, providing considerable military leverage. Nevertheless, the balance is likely to change in the near future. The Turkish Navy recently obtained the first out of six newly German-constructed Type 214 submarines. Reports suggest that these submarines are furnished with medium-range IDAS missile systems, which could carry out assaults on Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) helicopters (Karagiannis, 2021). Although several countries have imposed an arms embargo against Turkey, Germany is set on delivering the submarines, asserting that it cannot harm its credibility as a reliable supplier. Nevertheless, geopolitical considerations are also at play; Berlin wants to enhance Ankara's naval capabilities in the Eastern Mediterranean to counter-balance increasing Moscow’s naval footprint in the region. Furthermore, an indigenous submarine project- MILDEN- is all set to be commissioned for Turkey’s Navy in the 2030s. Compared to Ankara’s current submarines, MILDEN is designed to be diesel-electric, will submerge for a longer period of time, possess heavier ammunition loads, and function at greater depths. In 2019, the Greek navy bought seven MH-60 Romeo helicopters, which are considered as “best ASW helicopters in the world” (Ozberk, 2022) If the development trajectory goes as planned, the Eastern Mediterranean may experience a tit-for-tat confrontation between state-of-art Turkey’s submarines and Greece’s helicopters.

6.4 Impact of maritime disputes on migration patterns in the region

The geopolitical rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean have significantly impacted the pattern of migration in the region. Since 2014, the Eastern Mediterranean migration route has been a

signification transit route for refugees, asylum-seeking individuals, and immigrants traversing to the European region from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia (EUROMED Rights, 2022). In 2021, as many as 8370 people reached Greece by land and sea through the Eastern Mediterranean route (ACAPS, 2022). At the same time, the UN refugee organization stated that 326 individuals have either died or been displaced in their attempt to reach Greece through Eastern Mediterranean from Turkey and other countries in 2022; these statistics are three times higher than in 2021(Info Migrants, 2023). The prevailing conflicts in the region and maritime disputes within the states have generated a complex web of challenges. The conflict between Ankara and Athens has led to the closure of borders and stringent immigration policies; these countries have been increasingly reluctant to accept refugees due to security concerns and strain on their resources. For example, after the opening of Tukey's border with Greece in March 2020, thousands of emigres tried to reach Greece by crossing the Aegean Sea, which led to violent clashes and skirmishes with Greek border guards. As a response, Greek deployed the armed forces along its border and suspended the applications of asylum seekers for a period of one month, effectively impeding the entry of new refugees. Furthermore, geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean has resulted in the formulation of refugee camps and detention centers, where refugees are forcefully kept under squalid conditions (EUROMED Rights, 2022). For instance, Moria camp, situated on Lesbos island in Greece, was inhabited by over 13,000 refugees but was destroyed in the aftermath of a fire in 2020, leaving thousands of individuals homeless (BBC News, 2020). The camp has also been severely criticized by human rights organizations for poor living conditions. Lastly, the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean has also increased migration in the region as refugees seek to attain employment in the energy sector.

6.5 Implications for Turkey

6.5.1 Increasing international isolation

In 2013, Ibrahim Kalin, foreign policy advisor to Erdogan, coined the term “precious loneliness,” referring to Ankara’s value-based policies against the ‘immoral’ policies of other countries (Gormus, 2021). In conformity with its self-regulatory rhetoric, Turkey demoted its diplomatic ties with countries, including Egypt and Israel. As a result, the state retreated into doleful isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Moreover, Ankara’s increasingly bold outlook in the region has not been overlooked by its neighbors, and the country is left with almost no allies. While the AKP government argues that it is preserving its interests in a hostile region, other regional and extra-region players find common ground in their diplomatic tensions with Turkey. Therefore, even though Turkish foreign policy might be influenced by the president’s hope to attain victory in the upcoming elections, it has resulted in significant ramifications for its international alliances. Erdogan particularly feels the need to present himself as “a savior of a nation attacked on all sides so that he can cruise through the election” (Singh, 2020).

Geopolitical competition in the Eastern Mediterranean has resulted in the deterioration of its relations with its traditional European and NATO allies. There exists a multitude of factors behind this, such as Turkey's rapprochement with Russia and the acquisitions of the S-400 missile defense system, military assertiveness in Syria, democratic backsliding, etc. Similarly, Erdogan turned against Israel and instead opted to use the Palestine issue both domestically and abroad to attain support for his cause. Furthermore, Erdogan also refused to restore its ties with Egypt in the aftermath of toppling el-Sisi's government via a military coup. Turkey's increasing isolation in the region is met by Greek opportunism; Athens utilized this chance to severely constrain the rights of Turkey to access Eastern Mediterranean strategic waters (Büyük, 2020). The unshakable assistance of France, coupled with the indifference of other Western states, has emboldened Greece to further advance its maritime claims. Greek declared its intention to extend its territorial waters from 6 to 12 nautical miles along its Ionian coastline (Büyük, 2020). When it comes to the response of the EU, the bloc remains fragmented; German efforts at mediation have been met with a tepid reaction. Likewise, NATO's call for cohesion among member-states has fallen upon the deaf ear. What has made the matter worse is that states within and beyond the region have ignored the maximalist claims of Greece due to foreign policy blunders of Erdogan in the region. Turkey's list of detractors also includes Arab Gulf nations; for instance, UAE and Turkey find themselves on opposite sides in the Libyan conflict (Singh, 2020). However, Turkey was appalled to learn that even "friendly

Libya" does not want Turkey (Bekdil, 2021). In May 2021, Turkey dispatched two cabinet heavyweights and a top intelligence official to Libya to cement its ties with the Tripoli administration. The Foreign Minister of the Libyan interim government contended that Turkey must enact a UNSC Resolution that calls for the repatriation of external forces in mercenaries from the region (Bekdil, 2021). These injections were a "cold shower" for Turkey and a clear reprimand to Ankara for having forces deployed.

Figure 6.1: Turkey's increasing entanglements and confrontations abroad

Source: Romano, D. (2020, October 27). How Erdogan steered Turkey from 'zero problems' to Zero friends. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from https://www.arabnews.com/node/1754841/middle-east

Turkey has overextended itself militarily, which has led to its involvement in unwanted hostilities. Pivot to the military has doubled Turkey's military spending over the last ten years; Ankara also intends to domestically manufacture weapons in 2023 (Yackley, 2020). Erdogan has cast those investments, amid the state's economic contraction, in order to restore the supremacy enjoyed by Ottomans in the Mediterranean prior to their collapse after the first world war. Erdogan's self-aggrandizement has turned out to be costly, manifested by a decade of trial and error. As a result, Erdogan has been recalibrating its foreign policy in the region by finding new allies and

proclaiming conciliatory statements (Valansi, 2021). However, there are doubts over whether these attempts are enough to change the regional landscape. Turkey has notably missed the chance to become an EU member, and even its NATO membership has come under scrutiny after buying S-400 Russian missile systems. Moreover, the region is advancing, even without Ankara, as depicted by Turkey's exclusion from EMGF, which has been transformed into a regional international organization (İpek & Gür, 2021). Nevertheless, Turkey has reached out to Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and UAE to normalize its relations with these states. It seems that Ankara is attempting to arrange a "modus vivendi" to put an end to Turkey's isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

6.5.2 Economic consequences

In 2014, the Turkish economy was the 16th largest in the world, with a GDP of US$1 trillion in 2013. However, according to a report published by International Monetary Fund (IMF) in October 2021, Turkey is now the 21st largest economy in the world and has lost nearly 25% of its GDP since 2013 (Aydintasbas, 2021). According to analysts, the economic downturn is not the result of a global conspiracy to put Erdogan down; instead, the origin of the crises lies in the transformation of the country's parliamentary system of democracy into a one-man quasi-authoritarian presidential region. The absence of checks and balances in real-time has resulted in the consolidation of power in the hands of Erdogan. His quest for strategic autonomy, along with military adventurism in the Eastern Mediterranean, has resulted in the loss of international investors' confidence in the state (Arab News, 2020). The state's authoritarian trajectory has resulted in capital outflows and the cancellation of investment plans in the region. Erdogan's foreign policy choices are perceived as uncertain for the state's future because it generates antagonistic ties with its major economic partners.

Ankara has advanced its geopolitical interests at the cost of its mismanaged economy for several years. Turkey's macroeconomic outlook is vulnerable; as of January 2023, the inflation rate in Turkey was 57.5%, and the Turkish lira has fallen to a record low of 19 to 1US$ (Barklie, 2023; Reuters, 2023). Moreover, according to World Bank, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Turkey dropped from US$ 22 billion in 2007 to US$ 8.8 billion in 2019. Even though, since 2016, Ankara's dependence on European trade has decreased, the EU constitutes 42% of Turkey's trade, and the West as a whole account for 56% of its trade, with top destinations being Germany, the UK,

France, and Italy (Cagaptay, 2019). Although Erdogan has diversified Turkey's trade partners, in 2018, non-Western partners accounted for only 44% of its trade. Against this backdrop, in response to Turkish actions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU has enacted sanctions which have included the freezing of assets, arms embargoes, travel bans, and restrictions on economic cooperation. The sanctions also targeted individuals, including two employees of Turkish Petroleum Cooperation (TPAO) (Tookitaki, 2022). In November 2020, the EU Council authorized the prolonging of sanctions until November 2021. Furthermore, in December 2020, the USA implemented economic sanctions on Turkey as a reaction to its purchase of S-400 missile defense systems from Russia. The sanctions restricted the export of technology and financial transactions to the Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB); moreover, it imposed travel bans, asset freezes, and commercial engagement with US citizens on four Turkish individuals (Tookitaki, 2022).

Thus, Turkish leadership under the presidential system of government seems like a struggle to pull through the challenging global environment and worsening economic crises. Currently, for the government, long-term economic success or development is not the objective; instead, the goal is to sustain the electoral support base ahead of the 2023 elections. Erdogan seems to uphold his unorthodox views in spite of the economic cost associated, which could result in an economic shock for the state, the ramifications of which are largely unfelt up till now.

6.5.3 Impact on relations with the West

The relations between Turkey and the EU have been on a downward spiral for several years. In 2022, Turkey’s negotiation process for accession to the bloc reached its 17th year. Yet, the final outcome of its journey is far from certain. In the aftermath of the failed military coup in 2016, Erdogan severely limited democracy and civil rights, freezing the already stalled accession negotiations (Scazzieri, 2021). Democratic backsliding is one of the reasons why the EU-Turkish relations have deteriorated to this level; however, the EU maintains decent ties with several countries that are much less democratic than Ankara, for example, Egypt. What acts as a trigger is Turkey’s gas exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean because it directly clashes with the interests of the EU members, including Greece and Cyprus. Therefore, Turkish assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean, in line with its Blue Homeland doctrine, adds fuel to the fire. Tension remained particularly high in the summer of 2020 when Greek and Turkish vessels collided, and a confrontation occurred between Turkish and French ships off the coast of Libya. As a result, the

EU implemented sanctions on some of the individuals associated with the naval operations; however, member countries were not able to agree on the imposition of broader sanctions (Scazzieri, 2021). This highlighted the divisions between the bloc's member-states; some viewed Ankara as a threat and saw sanctions as an effective deterrent. For example, Greece asserted that the EU must stop arms export to Turkey and called for the suspension of the customs union with the state. Austria and France also extended their support for a tougher stance. Regardless, Ankara has not abandoned its claims in the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2019, in the wake of Turkey's "unauthorized drilling activities," the EU canceled talks with Turkey for an extensive air transport agreement and suspended meetings of the EU-Turkey Association Council; moreover, the bloc also slashed pre-accession funding to Ankara and demanded the European Investment Bank (EIB) reevaluate its lending policies in the states (Pelaghias, Murzanska, & Pelaghias, 2019).

Furthermore, in October 2022, giving an annual update on the EU enlargement, Mr. Varhelyi, the European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, asserted that Turkish foreign policy is at odds with the bloc's priorities; therefore, "the accession negotiations remain at a standstill" (Stickings, 2022). Even though the situation is fragile, the EU has welcomed conciliatory gestures by turkey; indeed, the bloc has a strategic interest in developing a mutually cooperative and interdependent relationship with Turkey, given that the EU is the top trading partner of Turkey and a significant player in global politics (Kirişci, 2018). Ankara can serve as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, act as a major security provider within the transatlantic alliance, as well as a vital actor in the European region's vulnerability to migration crises.

In parallel with the EU, Ankara's relations with Washington have also become progressively worse. According to Turkey, the US response to the 2016 military coup was sluggish, and it is convinced that America was essentially behind the attempt. The US declined the call to extradite Fethullah Gulen, arguing that Ankara has not presented adequate proof to warrant his repatriation (Cook, 2018). According to a study conducted by the German Marshall Fund, 60% of the Turks view the US as "the biggest threat to Turkey." Regardless, Turkey remains a formal NATO ally. Within an organization that functions on the basis of consensus, Erdogan has come to be viewed as a disruptive actor. Turkey has shown its dissatisfaction towards the West by impeding the entrance of Sweden and Finland into the alliance; moreover, he caught America off guard by purchasing the S-400 missile system, a superior system to American surface-to-air systems (Got, 2020).

Nevertheless, one of the greatest challenges to NATO does not emanate from Russia but from its internal divisions. The conflictual relations between Ankara and several European allies have started to undermine the credibility and cohesion of the organization, which hampers the potential of the alliance to act decisively (Lawrence, 2020). Since NATO operates upon the principle of consensus, all organization's decisions manifest the collective will of the allies; an inevitable downside of this is that every state possesses a de facto right to veto in case its demands are not dealt with, which is incentivized by states to pursue their national interests. For example, France and Turkey supported opposing camps in the Libyan civil war, and NATO intervention in the region in 2011 resulted from French-led initiatives. French president Macaron has been an ardent supporter of the "death of NATO," calling for the formation of a European security alliance that does not include Turkey. Nevertheless, Ankara's formidable military capability and increasing expeditionary capacities, coupled with its expansive defense industry, serve as crucial enables for NATO (Coşkun, 2022). Similarly, for Turkey, being a part of the world's strongest defense alliance cannot be overstated; the states have reaped immense benefits from its memberships. The state's prominence as a regional player has, both before and after the Cold War, been bolstered by its NATO identity.

6.5.4 New forms of dependency on Russia-China axis

According to the foreign policy vision of Erdogan, Turkey is firmly positioned in the global South. Therefore, it seeks to join like-minded states to stand up against the dominance of the West; in his words, "the world is bigger than five" (Aral, 2019). Turkey's leadership's growing discontentment with the West in the aftermath of the unsuccessful 2016 military coup provided an incentive for both Ankara and Moscow to establish closer cooperation. Deepening economic and energy cooperation has included large projects, including the manufacturing of the first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, as well as the Turk Stream natural gas pipeline project. In 2020, bilateral trade volume between Russia and Turkey surpassed US$27.5 billion, and investment stocks exceeded US$20 billion (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021).

Presently, Turkey attains nearly 1/3rd of its natural gas supplies from Russia. In October 2022, Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkish Foreign Minister, stated that Turkey possesses the capability to transform into an energy hub for the transfer of natural gas to the European region (Gaber, 2022). This statement came as a response to Russian President Putin's proposal to avert Russia's gas

supplies intended for the EU via the sabotaged Nord Stream pipeline to the Black Sea and beyond to the European region through Turkey. While geopolitical circumstances, and technical and economic factors, favors Turkey's goal to emerge as a major player in regional energy infrastructure, for Ankara to rise as an energy hub, Russia should not be part of the plan. The fundamental concept of the 'energy hub' rests on a few pillars, such as diversification of pre-existing energy transit routes and suppliers, autonomy in decision-making via a self-governing institution, free market economy, and political will amongst probable partners to engage in the projects (Gaber, 2022). On the contrary, the Russian proposal fulfill none of these requirements; Moscow's conception of making Ankara a Russian gas hub could potentially enhance the latter's reliance on the former's fossil fuels. This, in turn, would deepen Turkey's strategic dependence on Russia, damaging its already complicated ties with the West.

The analyst also contends that the Akkuyu power plant in Turkey could become a bargaining chip in Russia's nuclear blackmail, which the European region has already experienced through gas cuts. Another example is Russia's declaration of shutting down the Blue Stream Pipeline, which carries nearly 60% of Turkish gas imports from Turkey, for ten days with only a two-day notification (Reuters, 2022). Even without Russia, Turkey can play the role of a major energy actor in the region and provide Europe with alternative fossil fuels to fill the Russian gap. However, it would require decoupling from Moscow; Turkey could tap into Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources and accelerate the normalization process with Israel to reach a mutually beneficial deal.

Apart from Russia, Turkey has also developed a closer relationship with China. In 2017, Erdogan exhibited high hopes for the BRI project in Beijing stating, "Building a harmonious system in political and economic areas will herald a new era in our region based on stability and prosperity." In 2020, bilateral trade between China and Turkey amounted to US$22 billion (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021).. In 2019, Turkey declared the 'Asia Anew' initiative, intended to make use of political and economic prospects in the global south in a multipolar global order. According to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Turkey was amongst the third largest lenders in 2019. Furthermore, over a period of the last ten years, the migratory pathway of China's capital exports extended to the Eastern Mediterranean shores and is mainly concentrated in Turkey (Bastian, 2022). However, expanding collaboration between the two countries is rather asymmetric with

regard to the flow of trade and volume of investments; the mounting trade deficit heavily tilts in favor of China. Moreover, China maintains cordial relations with Turkish allies and adversaries alike in the Eastern Mediterranean to protect its investment under the BRI; should Turkey's military assertiveness in the region increase, China might reevaluate the role of Turkey as a dependable partner. While China provides Turkey with an alternate framework and considerable financial resources, Beijing is unwilling to assist Turkey to resolve its dysfunctional governance issues. This dysfunctionality most visibly manifests in the baking industry and monetary policy formation. Erdogan's repeated interference in the prerogatives of the central bank, advocacy for lowing benchmark interest rates, and frequent changing of employees in the finance ministry could result in material costs for Ankara with regards to the diminishing value of the currency, high rate of borrowing on global capital markets and negative reputational capital.

CHPATER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion

Foreign policy decision-making is amongst the greatest instrument of statecraft. It allows states to formulate policies in line with their national interests, which then translate into geopolitical outcomes. The geopolitical vision of Turkish foreign policy has transformed dramatically since the independence of the republic in 1923. From 1923-1938, under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the state embarked on a Western-led development trajectory, undertaking a series of revolutionary reforms. During the Cold War, strategic orientation with the West continued with the exception of a few cases, such as the Cyprus issue in 1974 and military coups in Turkey. Under the two decades of AKP rule, Turkish foreign policy has witnessed strategic reorientation. In the first decade of the 21st century, the logic of interdependence constituted a driving force for Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, from 2002 onwards, the doctrine of 'strategic depth' occupied a central place in AKP governance; the doctrine called for the state's active engagement with its immediate neighborhood in line with Ahmet Davutoglu's "zero problems with the neighborhood policy." However, the policy proved to be a failure amid the transforming nature of international politics; as a result, during the second decade of AKP rule, Turkey's soft-power-driven role as a mediator and integrator was eventually replaced with its quest for greater strategic autonomy, characterized by assertiveness, unilateralism, and military adventurism.

The Poliheuristic theory of decision-making provides a valuable framework for explaining this dramatic transformation. According to the theory, Erdogan's quest for strategic autonomy is an important junction in the Turkish government; it provides maximum overall utility to the state in terms of its political and military dimensions. In terms of political implications, Erdogan's foreign policy is an extension of his vision of greater Turkey based on his boosted self-identity. Moreover, the adventurous foreign policy allows Erdogan to mobilize an electoral support base at home, break down the opposition, and amass popular support, by averting attention from domestic governance

crises. With regards to the military and security dimension, strategic autonomy-based discourse allows political elites within Turkey to cooperate with non-western states, such as Russia and China, and establish an effective counterweight against the American-led hierarchical global order. Ahmet Davutoglu's zero problems with the neighbor policy became incompatible in the wake of the Arab Spring protests, transforming into "fault lines everywhere." Furthermore, the Turkish acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system, along with the development of its national defense sector, which fulfills 60% of Turkey's demand, enhanced the state's confidence in power projection. Therefore, Turkish reorientation can be perceived as an adjustment to the new normal within global affairs. Lastly, the economic consequences of Erdogan's policy option suggest that Turkey's economic outlook based on a major drift away from the West is premature because the West accounts for 56% of Turkey's trade. On the other hand, Turkey's trade with non-Western partners is asymmetric and does not come close to supply chains from the "Strategic West." Moreover, Russia's conception of making turkey a Russian gas hub could potentially enhance Ankara's dependence on Moscow; it could also expose Turkey to Russia's energy blackmail. Thus, Erdogan's foreign policy decision-making provides maximum utility across political and military dimensions; nevertheless, the economic dimension can be ruled out on the basis of the non-compensatory principle.

Under its strategic repositioning, Tukey entered a new phase in 2016, reflected in the spirit of the Blue Homeland doctrine. It is an ambitious legal and political doctrine that reflects Turkey's maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, a distinct geopolitical and geo-economic space. According to its littoral strategy, Ankara aims to sustain a strong coastal defense of its maritime borders and states that littoral waters surrounding the states, in effect, is an expansion of its boundary. Under the doctrine, Turkey and its TRNCs possess a naval domain expanding over an area of 462,000 km2. On the domestic front, the Blue Homeland doctrine can be viewed as the rendition of the reversal of AKP's political alliance with the Fethullah Gulen movement. Since then, Turkish military and political elites in the government witnessed gradual rapprochement, and Blue Homeland followers eventually began to enter power circles, who argued the Blue Homeland doctrine to be at the forefront of Turkey's defense agenda. Furthermore, regional and international developments also provided an impetus for maritime issues to occupy a central place in Turkish foreign policy, such as the discovery of vast hydrocarbon resources in Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt in 2009, 2011, and 2015, respectively. Blue Homeland doctrine is manifested in the Turkish Naval

Force Strategy 2015, the Blue Home Exercises in 2019 and 2022, the Turkey-Libya maritime deal in 2019, and the robust development of Turkey's indigenous defense industry.

Turkey's rising posture in the Eastern Mediterranean, along with the role played by regional and extra-regional players, has led to the emergence of geopolitical space defined by three aspects: overlapping EEZ claims amongst littoral states, competition over energy resources, and the desire for states to enhance their existing sphere of influence amid the regional and global power struggles. On the one hand, states such as Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and Greece, facilitated by America and France, have formulated alliances to balance against Turkey. On the other hand, due to isolation from regional mechanisms, including the EMGF and EastMed pipeline projects, Turkey has embarked on military modernization to "deconstruct" the regional state of affairs to its advantage. Even though the Israel-Turkey partnership has the potential to transform Eastern Mediterranean gas to the European region in a cost-efficient and feasible way, any such proposal could violate the rights of Cyprus and Greece, long-term allies of Israel. Russia and China's role in the region have also enhanced; however, Turkey's postulation that these states would play in opposition to the EU and the US has largely remained unrewarded because Moscow and Beijing maintain multi-dimension ties with regional states.

Geopolitical rivalries in the region have resulted in significant political, economic, and security ramifications, catalyzing imbalances in the region. For the broader region, antagonism between states has generated a cold war-like situation with different power centers seeking to balance against one another. Second, territorializing of maritime zones has led to the emergence of naval arms and submarine races between littoral countries, with regional actors aiming to construct blue-water navies. Third, regional instability has transformed migration patterns in the region, adversely impacting refugees and asylum-seekers aiming to reach the European region via the Eastern Mediterranean transit route. For Turkey, while the Blue Homeland doctrine has maximized the populist dividend in the short run, in the longer run, it has isolated Turkey on the international stage, transforming it into an unpredictable partner from a credible NATO ally. Moreover, Ankara's gunboat diplomacy has placed Turkey at odds with its traditional Western allies: the EU and the US. While such a scenario has provided Turkey with an opportunity to diversify its partnership with non-Western partners, such as Russia and China, the asymmetrical nature of relations has raised speculation over new forms of Turkey's international dependence. However,

Turkey’s isolation has promoted Turkey to recalibrate its international posture, as demonstrated by its reconciliatory statements and gestures.

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