

Balancing for Profit: The Republic of Cyprus' Grand Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea

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Abstract

This piece seeks to map and critique the Republic of Cyprus' grand strategy in recent years by focusing on the ways its Foreign Policy Executive has sought to counterbalance Turkey through a polythematic and proactive approach. This approach is based on extensive alliance-building efforts and an attempt to act as a link between the EU and the Middle East. This shift in the island's foreign policy was enabled by Turkey's breakdown of relations with Israel and Egypt and on the prospect of profit emanating from the region's hydrocarbons. The analysis is made through a new concept in the International Relations (IR) theory; balancing for profit. Based on a Neoclassical Realist Foreign Policy and using Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory as a starting point, offshore natural resources are viewed as a structural modifier that has altered the parameters of strategic interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, enabling the Republic of Cyprus to engage in a proactive foreign policy driven by the prospect of common profit.

Keywords: Neoclassical Realism, hydrocarbons, offshore natural resources, Eastern Mediterranean, Republic of Cyprus, foreign policy, Israel, Greece, structural modifiers

Introduction²

In recent years the Foreign Policy (FP) of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has witnessed important changes leading it from a position of historical uneasiness with the West to the position of an EU member state. Simultaneously, the geopolitical

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² It should be noted that segments of this piece have evolved from the MSc dissertation of one of the authors at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

locus in which the RoC is situated, namely the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has witnessed important hydrocarbon discoveries, illustrating the region's potential to become an energy hub. The RoC attempts to take advantage of these discoveries both within and outside its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) at an international level by constructing deepening relationships with other energy-rich states in the region aimed at providing a counterbalance to Turkey. Through trilaterals with Israel and Egypt, its geostrategic position, energy reserves and the historically close ties with states in the Eastern Mediterranean Cyprus attempts to act as a link between the Middle East and the EU.

This foreign policy shift has not altered the main objectives and axis of Cypriot FP. These are none other than a solution to the Cyprus problem that will include the removal of Turkish military forces from the island and the international non-recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), a breakaway republic established by the Turkish Cypriots in the Turkish-controlled part of the island. What has changed is the way in which the Cypriot Foreign Policy Executive (FPE) seeks to achieve those objectives. Instead of simply focusing on the illegality of the occupation, which is based on UN Security Council Resolutions, the Cypriot FPE has employed a polythematic approach. In specific, Cypriot diplomacy has been actively engaging with other actors on a range of issues and not just the Cyprus problem. This has elevated the island-state's stature, which in turn helps the Cypriot FPE to promote Greek Cypriot positions on the Cyprus problem at the international level. The aim of this piece is to illustrate the aforementioned, and to present, analyse and critique the Cypriot FPE's grand strategy based on secondary material and interviews with senior members of the Cypriot FPE.

Simultaneously, this paper is an exercise in International Relations (IR) theory. It seeks to account for the impact of offshore natural resources in alliance building. Their impact has so far been largely underestimated by Realist IR scholars who view them primarily as a form of 'latent power' that could eventually be transformed into military force.³ Although this is true, natural resources, within an anarchic international system, have the capability to modify the system's structure at a regional level, changing the parameters of strategic interaction within a regional environment. Based on this, natural resources can act as *structural modifiers*. This piece seeks to partly fill this gap within the literature by focusing on the impact of

³ J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

offshore natural resources like oil or hydrocarbons on a regional level. We specifically seek to illustrate that offshore natural resources can help a small and weak state to *balance* in the face of a rising hegemon.

This runs contrary to the view of Walt and Schweller. Both argued that a weak state should *bandwagon* – align itself with the aggressor – or perish, since no state would seek to form an alliance with it due to its limited capabilities.⁴ Nonetheless, the existence of offshore natural resources within the vicinity of the weak state allow it to *balance for profit*, provided that its FPE take the appropriate measures to generate profit. The fear that a revisionist state could gain these resources leads other states to balance with the weak state whilst increasing the possibility of profiting from these resources. Furthermore, their existence is not only affecting the regional level, but also the unit level by pressuring the weak state – the party whose survival is threatened to the greater extent - to alter its grand strategy and exploit this opportunity. Subsequently, the offshore nature of these resources creates the impetus for military cooperation due to the need for the provision of search and rescue.⁵ Through increased interaction, allies may enhance and deepen their relationship, approximating the effect of a formal military alliance.⁶ The key challenge for the small state is to exploit this opportunity by monetising these resources swiftly in a mutually beneficial way for itself and its partners. Such a development will allow for a deepening relationship and cooperation.

This work uses a Neoclassical Realist (NcR) theoretical framework to construct and illustrate the effect of balance for profit that emanates from the effect of offshore natural resources as a structural modifier. Balancing for profit has as its starting point in Walt's (1987) balance of threat theory and should be understood as a modification of this theory. This piece begins with a section on methodology followed by a literature review. Moving on, the theoretical framework of this piece is presented along with the balance for profit concept that will enable the deciphering of the RoC's grand strategy. Subsequently, the RoC's grand strategy and its alliance building efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean will be presented and critiqued.

⁴ See S.M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987) and R. L. Schweller (1994), "Bandwagoning For Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", *International Security* 19, No. 1, p. 72.

⁵ Search and Rescue (SAR) is the search for and provision of aid to people who are in distress or imminent danger

⁶ The definitions for the terms *alliance*, *grand strategy* and *alignment* follow the definitions offered by Walt discussed in the 'Theoretical Framework' section of this piece.

Methodology

This section outlines the qualitative mixed methods approach guiding this work, starting with its ‘soft positivist’ epistemology and the process tracing procedure that followed. We then focus on the semi-structured elite interviews undertaken for the assessment of the Cypriot FPE, explaining their goals, their limitations and the ways in which we have overcome these limitations.

‘Soft Positivism’ posits itself between the hard positivism of theorists who brought models of theory, building and testing from the natural to the social sciences, and the critical and post-positivist theorists who view the social sciences as incapable of providing prescriptive policy formulations to policymakers.⁷ Epistemologically, soft positivism falls within the family of Cartesian dualist philosophies of science. It contends that there is an objective material world that the immaterial mind can understand and grasp through careful experimentation and examination of case studies. Nonetheless, soft positivists contend that the prescriptive powers of their theories are limited to the scope conditions of their examined case studies and are in many cases victim to the subjectiveness of the available material in connection to the selected case study.⁸ They thus opt for a careful selection of case studies and their examination through a *process tracing* method to assess the effectiveness of the chosen causal mechanism i.e. a structural Realist theory.

Process tracing entails generating and analysing data connected to the ‘causal mechanisms, or processes, events, actions, expectations and other intervening variables, that link putative cases to observed effects’.⁹ This approach seeks to understand the link between cause and effect by an in-depth case study examination.¹⁰ Its goal is to assess the impact of the causal mechanism on the outcome by first breaking this process into smaller steps and then looking for empirical evidence verifying those steps. Within the NcR framework, it involves the selection of an appropriate Realist baseline as the independent variable. As Ripsman et al. have argued, the first crucial step in NcR theory building begins with the choice of an appropriate

⁷ N.M. Ripsman et al. *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 105-7

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 107.

⁹ A. Bennett and A.L. George, ‘Process Tracing In Case Study Research’, Last modified 1997, https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/suz/dam/jcr:00000000-5103-bee3-0000-000059b16b9d/05.19.bennett_george.pdf:5.

¹⁰ S.V. Evera, *Guide To Methods For Students Of Political Science*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) p. 64.

Realist baseline that the researcher can clearly identify beforehand, empirically verify and explain a category of international events i.e. alliances.¹¹ In this case, we assume the international system, its structure, and the structural modifiers affecting it, to be our independent variable. By testing this theory and others on the case study in question, one can illustrate its limits as a causal mechanism. In turn, with the utilisation of intervening variables and the re-examination of the nature of the independent variable, a new causal mechanism fit to explain the observable phenomenon in question can be derived.

The material consulted for the selected case study is primarily derived from secondary sources. In many cases, these do not seek to answer the questions posed by this work or by NCR theories in general. To alleviate this limitation as much as possible, we conducted fieldwork in Cyprus for a period of three weeks between June and July 2018, organising four elite interviews with members of the Cypriot FPE. The aim of those interviews was to understand the Cypriot FPE's strategic culture, grand strategy and how the existence of hydrocarbons within Cyprus's EEZ has affected this grand strategy and Cyprus' outlook towards the region. Due to the specific aims of these interviews a semi-structured form was chosen that allowed them to be targeted whilst leaving open the possibility of specific questions, allowing us to further explore certain facets of their responses.

Finally, the main challenges of conducting elite interviews (gaining access, establishing rapport and acquiring trust) were overcome because of our previous employment as research interns in the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), enabling us to gain access and establish rapport.¹² For this, we also utilised participant observation methods, as both participant-observers, as well as complete observers.¹³ Having first-hand experience in research within specialised divisions of the MFA, we were able to reflect on our findings whilst conducting fieldwork, obtaining a better understanding of key foreign policy and diplomatic functions of the state, as well as the actors involved.

¹¹ Ripsman et al, 2016, pp. 114-18.

¹² R. Mikecz, (2012) 'Interviewing Elites', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol.18, No. 6, pp. 482-484.

¹³ H. Becker and B. Geer, (1957) "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison", *Human Organization*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 28-29. See also L.M. Baker, (2006) 'Observation: A Complex Research Method', *Library Trends*, Vol. 55, No.1, p. 177.

Literature Review

There is a gap on the literature on Cypriot grand strategy that we seek to address. Primarily, the issue here is twofold: (a) does Cyprus, as a small state whose military capacity in relation to other bigger states is lacking, is in need of a grand strategy, and (b) do shifts in grand strategy bring more merits or problems for Cypriot foreign policy? We define grand strategy as a state's ability to operate within political, diplomatic, economic, military and non-military means in asserting power and statecraft to pursue their political objectives successfully, with security among its top priorities.¹⁴ In responding to the first question, grand strategy gives direction and contributes to foreign policy and a sense of security formulation. A major problem to Cypriot security is that Cyprus has never released a comprehensive report or other document that outlines its national security strategy. This limitation itself questions the very principle and concept of grand strategy. Nonetheless, do not argue that grand strategy is synonymous to a state's national security strategy, the latter being a plan that explicitly sets out a political agenda on security. Rather, grand strategy on its own is a framework whereby security objectives not constrained by specific decision-making outcomes are met in the long run.¹⁵ Therefore, Cyprus is in need of a grand strategy that acts as a theoretical tool that complements foreign, defence, and security strategy.

In answering the second issue within this body of literature, we turn to external actors that have a strategic presence in the region. Examples of strategical shifts that have affected the balance of power in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean fall under the shortcomings of the US grand strategy. First and foremost, the United States as a hegemon in the Eastern Mediterranean under the Obama administration produced a grand strategy that has allowed the state to reformulate a sense of national identity in world politics, repositioning itself better within the political environment.¹⁶ Obama, for instance, would at times launch operations in

¹⁴ P. M. Kennedy (1991) 'Grand Strategies in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition' in Kennedy, P.M. (ed.) *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press) p. 1-10. See also Gray, C.S. (2007) *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (New York, NY: Routledge) p. 1 and B. R. Posen (1984) *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 13.

¹⁵ A.G. Platias and K. Koliopoulos (2010) *Thucydides on Strategy: Grand Strategies in the Peloponnesian War and their Relevance Today* (London: Hurst Publishers).

¹⁶ G. Löfmann (2019) 'From the Obama Doctrine to America First: The Erosion of the Washington Consensus on Grand Strategy', *International Politics*, doi.org/10.1057/s41311-019-00172-0

Libya and Syria, on the one hand, whereas on the other hand, he would withdraw troops in Iraq – all incidents taking place in 2011.¹⁷

The Trump administration, however, in failing to produce a comprehensive grand strategy, resulted to the weakening of US hegemony in the region.¹⁸ The power vacuum generated, then, highlighted new challenges. For example, it has granted other countries such as Turkey a free hand in the region. This is evident in Turkey's actions in Syria, as well as the way it challenges Cyprus over its very own Exclusive Economic Zone.¹⁹ Simultaneously, the lack of a coherent US grand strategy has pushed Turkey closer to Russia, with the example of Turkey buying the S-400 missile system.²⁰ This shows that Turkey does not respect its NATO commitments, highlighting the decline of US hegemony. Moreover, the United States is not the only country that collaborates with Cyprus in the region. Rival countries such as the Russian Federation and China have drawn closer to Cyprus on economic cooperation.²¹ Taking both reasons into account, we understand Cypriot grand strategy as a tool that complements foreign policy. As such, the RoC utilises grand strategy in order to accomplish its long-term security and foreign policy objectives. External actors in the region also shape and re-direct the way Cyprus responds in addressing its security concerns. The decline of US grand strategy, then, also affects developments in the region.

The literature regarding Cyprus within international affairs is focused at two distinct yet interconnected directions which are pertinent to the topic of this piece. The first is linked to the Cyprus problem and the ongoing attempts to provide a solution to this protracted frozen conflict. Within this literature the most recent trend, which is also the most relevant to this article, is linked with the capacity of Cyprus' hydrocarbon resources to become a catalyst for the solution of the Cyprus problem. The second line of growing literature is linked to the shifting geopolitical

¹⁷ P. D. Feaver, H. Brands, R. F. Lissner, and P. Porter (2019) 'The Establishment and US Grand Strategy', *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 198.

¹⁸ G. Löfmann (2019)

¹⁹ G. M. Winrow (2016) 'The Anatomy of a Possible Pipeline: The Case of Turkey and Leviathan and Gas Politics in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 441-442.

²⁰ S. J. Frantzman (2020) 'Russia Ships 120 Missiles to Turkey for S-400 System' Available at <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Russia-ships-120-missiles-to-Turkey-for-S-400-system-614784>

²¹ R. Pedi and I. Kouskouvelis (2019) Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Small State Seeking for Status' in Litsas, S. N. and Tziampiris, A. (eds.) *The New Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, Politics and States in a Volatile Era* (Cham: Springer), p. 160.

environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and the trilateral partnerships and synergies in which Cyprus is involved along with Greece, Israel and Egypt. Although both portions of literature offer nuances and glimpse into Cypriot FP in the last decade, the material dedicated to Cypriot FP and its grand strategy is very limited in nature.

Apart from these two portions of literature, it should be noted that since the country's EU accession much work has been done by James Ker-Lindsay on the apparent shift in Greek Cypriot FP.²² Ker-Lindsay's starting point is Cyprus' Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) membership as the main axis of Cypriot FP prior to EU accession. However, since Cyprus' membership in the EU meant the termination of Cypriot NAM membership, Ker-Lindsay has rightly argued the island-state can act as the EU's 'lighthouse' in this turbulent region, linking the EU and the Middle East.²³ The problem herein lies in the fact that these pieces are currently dated and do not take the hydrocarbon factor into account which, as it will be argued later, has allowed Cyprus to elevate its stature both in the region and within the EU. It was also the hydrocarbons that enabled the Cypriot FPE to pursue Ker-Lindsay's prescribed strategy of Cyprus acting as a link between the EU and the Middle East. In the words of Foreign Minister Christodoulides, 'energy acted as a catalyst, which allowed us to discuss a range of other issues with other states in the region.'²⁴

For several scholars and politicians, these hydrocarbon discoveries within the Cypriot EEZ can also act as a catalyst in the efforts for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Their argument follows the logic of Liberal IR theorists who have long argued that in conditions of international anarchy, cooperation is possible through economic interdependence and global trade.²⁵ Despite this optimism, Keohane and Nye warn that even in conditions of economic interdependence tensions may rise due to the scarcity of resources.²⁶ Nonetheless, a growing number of liberal scholars and politicians have promoted the idea that natural resources can resolve

²² J. Ker-Lindsay, (2008) 'Europe's Eastern Outpost: The Republic Of Cyprus And The Middle East', *The Round Table*, Vol. 97, No. 397. See also J. Ker-Lindsay, (2010) 'Shifting Alliance: The External Orientation of Cyprus Since Independence', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 68, and J. Ker-Lindsay, 'Membership and Foreign Policy', in J. Ker-Lindsay, H. Faustmann, and F. Mullen (eds.) *An Island In Europe: The EU And The Transformation Of Cyprus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp.113-115.

²³ Ker-Lindsay, 2008.

²⁴ Nicos Christodoulides, Interviewed by the authors, Nicosia, June 2018.

²⁵ R.O. Keohane, (1977) *After Hegemony*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, p. 6. See also R.O. Keohane and J.S. Nye, *Power And Interdependence* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1977).

²⁶ Keohane and Nye, 1977, pp. 9-11.

international conflicts. The rationale is that the need for stable markets, low oil prices and access to natural resources can lead to interstate cooperation over the control and exploitation of these raw materials.²⁷ The UN realising the centrality of resources in many conflicts has incorporated these insights into its conflict resolution strategies.²⁸

Employing this logic on the Cyprus problem, liberal arguments have primarily focused on the possible economic benefits from hydrocarbon exploitation for both Turkey and Cyprus. This, in turn, should motivate them to resolve the conflict.²⁹ Since the cheapest monetisation option for these natural resources would be a pipeline from the Eastern Mediterranean through Turkey to Europe, this should provide the necessary impetus for a solution. Negotiations have persisted over the years but to no avail. What these analysts miss out, something that should have been apparent if they followed the counsel of Moravcsik to 'take preferences seriously', is that the preferences of the negotiating parties and their respective societies are not aligned.³⁰ The mutual insecurity that persists between the two sides, fuelled by an age-long mistrust between Greeks and Turks, heightens the security dilemma. Greek Cypriots would not accept a solution that will keep Turkish troops and intervention rights on the island, while Turkish Cypriots and Turkey are not willing to sign any solution

²⁷ Z. Mikdashi, *The International Politics Of Natural Resources* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 118. See also D. Chapman and N. Khanna, (2006) 'The Persian Gulf, Global Oil Resources, and International Security', *Contemporary Economic Policy*, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 511 and S. Dinar, 'Resource Scarcity and Environmental Degradation: Analyzing International Conflict and Cooperation', in S. Dinar (ed.) *Beyond Resource Wars: Scarcity, Environmental Degradation, and International Cooperation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011), pp. 10-11.

²⁸ UNEP, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment* (Nairobi: United Nations Environmental Programme, 2009), pp. 6-9.

²⁹ A. Antreasyan, (2013) 'Gas Finds in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3. See also H. Dabouche et al, 'Eastern Mediterranean Gas: What Kind of a Game-Changer', *The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies*, 2012, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/NG-71.pdf>, and M. Bryza (2014), 'Israel-Turkey Pipeline Can Fix Eastern Mediterranean', *Bloomberg*, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-01-20/israel-turkey-pipeline-can-fix-eastern-mediterranean>.

³⁰ A. Moravcsik (1998), 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory Of International Politics: Erratum', *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4, pp. 513-515. On public preferences regarding the Cyprus Problem, see M. Loizou, "Δημοσκοπήση: Η Άποψη Των Πολιτών Για Εξελίξεις Στο Κυπριακό | News", *Sigmalive.Com*, Available at <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/kypriako/385773/dimoskopi-si-i-apopsi-ton-politon-gia-ekselikseis-sto-kypriako>, and V.L. Morelli, 'Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive' (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2018).

that does not guarantee such provisions.³¹ In continuity, the persistence of the conflict reinforces the ontological security – the security of their collective identity that places the opposing side as the significant ‘Other’ leading to key normative and material consequences - of both sides in this conflict and the existence of hydrocarbons in this dilemma for the moment seems to heighten rather than ease the tensions.³²

The second portion of literature follows the teachings of the Realist School of thought within IR and is founded upon variations of the balance of power concept. This literature is primarily concerned with the trilateral alignment between Greece, Cyprus and Israel and is not solely dedicated to Cypriot FP and its goals. Aristotle Tziampiris argues that the Greece-Cyprus-Israel alignment has limited military value and uses *soft balancing* to characterise it.³³ Soft balancing concerns the employment of ‘international institutions, economic statecraft and diplomatic arrangements’ to balance against a hegemon by complicating, increasing the costs or delaying a policy enacted by the hegemon.³⁴ Tziampiris argues, based on extensive interviews with Greek and Israeli officials, that Greece does not expect Israeli help in a confrontation with Turkey in the Aegean, while the Israelis should not expect Greek help in a war with Iran.³⁵ ‘Greece and Israel embarked upon extensive bilateral cooperation that fell short of an alliance’, in his words.³⁶ Similarly, Zenonas Tziarras described this as a ‘comfortable quasi-alliance’ because of the minimal military component of this relationship making it less formal and more flexible.³⁷ Emmanuel Karagiannis also employs a balance of power argument to explain the alignment between Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt by offering an overview to the shifting geopolitical environment in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.³⁸

Although these pieces offer relevant insights to the scope of this work, none of them explicitly deals with the grand strategy of Cypriot FP in recent years. The only

³¹ Ibid.

³² On Ontological Security in IR see J. Mitzen, (2006) ‘Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma’, *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 12, No. 3.

³³ A. Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation* (New York, NY: Springer International PU, 2014), pp. 164-166.

³⁴ R. A. Pape, (2005) ‘Soft Balancing Against the United States’, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1.

³⁵ Tziampiris, 2014, pp. 164-166.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 166.

³⁷ Z. Tziarras, (2016) ‘Israel-Cyprus-Greece: A “Comfortable” Quasi-Alliance’, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 383-385.

³⁸ E. Karagiannis, (2016) ‘Shifting Eastern Mediterranean Alliances’, *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 1-3.

piece within the literature that makes such an attempt is a recent contribution to an edited volume by Tziarras. Utilising a NcR approach, Tziarras illustrates the more proactive nature of Cypriot FP in the 2010s which in his view has been enabled primarily by the systemic opportunity arising by the breakdown of relations between Turkey and other regional states like Israel and Egypt since 2010.³⁹ This systemic opportunity was exploited by the Cypriot FPE through the construction of the trilaterals, which, Tziarras rightly characterises as not fully-fledged alliances.⁴⁰ Although he attributes an element of importance to natural resources in his analysis, he does not view them as a systemic element of the international environment, something which this paper seeks to illustrate. The regional imbalances of power provided an important opportunity for the RoC since Israel and Egypt now viewed Turkey as a threat.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the construction of the trilaterals was significantly aided by the hydrocarbon potential of the region which acted as a structural modifier that altered the parameters of strategic interaction to the RoC's favour. Hydrocarbons and the necessity to exploit them prompted the Cypriot FPE into action making it understand the potential arising from the geopolitical opportunity presented by Turkey's aggressive stance in the region as well as the RoC's position as an EU member state.

All of the aforementioned works are part of a growing literature that deals with the reconceptualization/reconceptualisation of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea as a distinct geopolitical space. Although this area is not usually considered as a separate region within Area Studies or IR, in recent years more and more analysts have sought to change that.⁴² In theoretical terms, for example, Adamides and Christou understand the Eastern Mediterranean as a new Regional Security Sub-Complex (RSC).⁴³ The triangle between Cyprus and Israel, which are part of two different RSCs, and Turkey (the insulator state that sits on the periphery of two regions)

³⁹ Z. Tziarras, 'Cyprus' Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Trilateral Partnerships: A Neoclassical Realist Approach' in Z. Tziarras (ed.) *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security*. Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, No. 3 (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019).

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 61.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 57-58.

⁴² C. Adamides and O. Christou, 'Beyond Hegemony: Cyprus, Energy Securitisation and the Emergence of New Regional Security Complexes', in S.N. Litsas and A. Tziampiris (eds.) *The Eastern Mediterranean In Transition: Multipolarity, Politics and Power* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 181-183. See also Tziarras, 2016, 411.

⁴³ Adamides and Christou, 2016, p. 182.

forms a new RSC. It is also a region of constant regional tension that links Europe and the Middle East with the hydrocarbon discoveries, increasing the geostrategic importance of the region. The authors of this work believe that this effort will allow us to gain analytical insight into the developments in this geopolitical space and believe that this piece can add to the debate.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this work rests upon NcR, which shares three core assumptions with other Realist theories. Firstly, the international system is state-centric, where secondly, the international system is anarchic because there is no global government to enforce its will upon states. This in turn leads to constant insecurity within states. Hence, states, in their effort to survive they need to accumulate material power, primarily military force.⁴⁴ NcR distinguishes itself from Structural realism, which assumes that states can respond to systemic imperatives optimally by mobilising the necessary resources and forming the necessary alliances.⁴⁵ NcR, unlike Structural realism, does not view the state as a 'black box' that acts as a rational unitary actor. As Ripsman et al. point out, Waltz does not take into consideration the economic and societal environment the FPE operates in.⁴⁶ For a state to function in the way Waltz would expect it, a consensus among the FPE and key societal actors should exist regarding the need to counter the perceived threat.⁴⁷ On the contrary, if there is disagreement between the state and key societal actors, the state has less autonomy to counter this threat.⁴⁸

As Waltz acknowledged, his Structural Realist theory is not fit for foreign policy analysis.⁴⁹ NcR seeks to take up Structural realism's inability by providing a foreign policy analysis framework that has Structural realism as its starting point by accepting that a state's foreign policy decisions are a response to systemic stimuli. The exact nature of the response to the pressures of the international system, NcR argue, is not predetermined but filtered through a set of domestic interven-

⁴⁴ Ripsman et al, 2016, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁵ K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 95, 118.

⁴⁶ Ripsman et al, 2016, pp. 24-5.

⁴⁷ S. E. Lobell, 'Threat Assessment, the State and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model', in S.E. Lobell (ed.) *Neoclassical Realism, The State and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ K.N. Waltz, (1996) 'International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy', *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 54-57.

ing variables. These may include the perception of the international environment by the FPE, state-society relations, strategic culture and the nature of the state's domestic institutions. Consequently, unlike most Structural Realist theories that assume rationality, NcR approaches rationality with scepticism since this 'distorting variable' between the FPE and the international system affects the FPE's ability to act rationally. In turn, the framework recognises that there is no perfect 'transmission belt' between the relative distribution of power and a state's foreign policy decision-making.⁵⁰

Based upon the methodological approach of this work that follows the prescription of Ripsman et al. on the construction of a NcR Theory, this section consists of two parts. The first part outlines Stephen Walt's *Balance of Threat* theory. 'Balance of Threat' acts as the Structural Realist baseline for the theoretical concept proposed in this work – balance for profit- in according to Ripsman et al's NcR theory building process. The second sketches the parameters of the proposed 'balance for profit' concept. Key notice is given to the concept of structural modifiers that modify the effects of the system's structure in the regional space of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Structural Realist baseline: Balance of Threat

Walt's balance of threat forms our Structural Realist baseline. It fits the preconditions set by Ripsman et al. since it is clearly an identifiable, empirically verifiable theory, as Walt's analysis of Middle Eastern alliances between 1955 and 1979 highlights, and can explain the formation of alliances, a category of international events. Walt argued that states do not necessarily balance against power, which is the distribution of military capabilities, but they balance threat. In this section we illustrate the key assumptions and nuances of Walt's theory.

Walt broke with the prevalent tradition within Realist IR theory by arguing that history does not really support the claim that states necessarily balance against power.⁵¹ He argues that due to the existence of various definitions for the concept itself there is no clear understanding of how it operates and aids alliance construction. Pointing to the works of Morgenthau, Liska and Schroeder, which he singles out as the most important within the literature, Walt illustrates how balance of

⁵⁰ G. Rose, (1998) 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, p. 147.

⁵¹ Walt, 1987, p. 6-8.

power theorists lack any systematic hypothesis testing.⁵² He also breaks with the traditional definition of an alliance as a pact in the form of a treaty aimed at providing security. Instead, he terms alliances and alignment as:

*'a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states. This definition assumes some level of commitment and an exchange of benefits for both parties; severing the relationship or failing to honour the agreement would presumably cost something, even if it were compensated in other ways.'*⁵³

His rationale is explained by the fact that the US and Israel, for instance, do not have an alliance treaty between them.⁵⁴ Subsequently, Walt understands a state's grand strategy as a theory that seeks to explain how it can cause security for itself. These definitions are followed in this work.

He subsequently outlines his own balance of threat theory. For Walt, states balance against another state that is perceived as an existential threat. He agrees that the aggressor state's overall power, the backbone of balance of power, is vital in determining whether a state is a threat.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, he also points out to the importance of geographic proximity, the aggressor's offensive capabilities, and their offensive intentions. If two states are bordering each other, conflict is more likely to happen since their ability to project power on each other is greater due to the lack of geographical distance. Therefore, alliances are more likely to be constructed against bordering powers. For example, the inability of the European Great Powers to check the US rise, especially, after the end of the American Civil War and before the onset of World War I is owed largely to the inability of European powers to project their power across the Atlantic.⁵⁶ This also showcases the importance of offensive capabilities since the European powers lacked the offensive weaponry to effectively check the US ascendance during this period.⁵⁷ If a state can inflict considerable damage against its adversary and thus threaten their territorial integrity

⁵² H.J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 1993). See also G. Liska, *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. and P.W. Schroeder, (1977) 'Quantitative Studies in The Balance of Power', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 21, No. 1.

⁵³ Walt, 1987, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Ripsman et al. 2016, pp. 41-43.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 41-43.

and sovereignty, then it becomes more threatening.⁵⁸ Therefore, it leads others to balance against it. Finally, if a state is perceived as 'aggressive' by its neighbours then this will lead them to balance against it.⁵⁹

Walt eventually reaches to the conclusion that *balancing*, not *bandwagoning* is the more common behaviour for states within the international system. On the other hand, bandwagoning is restricted to 'weak and isolated states'.⁶⁰ Bandwagoning is supposedly stronger when the 'threat' has shown its ability to 'compel' through military force. Reaching the same conclusion, albeit in a different manner, Randall Schweller argues that small states should and would bandwagon in the face of a growing threat because aligning with a rising hegemon would allow them to share the spoils of victory.⁶¹ Nonetheless, Cyprus' defiance of Turkey, highlighted by the insolvability of the Cyprus problem, renders Walt's assumption problematic. Why does the Cyprus not bandwagon with Turkey? To answer this question, historically one can point out to the strategic culture of Cyprus post-1974. Even so, one should also understand the effect of *structural modifiers*, specifically, offshore natural resources like oil and hydrocarbons, within a regional environment. The existence of these offshore natural resources allows Cyprus to *balance for profit* and withstand Turkish pressures.

Structural Modifiers and Balance for Profit

Although NcR's conception of the international system is closely interconnected with the Waltzian conception of the international system, it is not entirely identical. Scholars have identified several non-structural systemic factors that modify the effect of the system's structure. For Waltz, 'structure' is defined by the relative distribution of capabilities and the ordering principle of the international system – anarchy.⁶² These structural modifiers, which include geographical proximity, the offence-defence balance and the rate of technological diffusion modify the system's structure by alternating the effects of anarchy and the relative power distribution, thus, influencing the external behaviour of units within the international system.⁶³

⁵⁸ Walt, 1987, p. 25.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 263.

⁶¹ Schweller, 1994.

⁶² Waltz, 1979, pp. 91-99.

⁶³ For a general discussion on structural modifiers see Ripsman et al., p. 39-43. See also Glenn H. Snyder, 'Process Variable in Neorealist Theory', in B. Frankel (ed.) *Realism: Restatement and Renewal* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 173-193 and B. Buzan, 'Beyond Neorealism: Interaction Capacity',

Nonetheless, unlike the early work on structural modifiers which viewed their effects as system-wide, this work and its theoretical hypothesis on the effect of natural resources as structural modifiers follows the position of Ripsman et al.'s, which considers them as material in nature and not necessarily system-wide in effect.⁶⁴ To them, these non-structural systemic elements modify the effect of the system's structure on the 'parameters of strategic interactions and the likely external behaviours of individual units'.⁶⁵ However, these constraints and opportunities rarely pertain to the whole system. Physical distance, for instance, which in turn leads to the loss-of-strength gradient and the existence or lack of topographical barriers -making borders indefensible - affects the regional security environment, not the whole system.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, natural resources, an attribute of geography have not been examined as a structural modifier.

Within the Realist canon natural resources have been treated as 'latent' power.⁶⁷ Latent power is the 'raw potential' of a state based on its economic capabilities and manpower that can be subsequently transformed into military power.⁶⁸ Taliaferro is the only Realist who has hinted to the impact of 'raw materials' or natural resources as a structural modifier.⁶⁹ His analysis, however, was focused primarily on the impact of the offense-defence balance. Nonetheless, the existence of natural resources within a regional environment has the capacity to modify the system structure's by altering the pattern and context of strategic interactions between regional actors at the systemic level and to grand strategic adjustment at the unit level.

The existence of natural resources within a regional environment has the capacity to modify the system structure's by altering the pattern and context of strategic

in B. Buzan, C. Jones, and R. Little (eds.) *The Logic Of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and S.V. Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) and J.S. Nye, (1988) 'Neorealism and Neoliberalism', *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 2.

⁶⁴ Ripsman et al., 2016, pp. 39-43.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

⁶⁶ J.M. Mearsheimer, 2001, p.114-128. See also H. Mouritzen, 'Past Versus Present Geopolitics: Cautiously Opening The Realist Door to the Past', in A. Freyberg-Inan, E. Harrison, and P. James (eds.) *Rethinking Realism In International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins University Press, 2009). and H. Mouritzen and M.R. Olesen, (2010) 'The Interplay of Geopolitics and Historical Lessons in Foreign Policy: Denmark Facing German Post-War Rearmament', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 45, No. 4.

⁶⁷ J.M. Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ J.W. Taliaferro, (2010) 'Realism, Power Shifts, and Major War', *Security Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 131.

interactions between regional actors at the systemic level and to grand strategic adjustment at the unit level. Depending on the regional environment, offshore natural resources like hydrocarbons can lead to the exacerbation of tensions or to increased cooperation.⁷⁰ In essence, this highlights that the existence of natural resources can alter a state's perceptions and strategic culture *vis-à-vis* another regional actor. This happens for two reasons:

- (1) *The prospect of profit*: Potential allies through the exploitation of these natural resources can construct an alliance that would otherwise be perceived as futile against a rising regional hegemon. Profit may not necessarily result just from access to the resources but most importantly by the way these resources will be monetised, which could also provide strategic gains. For instance, a common pipeline can allow joint profits as well as an increasing leverage for the alliance *vis-à-vis* the hegemon and other actors.
- (2) *Hindering the revisionist state*: The formation of an alliance and the exploitation of the natural resources means that the allies can hinder an aspiring hegemon from exploiting these resources. As we have seen above, these resources are a latent power that could become a military force, and eventually used against them.

This concept could help us understand how the protection and exploitation of a common offshore resource can lead to the creation of strategic partnerships and even alliance-building. Since it is founded upon an understanding that offshore natural resources are a structural modifier affecting the parameters in which interaction is taking place within a regional sub-system, the existence of these resources can shift a state's grand strategy at the unit-level. In turn, it can alter perceptions and norms governing the prevalent strategic culture that will make alignment even more possible.

The limits of this alliance are affected by the extent to which this relationship is profitable for all parties involved. If the strongest powers involved cease to have considerable profit from it, then is quite likely that they will also cease to have a stake in keeping this security relationship. Furthermore, the rate by which this security relationship is deepened can be aided by several other parameters. These include trade deals or representation of the interests of the parties involved in key

⁷⁰ Adamides and Christou, 2015, p. 181.

international forums and organisations like the EU. Additionally, increased contact between people of two states can help further a military and economic partnership.⁷¹

The offshore nature of these resources provides another key facet illustrating why this cooperation is not merely a trade relationship. It has the potential to transform into a military pact. Under international law, to disavow any claims by third parties in a state's declared EEZ, the provision of search and rescue within this EEZ is needed.⁷² Although the effect of international law in alliance building is minimal, it is a useful pretext under which two or more states can begin their military cooperation through joint search and rescue operations, adding a semblance of legality to their actions. As Major Hadjipavlis argues, search and rescue is needed to promote the sentiment of safety and to demonstrate the state's forces presence around offshore drilling sites.⁷³ Additionally, it is the 'softest' type of military cooperation in the broad form of security forces. This could become the first step in a common security relationship with these natural resources as the main reference point.⁷⁴ An example of how this security relationship might be formed is the ongoing cooperation between Cyprus and France in terms of naval training exercises, as well as new projects international vendors have shown interest in over search and rescue, such as project MARI-Sense, where the Ministry of Defence is a partner institution.⁷⁵ Since the allied states need to be able to have a certain level of interoperability to conduct joint operations, investment in common military research and development (R&D) projects is highly likely, especially if one of the parties has an advanced military industry. These developments gradually lead to a deepened security relationship that can be understood as a balance for profit with the aim of exploiting and securing the natural resources in question. The next section elaborates further on how this deepened security relationship is established.

⁷¹ R. Moelker et al, (2007) 'Sympathy, the Cement of Interoperability', *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 498-499.

⁷² United Nations, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (New York, NY: United Nations, 1982), p. 56. See also Irimi Papanicolopoulou, (2016) 'The Duty to Rescue at Sea, In Peacetime and in War: A General Overview', *International Review of The Red Cross*, Vol. 98, No. 902.

⁷³ Major (AF) Panagiotis Hadjipavlis interviewed by the authors, Nicosia, June 2018.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ B. Hadjioannou (2020) 'Cyprus, France Hold Joint Search and Rescue Exercise (Photos)' Available at <https://in-cyprus.com/cyprus-france-hold-joint-search-and-rescue-exercise-photos/>. For further information regarding 'MARI-Sense', see also www.marisenseproject.net

The Evolution of Greek Cypriot Grand Strategy: From the Non-Aligned Movement to Balancing for Profit

For someone to grasp Cyprus's strategic culture and grand strategy, they must first come to terms with the importance of the 1974 Turkish invasion. The invasion ended a turbulent period of intercommunal and intracommunal conflict, leaving the island split in two with the Turkish Cypriots forming an internationally unrecognised state in the North, the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' in 1983.⁷⁶ In the invasion's aftermath Cypriot FP gradually transformed because of the clear systemic threat in the face of Turkey and the societal changes caused by the invasion. The ethnic exchange of populations between Cyprus and the Turkish controlled areas led to a purely Greek Cypriot state. National unity was also aided by the incorporation of the anti-government paramilitaries within the political system by 1978, who understood that unification with Greece was unachievable. This led to further political stability. The Greek Cypriot society and state from that point onwards were united behind their perception of a Turkish threat. This 'exogenous shift in power' led to consensus between the FPE and important societal actors.⁷⁷ In addition, the invasion cemented the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriots from government. This was hugely important for the state's FP decision making process because the only significant hurdle for the FPE, the veto from the Turkish Vice president, was lifted. The Cypriot FPE, personified by the Republic's President, has had since then a largely free hand in conducting its FP approximating that of a rational actor.

Cypriot FP post-1974 has been concerned with the solution of the Cyprus problem. To achieve this with favourable terms to the Greek Cypriot side, Cyprus needs to counterbalance Turkey. As Ambassador Stavrinou noted, the Cyprus problem is a matter of 'national survival' for Cyprus.⁷⁸ This is reiterated by Minister Christodoulides and other government officials who point that the only way in which Cyprus would be able to gain lasting security, would be through a solution of the Cyprus problem that removes any Turkish troops and intervention rights.⁷⁹ The Cypriot National Guard, in accordance to this strategy, operates with the aim of

⁷⁶ Ioannides, C. P., *Realpolitik in the Eastern Mediterranean; from Kissinger and the Cyprus crisis to Carter and the lifting of the Turkish arms embargo* (Pella Publishing, New York, 2001).

⁷⁷ Lobell, 2009, pp. 64-5.

⁷⁸ Ambassador Michalis Stavrinou interviewed by the authors, Nicosia, July 2018.

⁷⁹ Interviews with Minister Christodoulides and Ambassador Stavrinou.

countering the Turkish forces on the island.⁸⁰ It is key to note that the National Guard is always headed by a Greek general, highlighting the interconnection between the Cypriot and Greek militaries.⁸¹ This also serves to point out that a common strategic culture between Greece and Cyprus has emerged in which Turkey forms the significant 'Other'.

Another key aspect of the Cypriot grand strategy is to remain the only internationally recognised entity on the island, a status which is threatened by the declaration of the TRNC. So far, the TRNC has only been recognised by Turkey with the UN Security Council clearly stating that the act was illegal. The NAM was an important tool in achieving this goal and preventing TRNC's secession since most Sunni Muslim and Arab states, the group thought to be the greatest danger for TRNC recognition due to Turkey's predominant Sunni Muslim population, were members of the movement and would side with Cypriot interests.⁸² Although leaving the NAM meant that Cypriot links with those states run the risk of losing their importance it was believed that Cyprus would be able to maintain these relationships whilst the weight of the EU bloc would prevent any state apart from Turkey from recognising the TRNC.⁸³

Moreover, although the aim of this grand strategy, a favourable solution to the Cyprus problem has not changed since 1974, the means and processes by which this would be achieved have drastically shifted because of the country's EU accession in 2004 and most importantly the discovery of hydrocarbons within the Cypriot EEZ. From the 1990s onwards, realising the limited potential of the NAM, the Cypriot FPE began to change course seeking to become a member of the EU.⁸⁴ In Christodoulides' words, 'we became EU members to solve the Cyprus Problem... without realising the potential that this membership offered us'.⁸⁵ Up to that point Cypriot FP was 'monothematic' catering for the Cyprus Problem and Turkey, but this changed and hydrocarbons 'facilitated this shift'.⁸⁶

Hydrocarbons allowed Cyprus to increase its defence cooperation in the region and beyond, reinforcing its position within the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean.

⁸⁰ Interview with Major Hadjipavlis.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ker-Lindsay, 2011.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 69.

⁸⁵ Interview with Minister Christodoulides.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

an Sea. This was achieved through a 'polythematic' FP approach that is not solely rested on the Cyprus Problem, Cyprus is ultimately seeking to become a 'supplier of security not a consumer of security'.⁸⁷ In this capacity the Cypriot FPE by exploiting the contacts with regional players like Israel, Egypt and Lebanon that came to the fore when the need to demarcate the country's EEZ arose, sought not to just interact with those players regarding the Cyprus Problem or hydrocarbons but to engage with them on a wide range of issues ranging from technological cooperation to terrorism. Cyprus offered the opportunity to those players to have a regional partner that was also an EU member-state who could voice their concerns within the bloc. Simultaneously, Cyprus with its newly found role as the link between the EU and the Middle East, has been able to elevate its importance within the organisation.⁸⁸ A case, Minister Christodoulides at the request of his Jordanian counterpart raised on the issue of the protests in the Arab country during the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU in May 2018. Similarly, the Egyptian leadership has thanked Cyprus for representing Egyptian interests within the EU.⁸⁹

However, the most important aspect of this proactive FP approach is linked with the alliance-building attempts of the Cypriot FPE in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Ambassador Stavrinou, who was closely associated with the demarcation of the Cypriot EEZ and the strategy to be followed regarding the hydrocarbon exploitation, highlighted that the aim was to 'attract firms within the Cypriot EEZ that would not necessarily make the best offer in financial terms, but the ones that could involve states that could counter Turkish pressures'.⁹⁰ These choices were made with a 'geostrategic criterion'.⁹¹ This point was also raised by Yiorgos Lillikas, former Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Foreign Affairs in President Papadopoulos' cabinet.⁹² In essence, the Cypriot FPE focused on creating security relationships in the region that would allow it to exploit its hydrocarbon potential, particularly after 2012 where the island's economy and banking system took an unprecedented hit and hydrocarbons were seen as a way out of the stalemate. These security relationships would deter Turkey from obstructing the hydrocarbon

⁸⁷ Anonymous Government Official interviewed by the authors, Nicosia, July 2018.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Stockwatch, (2019) 'President Sisi Thanks Cyprus', Available at <https://www.stockwatch.com.cy/en/article/politika/president-sisi-thanks-cyprus>.

⁹⁰ Interview with Ambassador Stavrinou.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Yiorgos Lillikas, interviewed by the authors, Pafos, December 2015.

exploration and exploitation efforts of the Cypriot state. Given Cyprus' limited military and economic power, instead of offering military assistance to construct these relationships, the Cypriot state would offer the prospect of profit. It would, thus, create balances with profit being the initiating and central element of these security relationships.

Commenting upon the aforementioned, Minister Christodoulides argued that the Cypriot FPE is 'completely Realist in its foreign policy' seeking to create partnerships based on common interests.⁹³ He argues that despite its importance, international law is not enough to solve global disputes or lead to strategic alliances. Cyprus acknowledges that it lacks the hard power to stand up to Turkey or the comfort of employing a monothematic, zero-sum game FP.⁹⁴ Instead, by slowly constructing important partnerships with European and regional states Cyprus has increased its defensive cooperation. It has become an ardent supporter of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and EU defensive cooperation.⁹⁵ This is clearly showcased by its decision to participate in and promote PESCO projects, which deal with a Joint EU Intelligence school and the creation of new land battlefield missile systems.⁹⁶

The hydrocarbon discoveries pushed Cyprus to demarcate its EEZ, which in turn brought it into contact with Egypt, Lebanon and Israel. This need allowed the Cypriot FPE to establish cordial relationships with Israel and Egypt, two states with which its relationships were not always rosy. Simultaneously, these relationships as well as the state's newly found mission as a link between the EU and the Middle East have allowed Cyprus to play a constructive role in the region that has elevated its stature whilst keeping Turkey at bay for the time being.

Balancing for Profit in Action: The Trilaterals

The aim of the following section is to illustrate the effects of this grand strategic shift from the NAM to a *Realpolitik* influenced by the country's EU membership and the

⁹³ Interview with Minister Christodoulides.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid. See also K. Lavinder, (2019) 'Greece & Cyprus Build New EU Intelligence School', South EU Summit, Available at <https://www.southeusummit.com/europe/greece-cyprus-build-new-eu-intelligence-school-while-other-southern-eu-countries-collaborate-on-drones-missile-systems-and-under-water-defence/>.

⁹⁶ 'Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) Updated List of PESCO Projects - Overview - 19 November 2018', (2018) Available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37028/table-pesco-projects.pdf>.

recent hydrocarbon discoveries. This section will delve into the two most important trilateral partnerships constructed by Cyprus along with its Greek counterpart, and with Israel and Egypt respectively. In accordance to our theoretical framework and its Structural Realist baseline, this work will begin with an examination of how Turkey is seen as a threat by all of the aforementioned parties. Moving forward, we will look at the nature of the trilaterals with Greece, Israel and Egypt as well as the increasing cooperation with France in the defence and energy sector. These developments illustrate the capacity of Cyprus, a small state, to balance for profit in the face of a rising regional hegemon.

Turkey as a Threat

Based on Walt's definition, Turkey is a threat for Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Egypt within the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Turkey is geographically adjacent to Greece, sharing a land border and many Greek islands which are only a few kilometres away from Turkey's coast. Turkey has troops in the Northern part of Cyprus with its Southern coast being roughly 70 km away from the island.⁹⁷ Although Israel and Egypt are situated more than 800 km away from Turkey, the deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq and Syria during the Syrian Civil War along with the Turkish navy's increasing activity in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, make Turkey threatening to the position of Israel and Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East in general.⁹⁸

In aggregate power terms, Turkey has the second largest army in NATO, a population of more than 80 million people and a top 20 economy in GDP terms. Furthermore, it has been investing heavily in its own military industry with the aim of becoming self-sufficient by 2023.⁹⁹ It has been able to produce advanced weapon systems like the Altay Main Battle Tank, the T-129 attacking helicopter and is a co-producer of the fifth generation F-35 fighting jet (Ibid; 272, 276).¹⁰⁰ These developments along with the fact that Turkey has the third largest fleet in NATO and 1,018 military aircraft, signify its offensive capabilities.¹⁰¹ However, the most

⁹⁷ Y. Gursoy, 'Turkey', in H. Meijer and M. Wyss (eds.) *The Handbook of European Defence Policies And Armed Forces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 161-164.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 161-165. See also F.Ö. Yeni, (2013) 'Thinking Beyond TAP: Turkey's Role in the Southern Energy Corridor', *LAI Working Papers*, Vol. 13, No. 32, pp. 9-10.

⁹⁹ Ç. Kurç, (2017) 'Between Defence Autarky and Dependency: The Dynamics of Turkish Defence Industrialization', *Defence Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 261.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 272, 276.

¹⁰¹ Gursoy, 2018, p. 171.

important military development in connection to the Eastern Mediterranean's hydrocarbon potential is the build-up of the Turkish navy under the 'Blue Homeland' dogma with the aim of enhancing its abilities and power projection.¹⁰² The recent military drill under the same name undertaken by the Turkish naval force included naval drills in concurrently in three theatres – the Aegean, the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. This highlights the aim of Turkish military planners to establish Turkey as the predominant naval force in the region. This aim is interlinked with the region's hydrocarbon potential, which according to Cem Güdeniz, the former head of the Turkish navy, is one of the key pillars of the Turkish grand strategy in the 21st century.¹⁰³

The fourth aspect of a state's definition as a threat – offensive intentions – requires taking a closer look at Turkey's FP and history. Turkey and Greece share a turbulent history, to a large extent the modern Greek Self has been constructed with Turkey as its significant 'Other'.¹⁰⁴ Both Turkey and Greece have established themselves as modern nation states after wars with each other; the Greek War of Independence (1821-1927) and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923). The dispute over the Aegean is a recurring matter in the FP of the two states.¹⁰⁵ This antagonism has reached its climax in recent years with the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the presence of a 40,000-strong Turkish military contingent on the island. The prevalence the Greek Cypriots gained over the RoC in the aftermath of this invasion as well as the educational and cultural links that exist between Cyprus and Greece have allowed the establishment of a common identity and strategic culture between the two states with Turkey being the perennial aggressor in their thinking. Furthermore, the insistence of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to maintain a unilateral intervention right in Cyprus, along with the presence of Turkish troops is perceived as a threat by most Greek Cypriots and the Greek and Cypriot governments.¹⁰⁶ Although for much of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) time in power, its FP was dictated by the 'zero problems with neighbours' doctrine and its position

¹⁰² Z. Tziarras, (2019) 'Οι «Δυσόμισι Πόλεμοι» Και Η Άσκηση «Μαβι Βαταν»: Στρατηγική Κουλτούρα και το Νέο Στάδιο της Τουρκικής Στρατηγικής', *ELLAMEP*, Working Paper No. 103.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ H. Tzimitras and M. Hatay, (2016) 'The Need for Realism: Solving the Cyprus Problem Through Linkage Politics', *Centre on the United States and Europe at Brookings*, Turkey Project Policy Paper No. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Karagiannis, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Morelli, 2018, pp. 24-26.

on Cyprus resembled that of the Kemalist military establishment.¹⁰⁷ In Davutoğlu's words, even 'if there was no Muslim Turk in Cyprus, Turkey is obliged to preserve a Cyprus Problem' since the island's geopolitical importance requires Turkey to maintain its presence there.¹⁰⁸

Although offensive intentions are apparent for Greece and Cyprus, the case is not so straightforward for Israel and Egypt. Concerning Israel, during the 1990s and the 2000s the two states enjoyed cordial relations.¹⁰⁹ However, after the success of the AKP to consolidate its power *vis-à-vis* the Kemalists within Turkey, the country altered its FP along Islamist and neo-Ottoman lines.¹¹⁰ During this period, Davutoğlu's 'strategic depth' doctrine served as the guiding principle.¹¹¹ Davutoğlu criticised the Western orientation of Turkish FP under the guidance of the Kemalist military establishment and called Turkey to exploit its vital geopolitical position and its status as 'the heir to the Ottoman Empire'.¹¹² This heritage highlights Turkey's potential to become the leading power within the Muslim world.¹¹³ Turkey's bid for hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean was evident during the Arab Spring, when Erdogan aligned himself with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.¹¹⁴

Inevitably, the credentials to the leadership of the Muslim world are linked to a proactive stance in the Palestinian issue. Consequently, Turkey began to support the Palestinians and their cause, but the first critical breaking point between Ankara and Tel Aviv came with the Mavi Marmara incident and the death of Turkish

¹⁰⁷ I.T. Mazis, *Νταβούτογλου και Γεωπολιτική*, (Athens: Herodotos Publications, 2013), pp. 49-54.

¹⁰⁸ A. Davutoğlu, *Στρατηγικό Βάθος: Η Διεθνής Θέση Της Τουρκίας* (Athens: Poiotita Publications, 2010), pp. 178-179.

¹⁰⁹ U. Uzer, (2013) 'Turkish-Israeli Relations: Their Rise and Fall', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 98-100.

¹¹⁰ M. Mufti, (2014) 'The AK Party's Islamic Realist Political Vision: Theory and Practice', *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 34-36. See also S. Çağaptay, *The New Sultan*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017) and W. Hale, (2016) 'Turkey's Domestic Politics, Public Opinion and Middle East Policy', *Palgrave Communications*, doi:10.1057/palcomms.2016.81.

¹¹¹ K. Dalacoura, "A New Phase in Turkish Foreign Policy: Expediency And AKP Survival", *Future Notes*, Vol. 4 (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017). Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision is outlined in A. Davutoğlu, 2010.

¹¹² Davutoğlu, 2010, p.33.

¹¹³ J.W. Walker, 'Turkey's Global Strategy – Introduction: The Sources of Turkish Grand Strategy – "Strategic Depth" and "Zero-Problems" in Context', in N. Kitchen (ed.) *IDEAS Report – Special Reports (SR007)* (London: LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Mufti, 2014, p. 36-38. See also I. Kouskouvelis and K. Zarras, (2019) 'Cairo and Riyadh, Vying for Leadership', *Middle East Quarterly*, Available at <https://www.meforum.org/57912/egypt-saudi-arabia-leadership>.

activists in the hands of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The Israeli government was quick to brand the activists as terrorists and link them with the Turkish government, whilst the Turkish government condemned Israel in all available diplomatic forums.¹¹⁵ In Uzer's words, the 'incident and its aftermath marked the end of Israeli – Turkish relations'.¹¹⁶ This proved true during a short-lived rapprochement brokered by the Obama administration that was driven to a considerable extent by the prospect of a natural gas pipeline taking Israeli gas to Europe through Turkey.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, for such a plan to materialise, a solution to the Cyprus Problem should be achieved since the pipeline would have to pass through the Cypriot EEZ.¹¹⁸ The Turkish response to the recent deadly Gaza Strip protests and Erdogan's fierce opposition to the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital have renewed the Israeli belief that Turkey seeks to jeopardise its position in the region by supporting Hamas and the Palestinians in general.¹¹⁹ The Israeli decision to support the creation of a Kurdish state an anathema for Turkey, highlights the severity of current Israel – Turkey relations.¹²⁰

The neo-Ottoman and Islamist turn taken by Erdogan's Turkey has also gravely damaged Turkish-Egyptian relations. Initially this turn did not pose a threat to this relationship, on the contrary it strengthened it since coincided with the Arab Uprisings of 2011 that led to the downfall of the long-time authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.¹²¹ Given the role played by Islamic parties and entities in the aftermath of the revolution in Egypt, Erdogan received a hero's welcome in his three days state visit in Cairo in September 2011, highlighting the apogee of Turkish influence in the region on the backbone of Davutoglu's 'zero problems with neighbours' dogma. These relations seemed to become an organic link due to the electoral victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the coming elections and the rise of Mohammed Morsi as Egypt's new President

¹¹⁵ Uzer, 2013, pp. 100-102.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 102.

¹¹⁷ S. Effron, *The Future of Israeli-Turkish Relations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), pp. 11, 34.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ BBC News, (2018) 'Turkey and Israel Clash Over Gaza Violence', *BBC News*, Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-43611859>.

¹²⁰ J. Heller, (2017) 'Israel Endorses Independent Kurdish State', Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-kurds-israel/israel-endorses-independent-kurdish-state-idUSKCN1B00QZ>.

¹²¹ K. Dalacoura, (2012) 'The 2011 Arab Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications', *International Affairs*, vol. 88, pp. 63-79.

meant that there was an ideological alignment between the Turkish and Egyptian governments.

However, the downfall of Morsi led to a break in Egypt-Turkey relations with President Erdogan leading the anti-Egypt bloc in support of the Muslim Brotherhood. The victory of General Sisi, the man who led the military during the coup against Morsi's government in the 2014 elections, worsened the fallout between Cairo and Ankara.¹²² The inflexibility showcased by the Turkish FPE regarding the change of leadership in Egypt in conjunction with the bid of taking over the reins of the Sunni Muslim world meant that Egypt, a predominantly Sunni Muslim state that has always seen itself as a leading Arab and Muslim state felt increasingly threatened by Turkish FP in the region.¹²³ Moreover, the personal animosity between President's Erdogan and Sisi did nothing to ease tensions instead it exacerbated them.

In general, Turkey is geographically proximate to Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Egypt, militarily strong and to varying extents it is perceived as a threat by all four parties. Additionally, Turkey has both the aggregate power and the offensive capabilities to back its bid for regional hegemony. It also has the ideational capital to challenge other regional players not only for hegemony over the Eastern Mediterranean Sea but of the Sunni Muslim world and the Middle East in general.

Alliance Building Efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea

The fact that all these regional players perceive Turkey as a threat, albeit for different reasons and in different ways, does not immediately lead to alliance-building. Of course, the link between Greece and Cyprus is organic due to the common national identity and strategic culture. Nonetheless, this cannot be claimed for Egypt or Israel. After all, Cyprus as a small state has little to offer in any effort they made to counterbalance Turkey. Therefore, helping in the island's defence would not be in their interests. Moreover, relations between Israel and Cyprus were not always cordial, primarily due to the close relationship that Israel and Turkey enjoyed and the close links between Cyprus and the Palestinians.¹²⁴ In a similar manner, despite their common past as members of the NAM, Egypt and Cyprus did not always enjoy

¹²² Kouskouvellis and Zaras, 2019.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ N. Shaath, (2016) 'Old Friends? Palestine, Cyprus, and Greece', Available at <https://euobserver.com/opinion/132004>.

close relationships.¹²⁵ The aim of this sector is to briefly analyse these relationships, which currently fall short of military alliances but nonetheless have the potential to be further developed, particularly in their defensive aspect.

The key to the construction of these important partnerships lies in the break of Israel's and Egypt's relations with Turkey along with the prospect profit emanating from the region's potential of becoming an international energy hub. The discovery of hydrocarbons in the region pushed all parties, except Turkey, to come into contact with each other in order to demarcate their EEZs. This process of demarcating the Cypriot EEZ led the Cypriot FPE to gradually alter its perception of Israel and Egypt.¹²⁶ Hydrocarbons in this respect acted as structural modifiers by modifying the effects of the international system's structure and enabling Cyprus to change the patterns of its interaction with Israel and Egypt.

As we can see at the unit-level, these offshore natural resources acted as a systemic pressure, due to their effect on the system's structure, by inciting Cyprus to change its perception towards Israel and exploiting the change of leadership in Egypt. The Cypriot FPE's choice to involve Noble and Delek within its EEZ, two firms that had strong connections with the Israeli state and its own hydrocarbon exploitation illustrates this shift.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Cyprus and Egypt have signed an agreement in September 2018 for the construction of an underwater pipeline that would take Cypriot natural gas to the Egyptian LNG facility in Idku.¹²⁸ In this respect the Cypriot FPE was able to partly exploit the geopolitical opportunity presented by the break in Turkish-Israeli and Turkey-Egypt relations, taking steps towards increased cooperation not only in energy development but also *vis-à-vis* a common threat.

Additionally, a key development is the deepening ties in the realm of defense between Greece and Cyprus on the one side and Israel and Egypt on the other. The

¹²⁵ Cyprus Mail, (1978) 'Diplomatic Relations Between Cyprus and Egypt Broken Off After Fierce Gun Battle Between Egyptian Commandos and Cypriot National Guard at Larnaca Airport. Fighting Broke Out After Plane Carrying Hostages Returns to Cyprus', Available at, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2015/10/03/diplomatic-relations-between-cyprus-and-egypt-broken-off-after-fierce-gun-battle-between-egyptian-commandos-and-cypriot-national-guard-at-larnaca-airport-fighting-broke-out-after-plane-carrying-hosta/>.

¹²⁶ Interview with Major (AF) Hadjipavlis.

¹²⁷ Noble and Delek are oil firms.

¹²⁸ G. Psyllides, (2018) 'Cyprus, Egypt Sign Gas Pipeline Agreement' *Cyprus Mail*, Available at <https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/09/19/cyprus-egypt-sign-gas-pipeline-agreement/>.

acquisition of Israeli equipment by Greece and Cyprus, which increases the interoperability between the security forces of the three states highlights this effort from the part of Greece and Israel.¹²⁹ The three states have also conducted joint military exercises that have seen Israeli commandos in Cyprus.¹³⁰ This was the first time IDF land forces conducted exercises on foreign soil. Moreover, since 2011 the Hellenic and Israeli navies jointly participate in 'Noble Dina', the main exercise of the US navy in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹³¹ Finally, similar steps have been taken in the trilateral with Egypt through the signing of defensive cooperation agreements and the conduct in common military exercises.¹³²

Another crucial component is the ability of Cyprus to represent the interests of its two partners within the EU. Regarding Israel, the EU's desire to increase its own security autonomy could potentially deepen defence cooperation with Greece and Cyprus. In 2017 the EU activated PESCO which seeks to integrate the military forces of EU member states, allocating EUR13 billion much of which will go to R&D.¹³³ Israel's defence industry, which state-run firms, Rafael and IAI dominate, stands to profit from these developments since the programs are open to participation from third country firms.¹³⁴ Participation with an EU partner can help Israeli companies access these funds and subsequently penetrate the European defence market. In view of these developments, the ministries of defence of the three countries organised a joint summit in Nicosia in June 2019, bringing in the major defence industry firms from the three countries with the aim of exploiting this opportunity.¹³⁵ Con-

¹²⁹ Politis News (2017) 'Νέα Όπλα Για Την Εθνική Φρουρά', Available at <https://politis.com.cy/politis-news/kypros/nea-opla-gia-tin-ethniki-froyra/>. See also M. Hadjiconstantinou, (2018) 'Βουλή: Εγκρίθηκε Συμφωνία Leasing Επτά Μη Επιθετικών Drones Από το Ισραήλ', *News247.Gr*, Available at <https://www.news247.gr/politiki/voyli-egkrithike-symfonia-leasing-epta-mi-epithetikon-drones-apo-to-israil.6574301.html>.

¹³⁰ Cohen, 2016.

¹³¹ S. Corpsey, (2015) *U.S. Policy and The Strategic Relationship of Greece, Cyprus, and Israel: Power Shifts in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute), pp. 39-44. For the official report on 'Noble Dina', see Hellenic Navy, (2018) 'Exercise "NOBLE DINA 2018"', Available at <http://www.hellenicnavy.gr/en/news/latest-news/item/10222-exercise-noble-dina-2018.html>.

¹³² E-Kathimerini, (2018) 'Greek, Egyptian, Cypriot Military Exercise to Start Friday', Available at <http://www.ekathimerini.com/234964/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-egyptian-cypriot-military-exercise-to-start-friday>.

¹³³ European Commission, (2018) 'Press Release – EU Budget: Stepping Up the EU's Role as a Security and Defence Provider', Available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4121_en.htm.

¹³⁴ Greene and Rhynold, 2018, pp. 103-104.

¹³⁵ Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Defence – MoD, (2018) 'ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΑΜΥΝΑΣ – Ανακοινώσεις', Avail-

cerning Egypt, the trilateral allows Egypt to represent its interests within the EU, a bloc which has been critical of its human rights record.¹³⁶ Most recently, President Sisi thanked his Cypriot counterpart for his help in improving EU-Egypt relations and for the opportunity given to Egypt to participate in the EU-Arab League Summit, an event that in Sisi's word 'would not have been possible without Cyprus' contribution'.¹³⁷

The cordial relationships that Cyprus has developed with Egypt serve another important purpose for Cypriot FP; the non-recognition of the TRNC. Egypt is one of the leading Arab and Sunni Muslim states. By establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with Egypt the Cypriot FPE has a strong ally on its side in important Arab and Muslim forums like the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation where the issue of TRNC recognition could be raised.

Eventually, since Turkey is considered a threat by all four states, their common aim is to prevent it from tapping into the region's reserves and subsequently channel them to Europe through a Turkish pipeline. Such a development would critically strengthen Turkey's stature in the region allowing it to become an influential energy hub for the EU's energy security.¹³⁸ In this respect both Cypriot, Egyptian, Greek and Israeli officials have understood that to profit from their natural gas exports they would also have to prevent Turkish hegemony in the region. Therefore, the *prospect of profit* and the need to *hinder* Turkey have provided one of the key foundational cornerstones for the construction of these two ever-deepening relationships.

The Limitations of Cypriot Foreign Policy

Despite the proactive nature of Cypriot FP in the 2010s, the Cypriot FPE has not fully exploited the financial and political advantages offered by its balancing for profit grand strategy due to its delay in appropriately monetising its energy assets. The relative success of the trilaterals along with the decision of international firms

able at <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/mod.nsf/all/D9EC9DD979911175C22582B4003DF70C?opendocument>.

¹³⁶ See the European Parliament's resolution on the status of human rights activists in Egypt available at European Parliament, (2018) 'Joint Motion for a Resolution on Egypt, Notably the Situation of Human Rights Defenders', Available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2018-0568_EN.html.

¹³⁷ 'President Sisi Thanks Cyprus',

¹³⁸ S. Fischer, (2018) 'Turkey and the Energy Transit Question', *Carnegie Europe*, Available at <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/64382>.

to invest in the Cypriot EEZ have not prevented Turkey from launching its own gas exploration programme in the area and obstructing the efforts of the RoC and its partners.¹³⁹ Turkey's actions like the Turkish navy obstruction of ENI's drillship in February 2018 or the drillings of the Turkish vessel *Fatih* in May 2019 within the RoC's territorial waters have remained practically unanswered by the RoC's regional partners and the EU.¹⁴⁰ However, without creating the necessary financial incentives for the companies involved as well as Israel and Egypt by moving forward with a monetisation option that would benefit them, they would lack any incentive in defending the island-state's EEZ *vis-à-vis* Turkey since profit is rendered only when hydrocarbons are monetised. Of course, in the case of a military conflict with Turkey the stakes would be higher for Cyprus' defence and both states might opt out from defending it. However, the greater the stake they have in the Cypriot EEZ then the more likely is that Egypt and Israel would come to the aid of the island state.

In terms of monetisation, the Cypriot FPE currently has an array of options at its disposal.¹⁴¹ The first being the proposed East Med pipeline. Despite the political will exhibited by Greece, the RoC, Israel and Italy and the EU's support for the project, the cost and technical challenges involved make this scenario extremely difficult to come to fruition.¹⁴² As Charles Ellinas, the former head of the KRETYK, the predecessor to the Cyprus Hydrocarbons Company noted, 'the cost for the construction would be extremely high whilst the pipeline would have to pass through extremely deep waters in an earthquake prone area'.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the price of natural gas in the European markets, the final destination of the East Med pipeline, is very low compared to the growing East Asian markets due to competition with Russian natural gas.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, the profit margin for all the involved parties would be minimal, thus, reducing their stakes in maintaining a security relationship with the

¹³⁹ Daily Sabah, (2019) 'Turkey's Second Drillship Yavuz to Begin Hydrocarbon Exploration In Mediterranean Region', <https://www.dailysabah.com/energy/2019/03/04/turkeys-second-drillship-yavuz-to-begin-hydrocarbon-exploration-in-mediterranean-region>.

¹⁴⁰ R. Maltezou, (2018) 'Cyprus Accuses Turkey of Blocking Ship Again in Gas Exploration Standoff', *Reuters*, Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-natgas-turkey/cyprus-accuses-turkey-of-blocking-ship-again-in-gas-exploration-standoff-idUSKCN1G71MF>.

¹⁴¹ An overview of this options is offered in A. Giamouridis, (2012) 'The Offshore Discovery in the Republic of Cyprus: Monetisation Prospects And Challenges', *The Oxford Institute For Energy Studies*, 2012, https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/NG_65.pdf.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴³ C. Ellinas, (2019) 'Εξελίξεις Στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο - Συζητάμε Τα Δικά Σας Ερωτήματα', *Geopolitical Cyprus*, Speech, Nicosia.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

RoC. In fact, the costs of sending Cypriot Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to Europe either through the proposed East Med Pipeline or through the Idku LNG plant far exceeds the USD6-7 per million British Thermal Units (mmBTU) selling price of natural gas on the continent, thus, rendering any of these prospects of delivering gas to Europe as economically imprudent.¹⁴⁵ Simultaneously, natural gas will be sold to Egypt at USD5-6 mmBTU which would also mean that the RoC and the firms involved in the Aphrodite block would be making minimal profits.¹⁴⁶

Arguably, the monetisation option which would elevate the RoC's geostrategic importance would be the construction of an LNG plant in Cyprus.¹⁴⁷ Such a plant would allow the RoC and the companies involved in the Cypriot EEZ to have greater flexibility in their export options and not be over reliant on prospect of a pipeline taking gas to Europe. The importance of Asian markets in this respect is related to the fact that East Mediterranean gas will find it hard to reduce the the EU's dependency on Russian gas to a considerable extent and be financially competitive in European markets.¹⁴⁸ Compared to Gazprom's 200 billion cubic metres (bcm) exports, the proposed EastMed pipeline will have the capacity when and if it becomes operational to transport up to 10 bcm of natural gas to Europe.¹⁴⁹ Russian gas will also become a more stable source of supply due to the ability of Gazprom to circumvent Ukraine and Poland and reduce its gas flows through those countries via the Nordstream 2 and Turkstream pipelines.¹⁵⁰ Finally, Eastern Mediterranean gas will have to compete with Russian and Norwegian pipe gas along with Qatari LNG exports which can provide much lower prices to European markets than

¹⁴⁵ C. Ellinas, 'Eastern Mediterranean Gas Developments' in Moran Ayla Gurel, Tzimitras Harry and Faustmann Hubert (eds.) *Global Energy Debates and the Eastern Mediterranean*, PCC Report, No 1, (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2016).

¹⁴⁶ Ellinas, 2019.

¹⁴⁷ Giamouridis, pp. 49-60. See also G. Butt (2019), 'Cyprus Ponders Gas Options', *Petroleum Economist*, <https://www.petroleum-economist.com/articles/midstream-downstream/lng/2019/cyprus-ponders-gas-monetisation-options>, Lomas, A. (2014), 'Cyprus Hydrocarbon Options: In search of Peaceful solutions to a Gas Bonanza' in Gurel A., Tzimitras H. and Faustmann H.(eds). *East Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Geopolitical Perspectives, Markets and Regional Cooperation*, PRIO Cyprus Centre, Nicosia, pp. 50-51,

¹⁴⁸ Gazprom (2019) 'Gas supplies to Europe.', <http://www.gazpromexport.ru/en/statistics/>.

¹⁴⁹ Hazou, E. (2020). "Historic' deal signed in Athens for EastMed pipeline (Update 2)." *Cyprus Mail*, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2020/01/02/historic-deal-signed-in-athens-for-eastmed-pipeline/>.

¹⁵⁰ Günther, M. (2019) 'What Nord Stream 2 means for Europe', *Atlantic Council*, 2020. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/what-nord-stream-2-means-for-europe/> , [Accessed January 5].

those the EastMed pipeline could offer in the future (Butler 2019).¹⁵¹ Hence, it would be challenging to see Eastern Mediterranean gas becoming vital to European gas markets and more importantly, an alternative to Russian pipe gas.

For the construction of an LNG plant to be an economically viable endeavour, approximately 10 trillion cubic feet (tcf), should be committed for liquification.¹⁵² Between 2012 and 2013 the RoC's government was steadily moving towards the direction of constructing an LNG plant at the Vassilikon area.¹⁵³ The project had the support of Delek and the Israeli government since the natural gas from the Leviathan block in the Israeli EEZ allocated for exports would be liquified at Vassilikon.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the change in government led to a slowdown of plans and Delek as a result chose to move ahead with the liquification of Leviathan's gas in a floating LNG platform. Currently, with the discovery of Glaucus by Exxon Mobil, the RoC's EEZ, has adequate natural gas quantities for the construction of an LNG plant. Nonetheless, the commitment of Aphrodite's gas for export and liquification at Idku will mean that there will not be enough natural gas available in the RoC's EEZ, hence, the construction of an LNG plant on the island will be once more economically non-viable. In consequence, the RoC's FPE will fail to make the island an international energy hub worth defending.

Moving on, although the RoC's political leadership and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have argued that the trilateral with Israel is an important aspect of Cypriot FP, the two states have been unable to reach a common agreement over their dispute regarding the basin of the Aphrodite block.¹⁵⁵ This deal is needed to allow the parties involved in Aphrodite to move forward with its commercial development.¹⁵⁶ The negotiations have been going on for the past seven years but to no avail. It begs the question if two friendly countries are unable to reach an agreement over a relatively small dispute, how could they deepen their cooperation to the extent that it becomes an alliance? Furthermore, the ability of Cyprus to export from the Calypso

¹⁵¹ Butler, N. (2019). "Eastern Mediterranean gas seeks a buyer." *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/ef1036f0-fb06-11e9-98fd-4d6c20050229>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Kathimerini, (2012) 'Συλλικιώτης: Σε Εξέλιξη Η Υλοποίηση Της Ενεργειακής Στρατηγικής', *Kathimerini*, Available at <http://www.kathimerini.com.cy/gr/kypros/104935/>.

¹⁵⁴ Ellinas, 2019.

¹⁵⁵ S. Gorodeisky and A. Barkat, (2018) 'Israel-Cyprus Gas Dispute Goes to Int'l Arbitration', *Globes*, Last modified 2018, <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-israel-cyprus-gas-dispute-goes-to-intl-arbitration-1001233992>.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

block to Egypt could hamper the potential of buyers for Israeli gas.¹⁵⁷ The key, according to Ambassador Stavrinou for Cyprus, is ‘to find the necessary formulas that will serve both Cypriot and Israeli interests’ allowing Cyprus to maintain this vital relationship’.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, although natural resources are structural modifiers, their effects on the patterns of possible strategic interactions can shift and change. This is because the possible interactions are not only affected by the structure, but also by the perceptions and perceived intentions of regional actors. For instance, the RoC views itself as a bridge between the Eastern Mediterranean, Southern Europe, as well as other EU partners, with Turkey seen as the ultimate foe and existential threat to RoC security.¹⁵⁹ Maintaining partnerships is vital for the RoC, though such partnerships are not permanently set in stone. In an environment like the Eastern Mediterranean that has seen a great deal of political change, the idea that current relationships between states will necessarily remain static is absurd. Apart from natural resources, the other major factor that has enabled the construction of these trilaterals is that Turkey is perceived as a threat by all the regional actors involved in these trilaterals. For instance, a change of leadership in Turkey, Israel or Egypt can shift this perception. If the AKP, for whatever reason loses power in Turkey and the pro-Western Kemalist establishment returns to power, then Israel or Egypt might not necessarily view Turkey as a threat. Consequently, they might be interested to cooperate in terms of energy exploitation leaving the RoC out of the equation. Therefore, the way in which natural resources modify the patterns of strategic interaction within the Eastern Mediterranean sub-system can also work against the RoC’s interests. The key for the RoC is to create the necessary material motives for its partners to remain in cooperation with the island-state even if there are political changes in the region. That can only be ensured through an appropriate and beneficial monetisation of the region’s hydrocarbons.

What is more, despite the positives arising from the trilaterals and the hydrocarbon development programme of the RoC, could potentially cause frictions between the RoC and its EU partners. The lack of any concrete measures against Turkey

¹⁵⁷ Maltezou, 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Ambassador Stavrinou.

¹⁵⁹ Press and Information Office (2018) ‘Keynote speech by the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, at the 9th Mediterranean Oil and Gas Forum’ Available at <https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/press-releases-article.html?id=947#flat>

by the EU apart from verbal condemnations during the latest round of tensions between Turkey and the RoC in the region testify to this.¹⁶⁰ After all, Turkey is the fifth most important EU trade partner with the direct trade between its country and the EU worth more than EUR140 billion in 2016.¹⁶¹ Similar frictions could also be caused with segments of the Middle Eastern world, particularly the Palestinian people with whom the RoC enjoyed a decades-long relationship founded on common struggles and post-colonial solidarity. The rapprochement with Israel can potentially harm this relationship and possibly impede the attempts of the Cypriot FPE to act as a link between the EU and the Middle East. The comments of Averof Neofytou, the leader of the Greek Cypriot ruling party DISY, are that 'Cyprus no longer sees Israel as an aggressive country imposing its will by force on the Palestinians, but rather as a small nation fighting for survival in the face of much greater odds,' did not resonate positively within the Palestinian leadership.¹⁶² Finally, without a solution to the Cyprus Problem that will comprehensively solve matters on the island, the RoC will always run the risk of having its energy exploitation endeavours hijacked by Turkey or any other regional power. Hence, Greek Cypriot leaders ought to constructively engage in negotiations.

Conclusion

Cypriot FP grand strategy has changed a great deal since the nascence of the island-state in 1960. Nonetheless, the backbone of the state's grand strategy and its aims have remained unaltered; a solution to the Cyprus Problem, the removal of Turkish troops from the island and the non-recognition of the TRNC. The processes by which these aims would be achieved have changed however. Instead of employing a 'monothematic approach', through which Cyprus was trying to put pressure on Turkey to solve the Cyprus Problem putting emphasis on the illegality

¹⁶⁰ Middle East Eye (2019) 'Turkey Warned By EU's Mogherini Against Oil And Gas Drilling Off Cyprus', Available at, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-warned-eus-mogherini-against-oil-and-gas-drilling-cyprus>.

¹⁶¹ European Commission, (2016) 'IMPACT ASSESSMENT Accompanying The Document Recommendation For A Council Decision Authorising The Opening Of Negotiations With Turkey On An Agreement On The Extension Of The Scope Of The Bilateral Preferential Trade Relationship And On The Modernisation Of The Customs Union', Available at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/january/tradoc_155238.pdf. See also L. Daziano, (2018) 'A Chance to Reset Europe's Relations with Turkey', *Financial Times*, Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/9e930bc0-9edd-11e8-b196-da9d6c239ca8>.

¹⁶² Shaath, 2016.

of the occupation, the Cypriot FPE through the hydrocarbons and the trilaterals is able to engage with other regional actors on issues including energy security and exploitation, defence cooperation as well as playing a linking role between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean. The hydrocarbon discoveries within the Cypriot EEZ and the Eastern Mediterranean in general proved to be the turning point in this process by pushing the RoC to demarcate its EEZ with regional powers. This led the members of the Cypriot FPE to the realisation that being an EU member state in this volatile international locus could potentially elevate the status of the island-state by acting as a link between the EU and the Middle East, thus, helping with the objectives of the Cypriot grand strategy. This initial contact coupled with important geopolitical developments in the region which led both Egypt and Israel to see Turkey as a threatening actor vying for regional hegemony, led to the creation of the trilaterals.

The construction of these trilaterals highlights that offshore natural resources can act as structural modifiers. In the case of the Eastern Mediterranean, they have altered the parameters of strategic interaction between regional players facilitating the formation of alliances within a competitive and hostile geopolitical environment. Their effect is magnified by the regional antagonisms over the control of those resources. The trilaterals examined here are a result both of the antagonisms and of the modifying effect of the hydrocarbons upon the regional environment and the international system's structure in the area. The common threat perception of the four parties *vis-à-vis* Turkey has brought them close. However, the existence of offshore natural resources has been the key link that allowed the four states which had limited and even suspicious relations 15 years ago, to engage into a broadening and deepening partnership that has a distinct and important defensive component. Cyprus' ability to balance for profit has allowed it to partly defy Turkish pressures so far. Consequently, it has also avoided bandwagoning, which is the behaviour most Realist scholars would anticipate from a weak state.¹⁶³

Balance for profit, the theoretical construct utilised to explain these developments, modifies Walt's balance of threat. It showcases how a small state in the face of a regional threat, as defined by Walt, is pressured by the existence of these resources to readjust its grand strategy with the aim of reaping the profits of these resources through alliance-building. This alliance is based on the exploitation of an

¹⁶³ See Walt, 1987 and Schweller, 1994.

offshore natural resource between states who share a common threat perception within the same regional environment. Therefore, the strongest states are more likely to commit resources to protect the weaker link, thus, allowing it to balance and not bandwagon. They do so, with the aim of jointly exploiting these offshore natural resources themselves and preventing the aspiring hegemon from having them. Consequently, there are limitations to these alliances. Their continuity and deepening is dependent upon increased economic and security benefits for all parties. If the small state in the equation fails to enable the monetisation of these resources in an appropriate way that would benefit its regional partners, it runs the danger of losing them since they would have limited benefits from its survival.

This holds true for the trilaterals in the Eastern Mediterranean, which are not fully-fledged military pacts but seek to protect a specific type of natural resource allowing participating states to jointly profit from it with the aim of increasing their energy security and geopolitical leverage. The inactiveness of both Egypt, Israel and the EU over the recent Turkish provocations within the RoC's EEZ and its territorial waters stems to a great extent from the inability of the RoC to enable the monetisation of the region's hydrocarbons, even though it had the chance to do so with the construction of an LNG plant as early as 2013. Without being able to generate profit, it is highly unlikely that the RoC will be able to use it as a counterbalance against Turkey and as a tool that will enable the achievements of its long-lasting FP goals.

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