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Andreas Theophanous, Professor of Political Economy, President of the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, and Head of the Department of Politics and Governance of the University of Nicosia. He served as Economic Advisor to the President of the Republic of Cyprus George Vassiliou from September 1990 to February 1993. Theophanous' areas of interest and publications revolve around the Cyprus problem, governance in biethnic and multiethnic societies, European Integration, Cyprus-EU relations, EU-Turkish relations, the Eastern Mediterranean, issues of public policy, political economy and higher education. He has, among other things, also done pioneering work on various aspects of the Cyprus problem. Theophanous is the author of many books, scholarly articles, reports, policy papers and numerous articles. He has served on national and international committees dealing with political, economic and research issues. He has visited several European, American and other universities and think tanks as a Visiting Professor, Senior Fellow and/or Guest Speaker.

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**LETTER
FROM THE
EDITOR-
IN-CHIEF**

Dear Readers,

As we present this Fall edition of *The Cyprus Review*, we find ourselves at a significant juncture in the evolution of academic publishing, influenced markedly by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). The intersection of AI and academic journals is a crucial one and the multifaceted implications that AI innovations bring to the scholarly community must be examined. In embracing AI, academic journals can significantly enhance their operational efficiency, improve their discoverability and quality of research, and expand accessibility, ultimately contributing to the progression of knowledge dissemination. Yet, it is ultimately the synergy of AI and human expertise that ensures a balanced and thorough process.

While the benefits of technological advancement are numerous, it remains crucial to navigate the ethical considerations and maintain the integrity of research communications. As with any technological tool, the deployment of AI in academic publishing necessitates a vigilant approach to ethical considerations. Journals must ensure that AI algorithms are transparent and regularly audited to uphold the integrity of the publication process. While AI can streamline certain processes, the interpretative and evaluative skills of human reviewers remain indispensable. Despite the technological advances, the foundational values of academic rigor, quality, and integrity remain paramount in the mission of scholarly publishing. As we navigate these changes, the editorial team at *The Cyprus Review* remains dedicated to delivering high-quality research and facilitating important discussions about the future of academic publishing.

Like every year, *The Cyprus Review* celebrated research excellence with its *Cyprus Review Annual Book Awards Ceremony* (CRABA 2024), for books published in 2023, which was held on 31st October 2024. The Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred this year to Andreas Theophanous and to Diana Markides, in

recognition of their distinct significant body of published work, especially in connection to the evolution of the Cyprus Question. In the ‘Political Sciences and History’ category, the ‘Stanley Kyriakides Award’ was conferred to Antonis Hadjikyriacou for his book *Χερσαίο Νησί. Η Μεσόγειος και η Κύπρος στην Οθωμανική Εποχή των Επαναστάσεων* (Ψηφίδες), while the ‘Junior Researcher Honourable Mention’ was awarded to Kyriakos Iacovides for his book *Τρεις Αριστερές (ΕΔΑ, ΚΚΕ, ΑΚΕΛ) και το Κυπριακό Ζήτημα* (Επίκεντρο). In the ‘Social Sciences’ category, ‘Honourable Mention’ was awarded to Ioanna Alexandrou for her book *Ελληνικόν Γυμνάσιον Αιγιαλούσης 1948-1976* (Αιγιαίον) and to Theodoros Rakopoulos for his book *Passport Island. The Market for EU Citizenship in Cyprus* (Manchester University Press). In the ‘Law’ category, the ‘Constantinos Emilianides Award’ was conferred to Christos O. Ioannides for his book *Το Δίκαιο στους Τομείς της Υγείας* (Hippasus) while the ‘Junior Researcher Award’ was given to Stella Mala Heracleous for her book *Το Νομικό Πλαίσιο του Διαδικτυακού Μισαλλόδοξου Λόγου* (Hippasus). Special thanks as always, to all the participants and to the Scientific Committees that examined these works. Our new Call for nominations for *The Cyprus Review Annual Book Awards* (CRABA 2025), for books published in 2024, can be found on our website and at the end of this issue.

The collection of articles in this issue delve once again into a wide array of scientific disciplines, thus exploring a diversity of research topics. The first article, by Zenonas Tziarras (University of Cyprus), examines the Republic of Cyprus’ foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly its involvement in regional cooperation and the formation of quasi-alliances, evaluating the success of the Republic’s policy since the early 2010s. It is argued that, despite some progress, the country’s foreign policy is hindered by lack of vision, insufficient strategic planning and institutional capacities, leaving it susceptible to domestic politics, populist rhetoric, and geopolitical shifts.

The second article, by Despina Sfountouri, Alexandros Antonaras, Melpo Iacovidou and Ioanna Papasolomou (University of Nicosia), examines the current state of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Cyprus and Greece, particularly in light of the recent Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. It highlights the low maturity level of these SMEs in ESG reporting and proposes a model framework to aid in data collection and disclosure, addressing the need for a cost-effective and user-friendly approach.

In the third article, Erica Charalambous (Coventry University) explores the epistemology of dance, by focusing on how it is captured, archived, transmitted, and reused as a form of knowledge. The author uses her autoethnographic dance experiences to establish a genealogy that serves as a foundation for critical analysis, linking the practitioner's perspective with cultural and social history through a post-structural methodological approach.

The fourth article, authored by Vasileia Anaxagorou (University of Cyprus), explores the role of performance art in Cyprus as a medium for challenging historical narratives and addressing sociopolitical issues, despite initial resistance to its acceptance as a legitimate art form. Through the pioneering work of Arianna Economou, who combined avant-garde techniques with political activism, the study highlights how performance art has facilitated inter-communal exchanges and contributed to the development of Cyprus's art scene.

As always, the issue is enriched with our Book Reviews Section, which presents recent bibliographical research pertaining to Cyprus. This Section is followed by our new Call for Papers on "Challenges and Prospects of Cyprus Education in a VUCA (Votality, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) World." In this respect, the Call invites scholars, researchers, educators, policy-makers, and practitioners, to contribute to a critical discourse on the transformation of the Cypriot educational landscape.

At the end of this issue you can find our recent Call for nominations for *The Cyprus Review Annual Book Awards* (CRABA 2025), for books published during 2024. Like every year, we invite nominations in the fields of (I) History and Political Science, (II) Social Sciences, and (III) Law, either in Greek or in English, which have Cyprus as their subject matter.

Once again, we express our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the creation of this issue. We encourage our readers to explore its content, interact with the authors, initiate discussions, and support the advancement of academic Cypriological research.

Christina Ioannou
Editor-in-Chief

ARTICLES

Revisiting the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus and Quasi-Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean

ZENONAS TZIARRAS¹

Abstract

The Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as a significant geopolitical region in the 21st century, influenced by both intra-regional dynamics and the strategic interests of international powers. The Republic of Cyprus (RoC)—a small State within this region—has endeavoured to adapt to the evolving international landscape and promote its own strategic interests. This paper examines the RoC's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly its involvement in regional cooperation and the formation of quasi-alliances. The primary focus is twofold: situating the RoC's foreign policy within the international-regional nexus (particularly US policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and US–RoC relations), and assessing its strategic objectives and priorities. The analysis revisits the formation of quasi-alliances, such as the Israel–Cyprus–Greece and Egypt–Cyprus–Greece partnerships, and regional networks of cooperation. The key questions addressed include the success of RoC policy since the early 2010s, the positives and negatives of its approach, and the preconditions for a more effective foreign policy. The paper concludes that, despite notable progress, the RoC's foreign policy suffers from a lack of vision, strategic planning, and institutional capacities, making it vulnerable to domestic politics, populist rhetoric, and geopolitical shifts.

Keywords: Cyprus; foreign policy; quasi-alliances; US foreign policy; Eastern Mediterranean

Introduction

The 21st century has been one of tectonic and fast-paced geopolitical changes, both at the international and regional levels. While the world is trying to 'settle' into a stable and ideally peaceful post-Cold War order, balances of power remain in flux and regional conflicts break out even as normative changes are also taking place with concepts like democracy, security, human rights, international law, and truth being

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reframed.² Amidst this volatile environment, it has become increasingly difficult for States, and more so for smaller States, to navigate international affairs and find their place.³ Especially since the early 2010s, foreign policy implementation has become arguably more about adaptability to fluid global dynamics than rigid commitment to traditional positions and orientations.⁴ And yet, unsurprisingly, some States are in a better position to adapt than others, insofar as their power components, capacities, capabilities, and political leadership can mitigate the impact that exogenous forces have on their interests and policies.⁵ This is true both for the great powers who compete for an agenda-setting role in the formation of the new international order and for the ‘microcosm’ of geopolitical (sub)regions that have also emerged as more useful levels of analysis in recent years.⁶

The Eastern Mediterranean is one of those geopolitical spaces that acquired a rather distinct identity within the transitioning international order of the 21st century.⁷ This is not least because of several endogenous (intra-regional) developments affecting the patterns of enmity and amity among regional States, and the Eastern Mediterranean’s place and role in the plans of greater—extra-regional and international—powers.⁸ As a small State in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has tried to adapt to new international realities while furthering its

² See e.g., Robert Jervis & al. (eds), *Chaos Reconsidered: The Liberal Order and the Future of International Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023); Rhys Crilly, ‘International relations in the age of ‘post-truth’ politics’, (2018) 94(2) *International Affairs*.

³ Giampiero Giacomello and Bertjan Verbeek, ‘Introduction: Middle Powers as the Ugly Ducklings of International Relations Theory’ in Giampiero Giacomello and Bertjan Verbeek (eds), *Middle Powers in Asia and Europe in the 21st Century*, (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2020) 1-8; Håkan Edström, Dennis Gyllensporre and Jacob Westberg, *Military Strategy of Small States: Responding to External Shocks of the 21st Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019) 1-13; Constantinos Adamides and Petros Petrikos, ‘Small European states in the hybrid warfare era: The cases of Cyprus, Malta, and Estonia’, (2023) 6(1) *Small States & Territories*.

⁴ Jochen Prant and Evelyn Goh, ‘Rethinking strategy and statecraft for the twenty-first century of complexity: a case for strategic diplomacy’, (2022) 98(2) *International Affairs* 444.

⁵ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, ‘Power in International Politics’, (2005) 59 *International Organization*.

⁶ Rick Fawn, ‘Regions’ and their study: wherefrom, what for and whereto?’, (2009) 35 *Review of International Studies* 5-10.

⁷ Yannis A. Stivachtis, ‘Eastern Mediterranean: A New Region?’ in Spyridon N. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris (eds), *The New Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, Politics and States in a Volatile Era*, (Cham: Springer, 2019).

⁸ Aristotle Tziampiris, ‘The New Eastern Mediterranean as a Regional Subsystem’ in Spyridon N. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris (eds), *The New Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, Politics and States in a Volatile Era*, (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019); Zenonas Tziarras, *The Eastern Mediterranean: Between Pow-*

own interests. As such, both the RoC and the Eastern Mediterranean have drawn increasing attention. This newfound interest has proliferated quickly, producing an extensive body of literature within the last 15 years.⁹ Drawing on and contributing to those debates, this paper's primary aim is twofold. First, to situate the foreign policy of the RoC towards the Eastern Mediterranean within the international-regional nexus, including the processes of regional cooperation, in which the RoC is both an actor and stakeholder in the contemporary security architecture of the region. Second, to assess the RoC's foreign policy in relation to its strategic objectives and priorities. To that end and given that the focus of the analysis is the regional level, the paper also revisits the quasi-alliances (or trilateral partnerships) in the Eastern Mediterranean and their contribution to networks of broader regional cooperation from today's vantage point. The most advanced partnerships are those among Israel, Cyprus, and Greece, and Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece, as well as the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which was established in 2020.

The main question to address is: Has the RoC's Eastern Mediterranean policy since the early to mid-2010s and the formation of the 'quasi-alliances', been successful? Second, what are the positives and negatives that can be identified in the RoC's policy and handling of these relationships? And ultimately, what are the preconditions for a more effective RoC foreign policy? The paper starts with a section that dis-

er Struggles and Regionalist Aspirations (Re-Imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, 2018).

⁹ See e.g., Zenonas Tziarras, 'Israel-Cyprus-Greece: A 'Comfortable' Quasi-Alliance', (2016) 21(3) Mediterranean Politics; James Roberts, 'Avenues for Cooperation between Turkey, the EU and the US in Regard to Eastern Mediterranean Energy.', (2013) US-Europe-Turkey Trialogue; Constantinos Adamides and Odysseas Christou, 'Energy Security and the Transformation of Regional Securitization Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean' in Savvas Katsikides and Pavlos Koktsidis (eds), *Societies in Transition: The Social Implications of Economic, Political and Security Transformations*, (New York: Springer, 2015); Spyridon N. Litsas, 'War, Peace and Stability in the Era of Multipolarity: What Lies at the End of the Systemic Rainbow' in Spyridon N. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris (eds), *The Eastern Mediterranean in Transition: Multipolarity, Politics and Power*, (New York: Routledge, 2015) ; Andrea Prontera and Mariusz Ruszel, 'Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean', (2017) 24(3) Middle East Policy; Jon B. Alterman, Heather A. Conley and Donatienne Ruy, *Restoring the Eastern Mediterranean as U.S. Strategic Anchor* (New York: CSIS, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Spyridon N. Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris (eds), *The New Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, Politics and States in a Volatile Era* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019); Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security* (Re-Imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Report Series: PCC Report 3, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019); Zenonas Tziarras, 'International Competition and Cooperation in the new Eastern Mediterranean', (2021) Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies; Andreas Stergiou, Kivanc Ulusoy and Menahem Blondheim (eds), *Conflict and Prosperity: Geopolitics and Energy in the Eastern Mediterranean* (New York: Israel Academic Press, 2017).

cusses the formation of quasi-alliances from a theoretical and empirical point of view, including the RoC's involvement. The next section focuses on the nexus between the international and regional level of analysis. It examines how regional developments are connected to broader shifts in the international system and focuses on the increasing integration of the RoC into the United States' (US) efforts for a pro-Western security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The final section discusses the RoC's strategic choices and foreign policy conduct thus far vis-à-vis its national interests and identifies the preconditions for a more optimal foreign policy.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. On the qualitative side, it employs discourse analysis, process-tracing, and elite interviews. These are complemented by the quantitative method of content analysis. The analysis relies heavily on process-tracing, namely, the methodological approach that examines the steps and mechanisms by which initial conditions lead to specific outcomes, focusing on the decision-making process itself.¹⁰ 'The simplest variety of process-tracing takes the form of a detailed narrative or story presented in the form of a chronicle that purports to throw light on how an event came about'.¹¹ In this paper, it is used to identify the ways through which (a) quasi-alliances were formed in the Eastern Mediterranean; (b) the RoC's foreign policy shifted during the 2010s; and (c) the Eastern Mediterranean developments became intertwined with changes in the global and regional strategic focus of the US. In this context, a limited number of interviews provide valuable information that complement the narrative. Moreover, content analysis, 'the classification and counting of data',¹² is applied especially to key US National Security Strategy (NSS) documents. Content patterns identified across these documents substantiate the growing US interest in the Eastern Mediterranean and reveal its correlation with the RoC's shift toward a pro-Western foreign policy orientation. However, content analysis is not made in isolation from context, as is often the criticism about this method. Rather, it is combined with discourse analysis and process-tracing to produce better inferences¹³ about the association between US

¹⁰ Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown, 'Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making' in Robert F. Coulam and Richard A. Smith (eds), *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations, Vol 2*, (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1985) 35.

¹¹ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 2005) 210.

¹² Peter John, 'Quantitative Methods' in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, (2nd edn, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, 2002) 218.

¹³ Peter Burnham & al., *Research Methods in Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 241.

foreign policy and Eastern Mediterranean geopolitical shifts, and the meaning that the former ascribes to the latter—including to the RoC. The same is true for the evaluation of content, discourse, and meaning when the discourse and implementation of the RoC's foreign policy is assessed in relation to its objectives, capabilities, and success. In this respect, content and discourse analysis also provides a foundation for understanding the role of quasi-alliances as flexible, strategic responses to shifting geopolitical priorities. After all, it is widely maintained that 'language and discourses [...] frame and constrain given courses of actions', which is what discourse analysis aims to unpack.¹⁴ As explained below, these methods also differentiate this paper's approach from a traditional neorealist or structure-oriented analysis.

Ultimately, the paper argues that, despite the new openings and significant progress that the RoC's foreign policy accomplished in the 21st century and particularly since the early 2010s, a great lack of vision, strategic planning, and institutional capacities can be identified. This renders the RoC's foreign policy susceptible to domestic politics and populist rhetoric, as well as more vulnerable to systemic constraints and geopolitical shifts.

Quasi-Alliances and the RoC in the Eastern Mediterranean

What Is a Quasi-Alliance?

To revisit the Eastern Mediterranean quasi-alliances and the RoC's foreign policy, we first need to review, if briefly, the distinction between the concepts 'alliance' and 'quasi-alliance'. Alliances are extensively analysed in International Relations literature and particularly neorealism. The latter focuses on why States form alliances and the dynamics that govern them. More specifically, it posits that, because the international system is anarchic, meaning no central authority dictates the actions of sovereign States, States must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival and security. Two neorealist theories are relevant to this discussion. On the one hand, Kenneth Waltz's 'balance of power' theory suggests that States form alliances as a defensive mechanism—to counterbalance the power of other States and prevent any one State from dominating the system.¹⁵ Alliances are thus formed based on the distribution of power and are intended to ensure that no single State or coalition can impose its will on others. On the other hand, Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' theory—a refinement

¹⁴ Ibid., 242.

¹⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc., 2010) 118, 166.

of the ‘balance of power’ theory—suggests that alliances are formed not merely based on the distribution of power, but on the perceived threat that other States pose as well.¹⁶ This includes considerations of geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and the perceived intentions of potential adversaries. Having said that, the States comprising an alliance may not only serve common or identical interests but also complementary or ideological ones.¹⁷ In this sense, both common and individual interests may motivate the formation of an alliance. Moreover, it should be noted that, according to the neoclassical strand of realism, alliances may not remain limited to the objectives of security and survival but also aim at the generation of profit. In other words, these objectives are not mutually exclusive and may be pursued simultaneously.¹⁸

The literature on quasi-alliances is not as developed as that on traditional alliances, while the concept remains somewhat contested. According to one definition, a quasi-alliance is formed by ‘two states that are un-allied but share a third great power patron as a common ally’.¹⁹ Sun Degang, on the other hand, defines it as a ‘permanent or ad hoc informal security co-operation arrangement, based not only on formal collective defense pacts, but on tacit agreements between two or among more international regimes’.²⁰ The two definitions seem to have parallel trajectories in the literature. However, the latter has been applied to other cases as well²¹ and remains more relevant to the Eastern Mediterranean context.

¹⁶ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987) 5.

¹⁷ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Brief & Revised edn, New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1993) 198-99; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

¹⁸ Randal L. Schweller, ‘Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in’, (1994) 19(1) *International Security* 82.

¹⁹ Victor Cha, ‘Abandonment, entrapment, and neoclassical realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea’, (2000) 44(2) *International Studies Quarterly* 262. See also, Resi Qurrata Aini and Yandry Kurniawan, ‘Quasi-Alliance at Play: The Curious Case of South Korea’s Aborted Withdrawal from GSOMIA in 2019’, (2021) 24(3) *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*; and, Won-June Hwang, ‘Quasi-Alliance explanation for the fluctuating ROK-Japan relationship: analysing friction in 2019 and cohesion in 2023’, (2024) *Asian Journal of Political Science*.

²⁰ Sun Degang, ‘Brothers indeed: Syria-Iran Quasi-alliance revisited’, (2009) 3(2) *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 68.

²¹ See, Özden Zeynep Oktav, ‘The Syrian Uprising and the Iran-Turkey-Syria Quasi Alliance: A View from Turkey’ in Raymond Hinnebusch and Özlem Tür (eds), *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*, (Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013) 194-95; Frederick Kliem, ‘Why Quasi-Alliances will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad’, (2020) 7(3) *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*

Drawing upon Degang's definition and its previous application to the Eastern Mediterranean,²² we could say that, unlike the formal, often treaty-bound alliances emphasised in traditional neorealist theory, quasi-alliances lack formal agreements and are characterised by informal and flexible arrangements. There are little to no binding commitments—particularly as regards the mutual defence of the parties—that compel States to act in certain ways, allowing greater diplomatic flexibility. Indeed, while traditional alliances might involve military commitments or obligations to come to the aid of allies under attack,²³ quasi-alliances usually lack such deep military integration and are characterised by cooperation that is more political and economic than military. As such, quasi-alliances allow for a high degree of non-exclusivity as well. States in a quasi-alliance can maintain more independent foreign policies, including relationships with adversaries of their quasi-allies. This ambiguity allows States to navigate complex international relations without firmly committing to a single bloc. Moreover, whereas neorealism often highlights security threats as the primary motivator for alliances, quasi-alliances also strongly consider economic and political opportunities. These alliances can be as much about leveraging mutual benefits from cooperation (like energy resources or economic projects) as they are about countering common threats. For all the above reasons, quasi-alliances are also easier to form, modify, or dissolve as they do not involve the extensive bureaucratic and political processes that formal alliances do. This flexibility is particularly useful in regions where political dynamics and threats are rapidly changing, such as the Eastern Mediterranean. When it comes to the RoC in particular, this view converges, for example, with that of Alyson J. K. Bailes et. al., who argue that small States have unique alliance motivations and behaviours—including not only security but also political, economic, and societal stability—that traditional alliance theories often fail to capture. The authors conceptualise this small State strategy as an 'alliance shelter', which is seen as providing support in areas where small States are particularly vulnerable due to limited resources and capacity;²⁴ that is, not unlike the RoC's strategic

²² Tziarras, 'Israel-Cyprus-Greece: A 'Comfortable' Quasi-Alliance'.

²³ Apart from NATO and Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the go-to example of a formal alliance, another is the one concluded between Greece and France in 2021. See, Elie Perot, 'A new alliance in Europe: the September 2021 defence agreement between Greece and France as a case of embedded alliance formation', (2023) 32(4) *European Security*.

²⁴ Alyson J. K. Bailes, Bradley A. Thayer and Baldur Thorhallsson, 'Alliance theory and alliance 'Shelter': the complexities of small state alliance behaviour', (2016) 1(1) *Third World Thematics*.

imperatives while pursuing the quasi-alliances and, as seen below, while gradually aligning with the US strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper accepts the basic premises of neorealist/structural realist analysis but is not limited by them. The international system and the distribution of power within it remains central to how we analyse the big picture of geopolitical shifts at the international and regional level. But as we have seen, the functionality of quasi-alliances is more complex, and their motivators are more diversified compared to the traditional (neorealist) definition of alliance formation. Furthermore, it has been argued that neorealism is inadequate in explaining (small) State foreign policies as it overlooks domestic-level factors.²⁵ Specifically, it has been argued that small States' foreign policy behaviours are significantly influenced by domestic factors, especially elite ideas and identities, which shape how these States perceive and respond to external threats and opportunities.²⁶ Although many of these approaches draw on neoclassical realism (NcR) and its theoretical synthesis of system- and domestic-level variables, this paper does not adopt an NcR framework as such. Nonetheless, it does integrate different levels of analysis—the international, the regional, and the domestic—to some extent. And this includes both the RoC (as a small State) and the US (as a great power). When it comes to the domestic level, and in line with the previously articulated research methods, emphasis is given to elite ideas and perceptions as expressed in official documents or statements. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to discern (a) how quasi-alliances are presented, construed, and legitimised in the public discourse of the RoC; (b) the types and motivators of US foreign engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean (including the quasi-alliances) and the RoC more specifically; as well as (c) the relationship or disconnect between the RoC's foreign policy rhetoric, implementation, and objectives.

The Formation of Quasi-Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean

The concept of quasi-alliances has been employed to assess and explain the geopolitical shifts that started taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean since the early 2010s, roughly the point from which our process-tracing begins. The factors driving

²⁵ Miriam Fendius Elman, 'The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in its Own Backyard', (1995) 25 *British Journal of Political Science*; Giorgi Gvalia, Bidzina Lebanidze and David S. Siroky, 'Neoclassical realism and small states: systemic constraints and domestic filters in Georgia's foreign policy', (2019) 35(1) *East European Politics*.

²⁶ Giorgi Gvalia & al., 'Thinking Outside the Bloc: Explaining the Foreign Policy of Small States', (2013) 22(1) *Security Studies*.

those shifts range from (a) the gradual deterioration of Turkey's relations with various States of the region, including Israel, Syria, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE);²⁷ (b) the breakout of the Arab uprisings in late 2010 that created a domino of regime changes and intrastate conflicts in the Middle East;²⁸ (c) the discovery of significant hydrocarbon reserves off the shores of Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt;²⁹ and (d) the emergence of the Islamic State (IS), with all the repercussions that its rise brought about.³⁰

Against this background, several common and individual interests developed among States like Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Egypt. Beyond the individual interests of each State that primarily had to do with the unstable geopolitical environment, the common interests may be summarised under two categories—threat perceptions regarding Turkey's power projection and energy-related interests (that can also be associated with prospects for further economic development in the region).³¹ The subsequent formation of quasi-alliances was based on both security and profit-related drivers. However, Turkey can be considered as a primary factor given that, looking at things retrospectively, it would be hard to see such level of cooperation developing among these States had Turkish foreign policy not made a shift towards a more assertive and even aggressive behaviour.

The RoC played a crucial role in bringing together these States. According to Nicosia's calculations, the geopolitical 'window of opportunity' that was created because of the breakdown in Turkey's regional relations had to be capitalised on, and the RoC was well situated to play that role.³² Its relations with the Arab world had been traditionally good, while relations with Israel started to improve since the 2000s and

²⁷ Özgür Özdamar and Balkan Devlen, 'Man vs. the System: Turkish Foreign Policy After the Arab Uprisings' in berto Belloni, Vincent Della Sala and Paul Viotti (eds), *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe: The Return to Realism?*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Zenonas Tziarras, *Turkish Foreign Policy: The Lausanne Syndrome in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East* (Cham: Springer, 2022).

²⁸ Thanos Dokos, 'The Evolving Security Environment in the Eastern Mediterranean: Is NATO still a Relevant Actor?', (2012) 12(4) *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*.

²⁹ Ayla Gürel, Harry Tzimitras and Hubert Faustmann (eds), *Global Energy and the Eastern Mediterranean* (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2016).

³⁰ Patrick Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (New York and London: Verso, 2014, 2015).

³¹ Tziarras, 'Israel-Cyprus-Greece...' 408-410.

³² Zenonas Tziarras, 'Cyprus's Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Trilateral Partnerships: A Neoclassical Realist Approach' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security*, (Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019).

particularly after 2008. According to former Foreign Minister Marcos Kyprianou (2008–2011), this came as part of a broader opening to the Middle East.³³ It was in this context that the RoC and Israel made efforts to delimitate their exclusive economic zone (EEZ), as well as what provided the foundation for the post-2010 widening of relations in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁴ Eventually, the bilateral EEZ agreement between the RoC and Israel was signed in 2010, a few months after the *Mavi Marmara* incident that led to the rapid deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations.³⁵ The RoC made its first natural gas discovery in 2011 (the ‘Aphrodite’ reserve in block 12) and in 2012 Benjamin Netanyahu became the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Cyprus with energy as the main item on the agenda.³⁶ Greek-Israeli relations had already started improving since a 2009 unplanned meeting that took place in Moscow between then Greek and Israeli Prime Ministers, Andreas Papandreou and Benjamin Netanyahu, respectively.³⁷ In 2010, Papandreou made the first visit to Israel by a Greek Prime Minister in 30 years and Netanyahu followed suit a few months later becoming the first Israeli head of State to visit Greece.³⁸ It is worth noting that these visits came soon after the *Mavi Marmara* incident as well. The first trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministers of Energy of Israel, the RoC, and Greece came in 2013.³⁹ Numerous trilateral meetings followed at the level of Foreign, Defence, and Energy Ministries, parliamentary committees, as well as heads

³³ This included the opening of a series of embassies in States of the Persian Gulf.

³⁴ Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcos Kyprianou, May 2024.

³⁵ Orna Almog and Ayşegül Sever, ‘The *Mavi Marmara*: An Embattled Voyage and Its Consequences’ in Ayşegül Sever and Orna Almog (eds), *Contemporary Israeli–Turkish Relations in Comparative Perspective*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

³⁶ Herb Keinon, ‘PM arrives in Cyprus for historic visit’ *The Jerusalem Post* (16 February 2012), available at <https://www.jpost.com/diplomacy-and-politics/pm-arrives-in-cyprus-for-historic-visit> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

³⁷ Aristotle Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli–Greek Cooperation* (Cham: Springer, 2015) 11.

³⁸ ‘Greek PM visits Israel for first time in decades’ *Neos Kosmos* (26 July 2010), available at <https://neoskosmos.com/en/2010/07/26/news/greece/israel-greece-three-decades/> (last accessed 20 May 2024); David Levitz, ‘Netanyahu in Greece’ *DW* (16 August 2010), available at <https://www.dw.com/en/netanyahu-visit-to-greece-signals-strategic-rapprochement/a-5915827> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

³⁹ Asher Zeiger, ‘Israel, Greece, Cyprus sign energy and water deal’ *The Times of Israel* (8 August 2013), available at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-greece-cyprus-sign-energy-and-water-deal/> (last accessed 20 May 2024)

of State. The first trilateral meeting between heads of States took place in 2016.⁴⁰ As of 2024, Greece, the RoC, and Israel have completed nine such trilateral meetings.⁴¹

Similar was the trajectory of the Egypt–Cyprus–Greece partnership, which produced the first trilateral meeting at the head of State level. This emerged in the aftermath of the 2013 military coup in Egypt, which overthrew President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. The head of the coup, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, was elected president in 2014. These developments stirred a tense feud between Turkey’s then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and El-Sisi, with the former calling the latter ‘terrorist’ and ‘tyrant’.⁴² On the one hand, Erdoğan lamented the overthrow of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood from power because they had provided a friendly and ideologically affined partner that better facilitated Ankara’s regional policy. On the other hand, Erdoğan expressed fears that Turkey could be next for ‘those who were stirring unrest’ in Egypt,⁴³ clearly pointing to Turkey’s long history with military coups and his own struggles with the military establishment in his country.⁴⁴

The RoC had already delimited its EEZ with Egypt in 2003, a deal that provided a great foundation for energy cooperation, especially after the RoC’s first natural gas discovery. Only a few months after the coup, then RoC President Nicos Anastasiades visited Cairo and signed with El-Sisi a unitisation agreement on the joint exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves.⁴⁵ The next year, the heads of the RoC, Greece, and Egypt met in Cairo for their first trilateral summit. There, then Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras stated that Greece and the RoC would act as ‘ambassadors’ for Egypt within the European Union (EU), something particularly valuable for Cairo at a time

⁴⁰ ‘Cyprus-Israel-Greece Trilateral Summit Declaration, Nicosia’ *Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Tel Aviv* (28 January 2016), available at http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/Embassies/Embassy_TelAviv.nsf/All/9A5802D6AC5D9E69C2257F480056CC29?Opendocument (last accessed 20 May 2024)

⁴¹ ‘Joint statement of the 9th Greece, Cyprus, Israel Trilateral Summit’ *Athens-Macedonian News Agency* (4 September 2023), available at <https://www.amna.gr/en/article/757367/Joint-statement-of-the-9th-Greece--Cyprus--Israel-Trilateral-Summit> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

⁴² ‘Egypt committing state terrorism, al-Sisi and al-Assad are same: Turkish PM’ *Hürriyet Daily News* (19 August 2013), available at <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/egypt-committing-state-terrorism-al-sisi-and-al-assad-are-same-turkish-pm-52723> (last accessed 20 May 2024); ‘Erdogan slams Sisi as ‘tyrant’ over Cairo policy’ *Al Arabiya* (19 July 2014), available at <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2014/07/19/Turkey-PM-slams-Egypt-s-illegitimate-tyrant-Sisi-> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

⁴³ ‘Egypt committing state terrorism...’

⁴⁴ Soner Cagaptay, ‘Erdoğan’s Failure on the Nile’, (2019) 33 *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*.

⁴⁵ ‘Cyprus and Egypt sign deal on joint exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves’ *Cyprus Mail* (13 December 2013), available at <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/articles/cyprus-and-egypt-sign-deal-on-joint-exploitation-of-hydrocarbon-reserves> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

of domestic political and economic turbulence and the erosion of the country's international image.⁴⁶ But Samaras' statement—and the summit more broadly—also spoke to the importance that Greece and the RoC attributed to their relationship with Egypt and the opportunity to reshape the diplomatic and geopolitical landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁷

The Egypt–Cyprus–Greece partnership went on to develop further with multiple meetings taking place the following years and a total of nine head of State summits as of 2024. And yet, just like in the case of the Israel–Cyprus–Greece partnership, the relationship grew into a quasi-alliance at best. As Nael Shama put it, 'it fits the model of a loose, flexible entente, rather than that of a rigid alliance with airtight commitments and obligations'.⁴⁸ While the two above quasi-alliances were not the only ones formed, they were the most substantial. Greece and the RoC pursued trilateral partnerships with countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Iraq, and Armenia as well, all of which remained at a more nascent state. Overall, these meetings and diplomatic efforts, particularly as regards the two main quasi-alliances, reflected some depth of cooperation in sectors like culture, economy, trade, tourism, technology, information exchange, and security more broadly, and effectively gave rise to a broader network of relations that went beyond the trilateral mechanisms.⁴⁹ At the trilateral level, these partnerships always fell short of a more formal/institutionalised framework and a mutual defence clause, despite the good relations and various sectors of cooperation they promoted.

Nevertheless, this diplomatic activity did contribute to the shifting patterns of enmity and amity in the Eastern Mediterranean. The quasi-alliances never explicitly positioned themselves against Turkey; in fact, the joint statements often noted that the partnerships had a positive agenda and did not intend to turn against any other country. It was, however, implicit that a major factor bringing these countries

⁴⁶ 'Greece, Cyprus to represent Egypt's interests in EU' *Daily News Egypt* (8 November 2014), available at <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/11/08/greece-cyprus-represent-egypts-interests-eu/> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

⁴⁷ Charalambos Tsardanidis, 'Greece's Changing Role in the Eastern Mediterranean' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security*, (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019) 78.

⁴⁸ Nael Shama, 'Between Alliance and Entente: The Egyptian-Greek-Cypriot Partnership' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security*, (Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019) 97.

⁴⁹ Tziarras, *The Eastern Mediterranean: Between Power Struggles and Regionalist Aspirations...*

together was not merely energy or other economic benefits but also common threat perceptions vis-à-vis Turkey. Bad or troubled relations with Ankara was something that most States had in common. Thus, to the extent that Turkey's relations with these countries remained problematic, there were reasons and ample opportunity for further cooperation and 'regional integration', at least among the like-minded actors of the region. Certainly, this does not mean that the parties shared identical threat perceptions, but that the range of perceptions between them aligned to an adequate degree. For the RoC and Greece in particular, this seemed like a historic opportunity to 'punch above their weight' and deal with their long-term Turkey problem.

A 'bipolar' structure started to emerge in the Eastern Mediterranean, with said States constituting one of the two poles and Turkey the other. In fact, the networks of cooperation among the 'anti-Turkey' camp were able to expand because of Ankara's continuing confrontational foreign policy in the broader region. In May 2020, the RoC hosted the first and only five-party meeting between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the RoC, Greece, Egypt, France, and the UAE, issuing a statement that clearly 'called on Turkey to fully respect the sovereignty of all States and their sovereign rights in their maritime areas of the eastern Mediterranean'.⁵⁰ For its part, Ankara stated that the five countries were forming an 'alliance of evil'.⁵¹ At this point, it became clear that the anti-Turkey agenda was becoming more salient, though mainly on paper and in rhetoric, not least because of the growing assertiveness and militarisation of Turkish foreign policy, as seen in Ankara's military interventions in northern Syria (2016, 2018, 2019, 2020), its irregular surveys and drillings within the RoC's EEZ, and its military intervention in Libya (2019), among others.

Nicosia was eager to see this diplomatic project leading to more regional integration with the RoC at its core. In 2018, then RoC Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides, stated that:

Cyprus has adopted the view that hydrocarbons can become the new coal and steel, in a new regional context. A tool of cooperation and synergies that would create an economy of scale, an inviting environment for companies and investors; a tool that would meet the energy security needs of the region and that of the EU and gradually contribute to greater stability in relations among countries

⁵⁰ 'Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece and UAE condemn Turkey's actions in eastern Mediterranean' *The National* (12 May 2020), available at <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/cyprus-egypt-france-greece-and-uae-condemn-turkey-s-actions-in-eastern-mediterranean-1.1018108> (last accessed 20 May 2024).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

of the region and promote security and peace. And ultimately, why not, a catalyst for greater, more institutionalized political co-operation in the region.⁵²

It was for this reason that in 2018 the RoC Council of Ministers adopted a proposal by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat for Trilateral Mechanisms in Nicosia.⁵³ The decision was agreed upon at the 6th Trilateral Summit between Greece, Egypt, and the RoC, and at the 5th Trilateral Summit between Israel, Greece, and the RoC.⁵⁴ The establishment of the Secretariat was acknowledged during a trilateral summit between Greece, the RoC, and Jordan in Athens.⁵⁵ However, despite the announcements and rhetoric, in practice, the institution did not attract the anticipated interest by other partner countries.⁵⁶ But beyond that, and despite efforts to staff and activate it, the Secretariat has remained idle for the most part perhaps because it was not pursued with adequate seriousness or political will, and due to lack of institutional capacity and support. This became evident in factors such as the delays to implement the decision of the Council of Ministers be-

⁵² Nikos Christodoulides, 'Remarks by H.E. Nikos Christodoulides Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus' *AJC Transatlantic Institute* (17 July 2018), available at <https://transatlanticinstitute.org/videos/remarks-he-nikos-christodoulidesminister-foreign-affairs-cyprus> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁵³ 'Το ΥΠΕΕ για τη Γραμματεία Τριμερών Μηχανισμών Συνεργασίας και τη δημιουργία Εθνικού Συντονιστικού Μηχανισμού για Θέματα Τριμερών Συνεργασιών [MFA on the Secretariat for Trilateral Cooperation Mechanisms and the Establishment of a National Coordination Mechanism on Trilateral Partnership Matters]' *Press and Information Office* (21 November 2018), available at <https://www.pio.gov.cy/%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%89%CE%B8%CE%AD%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B8%CF%81%CE%BF.html?id=4877#flat> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁵⁴ 'Κύπρος: Θεσμοθετούνται γραμματεία και συντονιστικό για τις Τριμερείς Συνεργασίες [Cyprus: Institutionalisation of Secretariat and Coordinating Centre for the Trilaterals]' *Naftemporiki* (22 November 2018), available at <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1104779/kypros-thesmothetountai-grammateia-kai-syntonistiko-gia-tis-trimereis-synergasies/> (last accessed 28 May 2024); '5th Trilateral Summit Declaration' *Israel Embassy in Greece* (14 December 2018), available at <https://embassies.gov.il/athens/NewsAndEvents/Pages/IsraelCyprusGreece5thTrilateralSummitDeclaration.aspx> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁵⁵ 'Joint Statement | Third Trilateral Summit Hellenic Republic – Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan- Republic of Cyprus- Athens, July 28, 2021' *Hellenic Republic – Prime Minister* (28 July 2021), available at <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2021/07/28/27111> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁵⁶ Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcos Kyprianou, May 2024. Kyprianou was an early candidate to head the Secretariat. See also, Stavros Antoniou, 'Προχωρεί η δημιουργία της Γραμματείας Τριμερών στη Λευκωσία - Με απολαβές και ωφελήματα υπουργού ο Λιλλήκας [The Establishment of the Secretariat for the Trilaterals in Nicosia Proceeds - Lillikas to receive ministerial earnings and benefits]' *Politis* (9 January 2022), available at <https://politis.com.cy/politis-news/48785/prochorei-i-dimioyrgia-tis-grammateias-trimeron-sti-lefkosia-me-apolaves-kai-ofelimata-ypoyrgoy-o-lillikas> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

tween 2018 and 2022, the difficulties in finding a building for the Secretariat, and the political saga that revolved around finding the right person to head the institution.⁵⁷

Aligned with the RoC's vision for more regional integration was also Egypt's initiative for an Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) announced in 2018. Following the decision on its establishment in 2019, its statute was signed in 2020 and came into force in 2021, rendering the EMGF an international organisation. The founding members of the EMGF were Egypt, the RoC, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority. Since then, France has also become a member and three observers have been added: the US, the World Bank Group, and the EU.⁵⁸ The EMGF is based in Cairo and aims to promote cooperation 'on developing an infrastructure for gas trade within the region and with external markets'.⁵⁹ Turkey's response was to call the EMGF 'an unrealistic initiative launched by some countries with political motives, under illusions of excluding Turkey from [the] energy equation in the Eastern Mediterranean'.⁶⁰ Indeed, Turkish political, media, and academic discourse has framed the EMGF (and the related partnerships) as an anti-Turkey 'alliance', portraying Turkey as a victim.⁶¹

As demonstrated, Turkey-related drivers have been at the core of the new Eastern Mediterranean partnerships, but that was because Ankara's confrontational foreign

⁵⁷ 'Προς αναζήτηση στέγης για τη Γραμματεία Τριμερών [In search of a roof for the Secretariat of the Trilaterals]' *Phileleftheros* (1 January 2022), available at <https://www.philenews.com/eidiseis/article/574908/pros-anazitisi-stegis-gia-ti-grammatia-trimeron/> (last accessed 28 May 2024); Antoniou, 'Προχωρεί η δημιουργία της Γραμματείας Τριμερών στη Λευκωσία - Με απολαβές και ωφελήματα υπουργού ο Λιλλήκας [The Establishment of the Secretariat for the Trilaterals in Nicosia Proceeds - Lillikas to receive ministerial earnings and benefits]'; 'Γραμματεία Τριμερών με Λιλλήκα - Ίσως και Διπλωματική Ακαδημία [Secretariat of Trilaterals with Lillikas - Maybe a Diplomatic Academy as well]' *Offsite News* (21 January 2022), available at <https://www.offsite.com.cy/apopseis/paraskinio/grammateia-trimeron-me-lillika-isos-kai-diplomatiki-akadimia> (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁵⁸ See, emgf.org.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ 'QA-3, 16 January 2020, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in Response to a Question Regarding the Meeting to Transform the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum into an International Organization' *Republic of Turkey – Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (16 January 2020), available at https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-3_-dogu-akdeniz-gaz-forumu-hk-sc.en.mfa (last accessed 28 May 2024).

⁶¹ See e.g., 'Ankara slams anti-Turkey alliance meeting in Athens' *Daily Sabah* (11 February 2021), available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/ankara-slams-anti-turkey-alliance-meeting-in-athens> (last accessed 28 May 2024); S. Süha Çubukçuoğlu, 'Energy Alliance in a Turbulent Region: What are Implications of the East Med Gas Forum for Turkey?', (2021) 1(1) *Turkish Journal of Policy Studies*; Pinar İpek and Tibet Gür, 'Turkey's Isolation from the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum: ideological mechanisms and material interests in Energy Politics', (2021) 23(1) *Turkish Studies*.

policy gave rise to threat perceptions about Turkey's foreign policy behaviour in various States of the region. Yet, despite the RoC's (and other States') best efforts to create a counter-balancing effect against Turkey's power projection, the quasi-alliances never managed to achieve more than some soft-balancing—and ultimately an under-balancing and sub-optimal—effect.⁶² What is more, the EMGF can by no means meet the criteria of an alliance and is far from coherent in its strategic outlook. Not only because of lack of a robust legal framework, governance structures, and binding rules,⁶³ but also because the geopolitical interests and foreign policy preferences contained within it, particularly regarding Turkey, are largely heterogeneous. How could Italy's or the Palestinian Authority's interests vis-à-vis Turkey align with those of the RoC for example? The RoC does have the power to veto Turkey's accession (like any other member), but it cannot be assumed that the organisation has a coherent policy on Turkey or any other issue for that matter. Especially since the EMGF, much like the Permanent Secretariat for Trilateral Cooperation Mechanisms, has failed to generate any meaningful outcomes on energy cooperation beside serving as a political project for regional relations and even the domestic politics of participating countries.

The following section fleshes out the nexus between regional developments and the RoC's foreign policy on the one hand, and international shifts—particularly US foreign policy—on the other. Before presenting the conclusions, the paper moves on to assess the RoC's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and identify the circumstances under which it can become more effective.

Between the Global and the Regional

Eastern Mediterranean developments during the 2010s occurred within a framework of broader shifts in the international system, namely, the real or perceived retreat of US global hegemony and the so-called 'Rise of the Rest'—particularly the middle and great powers of the East and the South. These dynamics had grown particularly salient by the end of the 2000s, after the US started bearing the cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2007–2008 financial crisis fallout, and its foreign policy overextension more generally in the post-Cold War era.⁶⁴ Under these circumstances

⁶² Tziarras, 'Cyprus's Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean...' 63–68.

⁶³ Arie Reich and Igor Klotsman, 'The East Mediterranean Gas Forum as a Platform for a Regional Energy Treaty', (2023) Research Paper(4538438) Bar Ilan University Faculty of Law https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4538438.

⁶⁴ Richard N. Haas, 'The Age of Nonpolarity: What will Follow US Dominance', (2008) 87(3) Foreign Affairs.

came foreign policy decisions like the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq (between 2009–2011), the US ‘pivot to Asia’, and the more reserved American involvement in the Arab uprisings that broke out in late 2010.⁶⁵ This post-hegemonic approach from Washington, which was accompanied by a significant shift of geopolitical focus, in conjunction with the ‘shift of global wealth’ from the West to the East,⁶⁶ created more space and opportunities for regional actors and middle and great powers that wanted to exploit the emerging power vacuums and have a say in the reshaping of the balances of power and the international order.⁶⁷ This was the pattern that manifested in the Eastern Mediterranean as well.

As a result, during the 21st century and especially under the presidency of Barack Obama (2009–2017), the US started adopting a different approach to grand strategy that favoured offshore balancing; a strategy based on the idea that the US ‘cannot prevent the rise of new great powers’ within and outside its influence, like Germany, China, and Russia, shifting the responsibility of regional security and power balance to other States, and reducing US involvement in managing regions such as the Middle East and Southeast Europe.⁶⁸ This can be seen in the discourse and praxis of US foreign policy, as well as in the content of official documents. For example, Table 1 demonstrates how the emphasis on ‘partners’ and ‘allies’ abroad in US official discourse grew over the first two decades of the 21st century, with the Obama administration being a distinct turning point. The 2015 NSS under Obama stated:

Abroad, we are demonstrating that while we will act unilaterally against threats to our core interests, we are stronger when we mobilize collective action. That is why we are leading international coalitions to confront the acute challenges posed by aggression, terrorism, and disease.⁶⁹

Such references are not uncommon in US NSS documents. However, similar statements in previous NSS documents during the 21st century focused on the fight against terrorism. As the 2000s came to a close and the 2010s found the US less will-

⁶⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, ‘The Arab Spring: Its Geostrategic Significance’, (2012) 19(3) *Middle East Policy*; Georg Löfflmann, ‘Leading from Behind – American Exceptionalism and President Obama’s Post-American Vision of Hegemony’, (2015) 20(2) *Geopolitics*; Janine Davidson, ‘The U.S. ‘Pivot to Asia’’, (2014) 21 *American Journal of Chinese Studies*.

⁶⁶ Christopher Layne, ‘It’s Real: The End of Unipolarity and the *Pax Americana*’, (2012) 56(1) *International Studies Quarterly* 203.

⁶⁷ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, ‘Capitalism and the Emergent World Order’, (2014) 90(1) *International Affairs* 74–75.

⁶⁸ Christopher Layne, ‘Offshore balancing revisited’, (2002) 25(2) *Washington Quarterly* 245.

⁶⁹ *National Security Strategy* (2015) i.

ing to act unilaterally, emphasis on multilateralism and collective action with regard to countering threats became more frequent, at times even as a substitute to the idea of a ‘prevailing grand strategy’ and global policing.⁷⁰ This approach was sustained in the years that followed and had a significant effect on how the US dealt with various regional contexts, including the Eastern Mediterranean.

| | G. W. Bush 2002 NSS | G. W. Bush 2006 NSS | B. Obama 2010 NSS | B. Obama 2015 NSS | D. Trump 2017 NSS | J. Biden 2022 NSS |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| ‘Partners’ & derivatives | 19 | 48 | 120 | 79 | 152 | 167 |
| ‘Allies’ & derivatives | 51 | 37 | 65 | 43 | 86 | 92 |

*Table 1: Emphasis on ‘Partners’ and ‘Allies’
in US National Security Strategy (NSS) Documents (2002–2022)*

The election of Donald Trump to the US presidency in 2016 and the NSS that was released in 2017 became the epitome of that strategic logic through the notion of an ‘America First’ foreign policy. Namely, the prioritisation of American national interests over those of States abroad, which also entailed more isolationism and offshore balancing. The States identified as primary threats in the 2017 NSS were China, Russia, and Iran, while the terms ‘malign’ ‘influence’, ‘actors’, and ‘activities’ appear to refer particularly to Iran—seen as one of the main concerns in the Middle East—but also other threats as well. Moreover, the document pays particular attention to the regional level, articulating the US approach to different regions. The Eastern Mediterranean does not feature in the document, but under the Middle East section the document presents a broader vision for the area. It specifically notes that the US,

has the opportunity to catalyze greater economic and political cooperation that will expand prosperity for those who want to partner with us. By revitalizing partnerships with reform-minded nations and encouraging cooperation among partners in the region, the United States can promote stability and a balance of power that favors U.S. interests.⁷¹

The US perception about the Eastern Mediterranean became clearer later, when in 2019 the RoC and Greece were incorporated into a trip that then Secretary of State,

⁷⁰ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, ‘The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy’, (2016) 95(4) *Foreign Affairs* 70-71.

⁷¹ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2017) 49.

Mike Pompeo, made to the Middle East, visiting Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon. The stated purpose of the trip was ‘to reinforce the value of our partnerships, as well as the importance of security and economic cooperation in achieving regional stability and countering the Iranian regime’s malign activities’.⁷² In the context of that trip, Pompeo participated in the 6th Trilateral Summit between Israel, the RoC, and Greece that took place in Jerusalem—a format that was called ‘3+1’. In a joint statement, the four parties affirmed ‘their shared commitment to promoting peace, stability, security, and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean region’, and ‘agreed to increase regional cooperation; to support energy independence and security; and to defend against external malign influences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East’.⁷³ Although public discourse in Greece and the RoC construed these references as pointing to Turkey, and were thus seen as cause for celebration, they were in fact completely aligned with the US NSS and the US Department of State readout about Pompeo’s visit.⁷⁴ It was thus evident that the Eastern Mediterranean, via Israel, the RoC, and Greece, had started to be seen as part of the US regional security architecture that aimed at dealing with the Iranian ‘malign influences’ and, by extension, other threats such as China and Russia.

By 2019, the RoC’s efforts to exploit the new geopolitical setting in the Eastern Mediterranean had paid off as its pro-Western foreign policy shift, coupled with growing distancing from Russia, opened new avenues for cooperation with the US. Complementing our process-tracing, Table 2 lists milestones in the US–RoC relationship based on official US government documents.⁷⁵ As seen in the NSS documents at least

⁷² ‘Secretary Pompeo’s Visit to Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon: Reinvigorating Partnerships, Enhancing Bilateral Ties, and Countering Iran’ *US Department of State* (18 March 2019), available at <https://2017-2021.state.gov/secretary-pompeos-visit-to-kuwait-israel-and-lebanon-reinvigorating-partnerships-enhancing-bilateral-ties-and-countering-iran/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁷³ ‘Joint Declaration Between Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and the U.S. After the 6th Trilateral Summit’ *US Embassy & Consulate in Greece* (21 March 2019), available at <https://gr.usembassy.gov/joint-declaration-between-cyprus-greece-israel-and-the-u-s-after-the-6th-trilateral-summit/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁷⁴ The readout’s emphases were clear: Lebanon and derivatives are mentioned 21 times; Israel and derivatives 11 times; Kuwait and derivatives 10 times; Greece twice; and Cyprus twice. See, ‘Secretary Pompeo’s Visit to Kuwait, Israel, and Lebanon: Reinvigorating Partnerships, Enhancing Bilateral Ties, and Countering Iran’

⁷⁵ ‘U.S. Security Cooperation with the Republic of Cyprus’ *US Department of State* (24 May 2021), available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-the-republic-of-cyprus/> (last accessed 3 June 2024); ‘Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Cyprus on the Signing of a Defense Cooperation Roadmap for 2024-2029’ *US Department of Defense* (10 September 2024), available at <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3900834/joint-statement-by-the-united->

since 2015, the US has been particularly concerned about the projection of Russian power in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Eastern Mediterranean, with Georgia, Ukraine, Syria, and Libya considered as hotspots. The RoC was also seen as a largely pro-Russian country and that hindered deeper cooperation with the US in the past. However, things gradually changed after 2013. The bail-in that the Cypriot economy had to suffer because of the financial crisis significantly affected Russian capital and investments in Cyprus in the medium term.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Turkey's pro-Russian turn particularly after 2015 and the frequent tensions between Ankara and Washington contributed to Nicosia's decision-making towards a pro-Western shift.⁷⁷ These trends were further solidified after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Western sanctions imposed on the former and with which the RoC complied.⁷⁸ Notably, in 2022, the US Department of State acknowledged the RoC's cooperation 'in efforts to implement reforms on anti-money laundering regulations and financial regulatory oversight', and the necessary steps that it made 'to deny Russian military vessels access to ports for refueling and servicing'.⁷⁹ On this basis, the US government decided to lift the arms embargo from the RoC for the fiscal year 2023 with an annual review clause.

states-of-america-and-the-republic-of-cyprus-on-t/ (last accessed 3 November 2024); 'Joint Statement on the First Strategic Dialogue Between the Republic of Cyprus and the United States of America' *US Department of State* (23 October 2024), available at <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-first-strategic-dialogue-between-the-republic-of-cyprus-and-the-united-states-of-america/> (last accessed 3 November 2024); 'Readout of President Joe Biden's Meeting with President Nikos Christodoulides of the Republic of Cyprus' *The White House* (30 October 2024), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/10/30/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-meeting-with-president-nikos-christodoulides-of-the-republic-of-cyprus/> (last accessed 3 November 2024); 'Lifting of Defense Trade Restrictions on the Republic of Cyprus for Fiscal Year 2023' *US Department of State* (16 September 2022), available at <https://www.state.gov/lifting-of-defense-trade-restrictions-on-the-republic-of-cyprus-for-fiscal-year-2023/> (last accessed 3 June 2024); Giannis Ioannou, 'Τα βήματα για ενίσχυση των αμυντικών σχέσεων Λευκωσίας-Ουάσιγκτον [The steps for strengthening Nicosia-Washington defense relations]' *Kathimerini Kyprou* (12 December 2024), available at <https://www.kathimerini.com.cy/gr/politiki/ta-bimata-gia-enisxysi-ton-amyntikwn-sxeseon-leykosias-oyasigkton> (last accessed 15 December 2024).

⁷⁶ Elena B. Zavyalova & al., 'Trends and Issues in Economic Relations of Cyprus and Russia', (2020) 31(3) *Cyprus Review*.

⁷⁷ Alexandros Zachariades, 'The Republic of Cyprus and the US: A Revamped Relationship with Key Limitations' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus: Local, Regional and International Dimensions*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) 111.

⁷⁸ Helena Smith, 'Our credibility must be safeguarded': Cyprus in turmoil after Russia sanctions' *The Guardian* (22 April 2023), available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/22/cyprus-russia-sanctions-us-uk> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁷⁹ 'Lifting of Defense Trade Restrictions....'.

| Year | Event |
|------|--|
| 2018 | Signature of Statement of Intent on bilateral security cooperation |
| 2019 | The Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act (2019) signed into law |
| 2019 | Accreditation of the RoC's first Defence Attaché at its embassy in Washington |
| 2020 | Decision on RoC participation in the US International Military Education Training Program (IMET) |
| 2020 | Temporary waiver on International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) restrictions to allow for the direct commercial sale of non-lethal defence articles and services to and from the RoC |
| 2022 | Inauguration of the \$5-million Cyprus Centre for Land, Open-sea, and Port Security (CYCLOPS) regional training centre focused on border security and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction |
| 2022 | Full lifting of arms embargo Approval of exports, re-exports, and transfer of defence articles to the RoC for 2023 |
| 2024 | Defence Cooperation Framework Agreement |
| 2024 | First Strategic Dialogue Meeting |
| 2024 | Meeting of American President Joe Biden with RoC President Nikos Christodoulides in Washington, DC |
| 2024 | New amendment to the US Defense Budget Bill (NDAA) for the first time includes the RoC in the list of countries eligible to participate in US military training programmes for Eastern Europe. |

Table 2: Milestones in US–RoC Relations

The RoC hoped that, much like with the relations that developed in the Eastern Mediterranean after 2010, it would be able to exploit the growing rift between Turkey and the US. After all, this was an approach that Greece had adopted as well, dramatically enhancing its security cooperation with the US, often to the dismay of Ankara.⁸⁰ Washington did not only welcome the RoC's shift but also encouraged and rewarded it along the way with the enhancement of relations on multiple levels. It was in this context that the American government under Trump promoted the Eastern Mediter-

⁸⁰ Zenonas Tziarras, 'The Stakes for Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean' in Valeria Talbot (ed), *The Scramble for the Eastern Mediterranean*, (Milan: ISPI, 2021) 34-36; 'Turkey's Erdogan says Greek PM Mitsotakis 'no longer exists' for him' *Reuters* (23 May 2022), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkeys-erdogan-says-greek-pm-mitsotakis-no-longer-exists-him-2022-05-23/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

anean Security and Energy Partnership of 2019 that specifically identifies Greece, the RoC, and Israel as important partners in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, reiterating the joint statement of the 2019 3+1 summit in Jerusalem on regional ‘malign influences’ and particularly Russia. The Act also points to Turkey’s controversial decision to purchase the S-400 antiballistic system from Russia and implicitly presents the deepening of US–Israel–RoC–Greece relations as an outcome of Turkish foreign policy behaviour.⁸¹ Although Washington’s frustration with Turkey has been evident in recent years, this should not be seen as proof of its desire to marginalise Turkey, but rather as a way of applying pressure on Ankara to the end of re-engaging it, all the while establishing strategic alternatives and offshore balancing networks in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁸²

It is worth noting that the 2022 NSS issued by the Joe Biden administration presents a vision for the broader Middle East similar to that of the NSS issued under Trump. The Eastern Mediterranean Act of 2019 is not mentioned in the NSS, but under the Middle East section it notes: ‘We will seek to extend and deepen Israel’s growing ties to its neighbours and other Arab States, including through the Abraham Accords, while maintaining our ironclad commitment to its security’.⁸³ The Abraham Accords were promoted by the Trump administration. Signed in September 2020, the project represented a significant milestone in Middle Eastern diplomacy, marking the normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE and between Israel and Bahrain, later including Sudan and Morocco.⁸⁴ Evidently, the Biden administration saw its Middle East policy as a continuation of the established approach of offshore balancing, encompassing the networks of cooperation that developed in the Eastern Mediterranean as well. And indeed, in line with the 2022 NSS, the Biden administration sought to expand neighbouring ties in the area, brokering a ‘historic’ deal in 2022 between Israel and Lebanon that delimited their EEZ maritime boundary.⁸⁵ In

⁸¹ See, *Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019* (2019) <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th>.

⁸² Discussion with high-level American diplomat, May 2024. See also, Ryan Gingeras, ‘An Honest Broker No Longer: The United States between Turkey and Greece’ *War on the Rocks* (3 January 2023), available at <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/an-honest-broker-no-longer-the-united-states-between-turkey-and-greece/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁸³ *National Security Strategy* (2022) 42.

⁸⁴ ‘The Abraham Accords’ *US Department of State* (2020), available at <https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁸⁵ Maya Gebeyly and Maayan Lubell, ‘Israel, Lebanon finalise maritime demarcation deal without mutual recognition’ *Reuters* (27 October 2022), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/>

the same vein, the 2022 NSS reference to the EMFG as one of the ‘partners and allies’ with whom the US will work ‘to ensure energy security and affordability’, was the first mention to an Eastern Mediterranean project in a US NSS and another indication of the linkages that Washington saw between the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean with regard to its security architecture for the broader region.⁸⁶

As such, although quasi-alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be considered a US initiative but rather a project conceived by Nicosia,⁸⁷ they were later integrated into the US policy for the region, facilitated by deteriorating relations with Turkey and the pro-Western shift of the RoC. From the mid-2010s onwards, Washington prompted the RoC to expand the trilateral partnership mechanisms and Nicosia was happy to oblige, thinking that the closer relationship with the US would prove valuable in its own efforts to deal with the Turkish threat and find a settlement to the Cyprus conflict.⁸⁸ But the question remains: How efficient and sustainable was the RoC’s policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, as manifested through the trilateral partnership mechanisms and multilateral networks of cooperation?

Assessing the RoC’s Foreign Policy

Two things can be noted regarding the RoC’s foreign policy: First, starting in the early 2010s, it was favoured by a permissive strategic environment, namely, regional, and international developments that created opportunities. And second, the RoC managed to exploit those opportunities at least to a certain extent, shift its international orientation towards the West, and emerge as an important actor in the Eastern Mediterranean with a geopolitical weight disproportionate to its size. To what extent, however, has the RoC managed to serve its three main and traditional foreign policy objectives, which are to (a) deal with the Turkish threat; (b) work towards the resolution of the Cyprus problem; and (c) promote regional integration?⁸⁹

lebanon-israel-set-approve-maritime-border-deal-2022-10-27/ (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁸⁶ *National Security Strategy* (2022) 28.

⁸⁷ Interview with former RoC Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcos Kyprianou, May 2024. See also, ‘Υπάρχει ενδιαφέρον για διεύρυνση τριμερών συνεργασιών, λέει ο ΓΓ της Μόνιμης Γραμματείας [There’s interest in expanding the trilaterals, says SG of Permanent Secretariat]’ *Cyprus Times* (27 May 2022), available at <https://cyprustimes.com/politiki/yparchei-endiaferon-gia-dievrynsi-trimeron-synergasion-leei-o-ng-tis-monimis-grammateias-video/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁸⁸ Interview with high-level RoC technocrat, March 2024.

⁸⁹ ‘Foreign Policy - Themes’ *Republic of Cyprus - Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (2024), available at <https://mfa.gov.cy/themes/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

Precisely because the trilateral and multilateral schemes of cooperation remained rather weak and informal, they have also proved fragile. On the one hand, the very nature of the quasi-alliances limits the level and kinds of commitment that participating States have to each other. On the other hand, institutionalisation efforts such as the Permanent Secretariat of Trilateral Mechanisms and the EMGF remain idle and, in the case of the latter, with a very niche focus and virtually no results.⁹⁰ These weaknesses made the newly emergent Eastern Mediterranean security architecture more susceptible to exogenous, systemic pressures. More specifically, the same variable that facilitated the change at the regional level, namely, the shift in Turkish foreign policy, was the one that gradually brought the sustainability of the new Eastern Mediterranean partnerships into question.

Particularly since 2020, and at the prospect of a new administration in the US, Ankara embarked on an effort to normalise its relations with various countries of the region and beyond. Unsurprisingly, these included countries that have participated in the ‘anti-Turkey’ bloc that emerged in the Eastern Mediterranean and spilled over into other areas. Since then, Turkey normalised its relations with Saudi Arabia, Greece, the UAE, Armenia, France, Egypt, and Israel (albeit the latter effort was short-lived due to the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023). This created a level of excitement in the West, that Turkey was finally abandoning its confrontational foreign policy for a more sensible approach. The hopes culminated in 2023 when Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected and made significant changes in his cabinet, signalling a more pragmatic financial and foreign policy.⁹¹ Soon after, the Turkish government seemed to live up to Western expectations when it finally ratified Sweden’s accession to NATO in exchange for the endorsement of a sale of F-16 fighter jets by the US Congress.⁹²

These developments did not nullify the relationships developed in the Eastern Mediterranean, nor did they halt cooperation; and they probably will not do so in the future. However, they subvert the vision that the RoC had for the region and raise obstacles to the further integration of those relations. Indeed, one of the driv-

⁹⁰ Interview with high-level RoC technocrat; Interview with high-level Jordanian technocrat, May 2024.

⁹¹ Asli Aydintasbas and Jeremy Shapiro, ‘Erdoğan’s Post-Western Turkey’ *Foreign Affairs* (11 August 2023), available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/turkey/recep-erdogan-post-western-turkey> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁹² Jonathan Spicer, ‘US envoy sees rapid F-16s sale to Turkey after Sweden NATO bid sign-off’ *Reuters* (25 January 2024), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-envoy-sees-rapid-f-16s-sale-turkey-after-sweden-nato-bid-sign-off-2024-01-25/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

ers behind Turkey's efforts to normalise its relations with the region was the deconstruction of what it perceived as an anti-Turkey security architecture.⁹³ The RoC saw the dynamics of cooperation and regionalism through a security lens, investing in the prospect that further regional integration could have a balancing effect vis-à-vis Turkey.⁹⁴ But, as already seen, this objective has not yet been—and is now less likely to be—achieved. Moreover, Turkey's 'return' to the Eastern Mediterranean, even if it remains troubled, could open further avenues for energy cooperation with States of the region, particularly Egypt and Israel, thus hindering other prospective projects that involve Cyprus and Greece.⁹⁵

Not only were the RoC's efforts not effective in that respect, but it also has been argued that the exaggerated expectations projected by Nicosia regarding the trilateral partnerships and other developments in the Eastern Mediterranean have at times accomplished the opposite results. Discourse and content analysis illuminate these exaggerations and emphases in the rhetoric of key RoC politicians, especially when contextualised within the geopolitical processes in the Eastern Mediterranean. For example, in 2017, then President Nicos Anastasiades stated that the presence of the American oil company ExxonMobil in the Cypriot EEZ constituted a 'protection shield'.⁹⁶ He reiterated the same sentiments in the 2017 political programme for his re-election to the presidency, misleadingly framing the trilateral partnerships as 'alliances':

On our own – Cypriot – initiative we have formed together with Greece as well, Trilateral Partnerships with Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. These

⁹³ Tziarras, 'International Competition and Cooperation...'

⁹⁴ See also, DISY's view on the value of trilateral partnerships. DISY (Democratic Rally) is the party that was in power from 2013 until 2023. Nikos Christodoulides, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and government spokesperson, who was elected president in 2023 was part of that government and member of DISY. 'Ανακοίνωση Δημοκρατικού Συναγερμού για τριμερή Κύπρου, Ελλάδας, Ισραήλ [Announcement of Democratic Rally about the Cyprus, Greece, Israel Trilateral]' *DISY* (4 September 2023), available at <https://disy.org.cy/announcements/%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%AF%CE%BD%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%BF%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%8D-%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B-C%CE%BF%CF%8D-918/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁹⁵ Francesco Siccardi, *Understanding the Energy Drivers of Turkey's Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC and Brussels: Carnegie Europe, 2024) 13-23.

⁹⁶ 'ΠτΔ: Ασπίδα προστασίας της ΚΔ η ExxonMobil στην ΑΟΖ μας [President: ExxonMobil in our EEZ is a Protection Shield for the RoC]' *RIK News* (8 March 2017), available at <https://news.rik.cy/article/2017/3/8/ptd-aspida-prostasias-tes-kd-e-exxonmobil-sten-aoz-mas-1603085/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

are alliances that are already on a dynamic track towards materializing certain projects and actions [...] Our aim is to bring all of our alliances into a regional informal forum, soon to be transformed into an important security and cooperation leverage for the whole region [...] We managed all of the threats and attempts to destabilize and prevent our drilling initiatives with decisiveness and – most importantly – safety, thus shielding Cyprus and our energy prospects.⁹⁷

This was not a unique reference in the programme as the word was used a total of nine times, always in relation to the RoC's national security and defence and its relations with other countries or the involvement of international oil companies in the republic's energy activities. From the excerpt above, it is moreover evident that these 'alliances' are portrayed as effective in countering threats and shielding the RoC. In 2020, then Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides reiterated this idea, stating that the trilateral partnerships have 'politically and legally shielded' the RoC's EEZ. He was criticised about his statements from opposition party AKEL and part of the press.⁹⁸ As a presidential candidate in 2022, Christodoulides argued that the RoC's EEZ delimitations 'produce security, stability and prosperity, and contribute to the promotion and prevalence of peace wherever it is absent'.⁹⁹

These were clear exaggerations because of the misleading usage of concepts like 'alliance', 'shielding', and 'protection', but mostly because they stood in stark contrast with reality. Not only was Turkey not deterred but it also proceeded to impose a naval blockade on a ENI drillship that was on its way to drill within the RoC's EEZ in 2018 and conducted a series of illegal surveys and drillings within the Turkey-occupied continental shelf as well as the delimited EEZ of the RoC.¹⁰⁰ Thus, it became clear

⁹⁷ Nicos Anastasiades, 'Το Όραμα, το Σχέδιο και το Έργο του Νίκου Αναστασιάδη: Η Κύπρος της νέας Εποχής [The Vision, Plan and Work of Nicos Anastasiades: The Cyprus of the New Era]' *Dialogos* (2017), 71, available at <https://dialogos.com.cy/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/stathera-bimata-mprosta.pdf> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁹⁸ 'Αντιπαράθεση ΑΚΕΛ – Χριστοδουλίδη για θωράκιση ΑΟΖ [AKEL-Christodoulides Confrontation about the shielding of EEZ]' *Phileleftheros* (22 January 2020), available at <https://www.philenews.com/eidiseis/article/897297/antiparathesi-akel-christodoulidi-gia-thorakisi-aoz/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

⁹⁹ 'Χριστοδουλίδης: Ασφάλεια λόγω οριοθετήσεων ΑΟΖ και υφαλοκρηπίδας [Christodoulides: Security because of EEZ and continental shelf delimitations]' *Offsite News* (5 November 2022), available at <https://www.offsite.com.cy/eidiseis/politiki/hristodoylidis-asfaleia-logo-oriothetiseon-aoz-kai-yfalokripidas> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

¹⁰⁰ 'Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean: EU puts two persons on sanctions list' *Council of the EU* (27 February 2020), available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/02/27/turkey-s-illegal-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-eu-puts-two-persons-on-sanctions-list/> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

that the government's rhetoric was not presenting an accurate picture, but was rather used for populist purposes and potentially gathering more international support. It has also been argued that pompous rhetoric about the prospect of energy cooperation and regional integration might have accelerated Turkey's coercive response and its own effort to present itself as a victim excluded from the regional (energy) security architecture.¹⁰¹ This was certainly how Turkish officials tried to frame Ankara's coercive actions in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰² Former RoC Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Markoulli (2007–2008, 2011–2013) argued in an interview that the RoC (under Anastasiades) overestimated its ability to deter Turkey and was not well prepared for its actions in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰³ As such, although the RoC's initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean were in themselves positive, they arguably ended up leaving the RoC more exposed to than shielded from Turkish aggression. What is more, they have failed to render the quasi-alliances more institutionalised and formal, or to further integrate regional cooperation.

When it comes to the RoC's objective of finding a viable solution to the Cyprus conflict, the foreign policy implemented since the 2010s has not had any substantial results. Though the settlement of the conflict does not depend on the RoC, given that there are other parties involved and particularly Turkey as the occupying force, the 2010s presented a disconnect between foreign policy and domestic efforts at a peace process. Ideally, foreign policy should complement the peace process, and yet a popular opinion among Anastasiades' critics, at the level of public intellectuals, the press, and opposition parties, was that while the government inflated the country's international position and foreign policy achievements, it simultaneously downplayed the consequences of the protracted stalemate in peace talks that occurred after the collapse of the 2017 Crans Montana Conference on Cyprus.¹⁰⁴ The idea was that the RoC

¹⁰¹ Interview with high-level RoC technocrat, March 2024. For this kind of criticism in the press see also e.g., Makarios Drousiotis, 'Τι εξωτερική πολιτική ασκεί ο Χριστοδουλίδης [What kind of Foreign Policy does Christodoulides exercise?]' *makarioseu* (17 May 2020), available at <http://www.makarios.eu/cgibin/hweb?-A=6764&-V=articles> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

¹⁰² See e.g., Barçın Yinanç, 'Blue Homeland 'shows Turkey has become a maritime power'' *Hürriyet Daily News* (4 March 2019), available at <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/blue-homeland-shows-turkey-has-become-a-maritime-power-141624> (last accessed 3 June 2024).

¹⁰³ Apostolos Tomaras, 'Δεν Πείσαμε την Ευρώπη για την Τουρκία [We did not convince Europe about Turkey]' *Kathimerini Kyprou* (13 October) 9.

¹⁰⁴ See, 'Ύπυρ και μανία με τους επικριτές του για το Κυπριακό ο Νίκος Αναστασιάδης [Anastasiades is furious with his critics about the Cyprus problem]' *Reporter* (27 November 2018), available at <https://reporter.com.cy/article/2018/11/27/219422/ur-kai-mania-me-tous-epikrites-tou-gia-to-kypriako-o-nikos-anastasiades/> (last accessed 4 June 2024); Kyriakos Pieridis, 'Τι θα κάνει με το Κυπριακό ο νέος

government saw the new partnerships and regional initiatives as power multipliers that would improve its leverage over Turkey and thus focused its energy on them at the expense of a more committed effort at peace. To reduce the negative outcome of Crans Montana to this interpretation would be misleading.¹⁰⁵ It is, however, hard to escape the fact that although RoC foreign policy has broken some new ground with respect to its Eastern Mediterranean openings and relations with the US, it has not delivered any substantial results vis-à-vis its main strategic objectives.

Certainly, one must recognise that a small State like the RoC is more vulnerable to systemic constraints than greater powers. Yet one should also admit that the RoC has not done enough to mitigate its vulnerability and shield itself from the unpredictability of geopolitical shifts. As argued elsewhere, the RoC lacks clear strategic direction, which could come in the form of an NSS document, while it also lacks or has underdeveloped institutional capacity.¹⁰⁶ The simplest and perhaps most important example in this respect is the fact that the RoC's Foreign Ministry is dramatically understaffed and underfunded. Its funding amounted to only one percent of the national budget for 2024, while several of its diplomatic missions abroad are staffed by a single diplomat.¹⁰⁷ It is therefore practically impossible for the RoC to actually 'punch above its weight' under these circumstances, when the most fundamental capacities and means are not in place; it is at least overly ambitious to be a proactive and key player

Κύπριος πρόεδρος; [What will the new president do with the Cyprus problem?]' *efsyn* (23 October 2022), available at https://www.efsyn.gr/stiles/apopseis/364143_ti-tha-kanei-me-kypriako-o-neos-kyprios-proedros (last accessed 3 June 2024).

¹⁰⁵ For an extensive analysis on the Crans Montana talks and the factors that shaped the Greek-Cypriot approach see, Zenonas Tziarras, 'Οι συνομιλίες στο Κραν Μοντανά και η Ελληνοκυπριακή προσέγγιση [The Crans Montana Talks and the Greek-Cypriot Approach]' in Kostas Ifantis and Nikos Chatziioakeim (eds), *Το Κυπριακό στον 21ο Αιώνα: Διπλωματία, Ασφάλεια, Ενέργεια [The Cyprus Problem in the 21st Century: Diplomacy, Security, Energy]*, (Athens: I. Sideri, 2024).

¹⁰⁶ For extensive discussion on these issues see, Constantinos Adamides, 'The Challenges of Formulating National Security Strategies (NSS) in the Presence of Overarching Existential Threats', (2019) 30(1) *Cyprus Review*; Ioannis-Sotirios Ioannou, 'Assessing Maturity in the RoC's Eastern Mediterranean Foreign Policy' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus: Local, Regional and International Dimensions*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Zenonas Tziarras, 'Foreign Policy Maturity and Grand Strategy: The Way Forward for the Republic of Cyprus' in Zenonas Tziarras (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus: Local, Regional and International Dimensions*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)

¹⁰⁷ Andreas Pimbishis, 'Έξωτερική πολιτική με ψίχουλα από τον προϋπολογισμό [Foreign policy with crumbs from the budget]' *Phileleftheros* (26 November 2023), available at <https://www.philenews.com/politiki/article/1411324/exoteriki-politiki-me-psichoula-apo-ton-proipologismo/> (last accessed 4 June 2024).

in the Eastern Mediterranean if such a key institution as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is overstretched and overwhelmed merely by the everyday workload. Similarly, the RoC National Security Council (NSC), announced in May 2023, has not yet functioned properly. It has neither produced—nor started to produce—an NSS nor undertaken a planning role, as its mandate dictates.¹⁰⁸ It has thus far functioned primarily as an ad hoc consulting body for the management of crises, such as the massive influx of refugees in Cyprus or Iran’s missile strike on Israel.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Against this backdrop, Nicosia needs to take its foreign policy-making and implementation more seriously. Although the progress made during the 2010s should not be dismissed, it should at the same time be acknowledged that much of the RoC’s foreign policy accomplishments can be attributed to developments at the international and regional levels that created new opportunities. Bilateral and multilateral relations, including quasi-alliances, were able to form within this framework creating unforeseen geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean, including unforeseen foreign policy activism by the RoC. However, revisiting the trilateral partnerships after a testing period of almost a decade has demonstrated that ‘quasi-alliance’ was and remains an accurate description of these relationships. This is evidenced by two facts: (a) they never transitioned into traditional alliances, and (b) they were loose or informal enough so as not to prevent foreign policy reconfigurations by participating States, specifically in relation to Turkey.

The war in Gaza that broke out in October 2023 has put a halt to Turkey’s efforts to ‘deconstruct’ the Eastern Mediterranean security architecture—it has instead ushered Turkey and Israel into a new cycle of crisis and hostile interactions that have

¹⁰⁸ Costas Venizelos, “Έτσι θα λειτουργεί το ΣΕΑ - Αποκαλύπτουμε έγγραφο [This is how the NSC will function - We reveal document]” *Phileleftheros* (10 April 2023), available at <https://www.philenews.com/eidiseis/article/1301724/etsi-tha-litourgi-to-sea-apokaliptoume-engrafo/> (last accessed 4 June 2024).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Συνεδριάζει εκτάκτως το Συμβούλιο Εθνικής Ασφάλειας για το Μεταναστευτικό [Urgent Meeting of the National Security Council on the Migration Issue]’ *Offsite News* (1 April 2024), available at <https://www.offsite.com.cy/eidiseis/astynomika/synedriazei-ektaktos-symboylio-ethnikis-asfaleias-gia-metanasteytiko> (last accessed 4 June 2024); ‘Συνεδριάζει εκτάκτως το Συμβούλιο Εθνικής Ασφαλείας [Urgent Meeting of the National Security Council]’ *Reporter* (13 April 2024), available at <https://reporter.com.cy/article/2024/4/13/769508/sunedriazei-ektaktos-to-sumboulio-ethnikes-asphaleias/> (last accessed 4 June 2024).

broken down their diplomatic and trade relations.¹¹⁰ Without a doubt, the Gaza war has caused structural changes to the geopolitical setting of the Middle East, threatening the US-inspired regional order that came about especially after the Abraham Accords and increasing the risk of an all-out regional war. Things may well change again. But as long as the war persists, the improvement of Turkish-Israeli relations remains highly unlikely and the likelihood of further deterioration in Israel's relations with the Arab world increases. This dynamic was further complicated by the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, when Hayat Tahrir al-Sham marched to Damascus late in 2024, and the opening of a new cycle of regional crisis and instability.

These circumstances present the RoC with a difficult geopolitical environment, but they also provide it with some time and opportunities. Amid the chaos, the RoC stands as a stable EU Member State and a reliable partner for regional and international actors alike. Its positive relations with the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, as well as its EU membership, could provide a foundation for dialogue, peace talks, know-how, and post-conflict reconstruction. The vision of regional cooperation does not have to be abandoned, nor given up to the forces of conflict and deconstruction. It should perhaps be reconsidered and reframed to adapt to the new realities. However, this requires that the RoC takes itself, its role, and the region more seriously by investing in its own means and capabilities, as well as labouring towards a coherent and institutionalised geopolitical vision and foreign policy strategy. Time and circumstances may not always be 'gracious' to the RoC, and when bad turns to worse it should be able to lean on well-thought contingency plans, tested relationships, and its own national capacities.

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¹¹⁰ Gallia Lindenstrauss and Rémi Daniel, 'Turkish-Israeli Relations at a Dangerous Turning Point' *ISNSS Insight 1853* (19 May 2023), available at <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/turkey-israel-low/> (last accessed 4 June 2024).

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Towards a Commonly Accepted ESG Reporting Template for Greek and Cypriot SMEs

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Abstract

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting is a revolution in the operation of businesses. In recent years, more and more businesses are required or decide to publish corporate sustainability reports that highlight their performance in the environmental, social, and intergovernmental pillar. The recent Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) includes small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the context of mandatory ESG reporting. The goal of this paper is to provide a model ESG reporting framework to assist Cypriot and Greek SMEs in collecting and disclosing relevant data. A study was conducted to assess the readiness of Greek and Cypriot SMEs to engage in ESG reporting. The results revealed a relatively low level of maturity in this regard. At the same time, there is growing demand to develop a more cost-effective, user friendly, and straightforward ESG framework.

Keywords: ESG reporting; small and medium enterprises (SMEs); sustainability reporting; CSRD; EFRAG standards; environmental sustainability; social responsibility; governance practices

1. Introduction

Companies, political leaders, and groups are increasingly engaging with sustainability.⁵ This paper proposes an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting framework tailored for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Greece and Cyprus, addressing the current lack of a framework that accommodates their unique

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⁵ George Nyantakyi et al., 'A boost for performance or a sense of corporate social responsibility? A bibliometric analysis on sustainability reporting and firm performance research (2000-2022)' (2023) 10(2) *Cogent Business & Management* 1

characteristics. This objective is critical because the initial phase of mandatory ESG reporting laws (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive – 2022/2464/EU) by the European Commission (EC) took effect on January 2023, affecting not only companies headquartered within the European Union (EU) but also numerous global entities.⁶

The publication of the first Standards by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) marked the beginning of a major shift toward increased global regulation.⁷ The ISSB was established to develop a worldwide baseline of sustainability disclosures that address the dispersion of frameworks globally, and to promote greater consistency and comparability. On the regulatory front, the ISSB Standards have been accepted by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), the worldwide body of securities regulators, and governments are examining how to incorporate them into their regulatory frameworks.⁸

Despite these developments, it remains doubtful that the provision of ESG information will ever be dominated by a single global standard. For example, the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) framework is not as frequently used as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).⁹ The potential of gaining the widespread acceptability that a stakeholder-focused programme like GRI can aim for is arguably limited by SASB's investor-centric approach. However, as this article goes on to discuss, each framework has its strengths.

In parallel, the European Commission has made significant progress, developing the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and, more recently, adopting the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) for all companies covered by the CSRD beginning in 2024.¹⁰ These new legal and regulatory obligations

⁶ Susanne Arvidsson & John Dumay, 'Corporate ESG reporting quantity, quality and performance: Where to now for environmental policy and practice?' (2022) 31(3) *Business Strategy and the Environment* 1091

⁷ Charl de Villiers & Ruth Dimes, 'Will the formation of the International Sustainability Standards Board result in the death of integrated reporting?' (2022) 19(2) *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change* 279.

⁸ Hervé Stolowy & Luc Paugam 'Sustainability Reporting: Is Convergence Possible?' (2023) 20(2) *Accounting in Europe* 139

⁹ Satyajit Bose, 'Evolution of ESG Reporting Frameworks' in DC Esty & T Cort (eds), *Values at Work* (2022) 13.

¹⁰ European Union, *Directive (EU) 2022/2464 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 537/2014, Directive 2004/109/EC, Directive 2006/43/EC and Directive 2013/34/EU, as regards corporate sustainability reporting* (2022) available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022L2464> (last access date 12 2024).

have significantly affected large corporations, and will soon have a similar effect for SMEs as well.¹¹ Specifically, the CSRD obliges SMEs to prepare sustainability reports that include ESG performance¹².

The CSRD is currently voluntary for listed SMEs, but it will become mandatory in the fiscal year beginning 1 January 2026. However, the standards (ESRS) developed by European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) have proved complex to implement, resulting in significant delays in agreement on a specific reporting template for EU companies.¹³ A recent development concerning the implementation of CSRD and the standards proposed by EFRAG is the delay in the implementation of the obligation to submit sector-specific sustainability disclosures and for sustainability reporting from companies outside of the EU¹⁴.

The Commission released its 2024 Work Programme, which outlines the actions it will conduct in the future year, along with the announcement. The reporting burden for businesses related to reporting requirements is one of the 2024 Programme's priorities, and one of the main initiatives stated by the Commission is delaying the deadline for adopting European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) sector-specific reporting standards. The CSRD subsequently mandated the adoption of sector-specific ESRS by the end of June 2024, outlining sustainability information for companies to report relating to their operating industries. The first set of ESRS rules was adopted by the Commission in July 2023, outlining sector-agnostic sustainability reporting requirements.¹⁵

However, SMEs are falling behind in terms of capacity to comply with ESG requirements.¹⁶ SME-specific guidance is provided in recent EC recommendations on

¹¹ Meng Kui Hu & Daisy Mui Hung Kee, 'Global Institutions and ESG Integration to Accelerate SME Development and Sustainability' in N. Baporikar (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Global Institutional Roles for Inclusive Development* (2022) 139.

¹² Hervé Stolowy & Luc Paugam 'Sustainability Reporting: Is Convergence Possible?' (2023) 20(2) *Accounting in Europe* 139

¹³ Niki Glaveli, et al., 'Assessing the Maturity of Sustainable Business Model and Strategy Reporting under the CSRD Shadow', (2023) 16(10) *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 445.

¹⁴ Meng Kui Hu & Daisy Mui Hung Kee, 'Global Institutions and ESG Integration to Accelerate SME Development and Sustainability' in N. Baporikar (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Global Institutional Roles for Inclusive Development* (2022) 139.

¹⁵ European Commission, *Delivering today and preparing for tomorrow: The 2024 Commission Work Programme* (2023), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_4965 (last access date 12 2024).

¹⁶ Roberto Tombolesi, 'Sustainability Performance and ESG Factors: A New Challenge for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)', in Cristiano Busco et al., (eds), *The Impact of Organizations* (Routledge,

supporting financing for the transition to a sustainable economy¹⁷. However, these suggestions fall short of offering crucial direction in terms of internal reporting process adaption, data quality assessment, and structural modifications.¹⁸

This study proposes an ESG reporting framework for SMEs in Greece and Cyprus while aiming to address the challenges of preparing ESG reports. Currently, there is no framework that takes into consideration the two countries' characteristics. The proposed framework was developed after examining and contrasting the various ESG reporting standards, taking into account the difficulties faced by SMEs in the two countries. It should also be highlighted that, although this study focuses on Greece and Cyprus, the findings may be applicable to other European countries as well.

2. Methodology and Research Questions

Building on the comparative analysis of different ESG reporting standards, the methodology focuses on creating a framework tailored to the needs of SMEs. The diverse indicators and varying mandatory requirements identified in standards like those published by GRI, SASB, and United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI) inform this approach. Descriptive research was employed to pinpoint the most critical aspects for SMEs, ensuring that our framework addresses their unique characteristics and capabilities. This methodology is designed to simplify ESG reporting for SMEs, making it more accessible and practical for smaller enterprises to adopt and implement effectively.

The research started with an analysis of the maturity level of SMEs in Greece and Cyprus. After identifying the number of SMEs in these countries and subsequently those that had previously generated corporate social responsibility reports, the research determined how many of these businesses had integrated their ESG performance into their reporting. Next, a comprehensive analysis addressed six sustainability and ESG reporting frameworks to obtain an understanding of their disclosure requirements.

2023), 12.

¹⁷ European Commission, *Strategy for financing the transition to a sustainable economy* (2021) available at https://finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/strategy-financing-transition-sustainable-economy_en (last access date 12 2024).

¹⁸ Alperen Gözlügöl & Wolf-Georg Ringe, *Private companies: The missing link on the path to net zero* (2022) SAFE Working Paper 342, Leibniz Institute for Financial Research SAFE.

The aim of this paper is to introduce an ESG reporting framework tailored to SMEs in Greece and Cyprus, aligning with the requirements outlined in CSRD and EFRAG standards. This study seeks to address the following key research inquiries:

1. What should an ESG report designed for SMEs include?
2. Which indicators should be incorporated into ESG reports for SMEs?
3. What methodologies can be employed for calculating ESG indicators?

This paper provides comprehensive insights and answers to these research questions by presenting the proposed framework. Addressing these research questions aims to develop a comprehensive ESG reporting framework tailored to the unique needs of SMEs in Greece and Cyprus, while also adhering to the requirements set forth by the CSRD and EFRAG's (ESRS) Standards.

The next section presents a detailed comparison of existing ESG frameworks and their applicability to Greek and Cypriot SMEs. This comparative analysis identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each framework, thereby establishing a foundation for the proposed ESG reporting model. This analysis is crucial for understanding how these frameworks can be adapted to simplify ESG reporting processes for SMEs, ensuring effective compliance with emerging regulatory demands and contributing to sustainable business practices.

3. ESG Framework Comparison and ESG Reporting in Greek and Cypriot SMEs

3.1 ESG Reporting Framework Analysis

There are currently a number of frameworks for sustainability and ESG reporting, with respective groups of indicators often dependent on the specificities of the particular industry in which they are used.¹⁹

ESG reporting and sustainable business strategy can also vary according to the size of the entity. This disparity makes calculating the indicators extremely challenging, especially for businesses without a significant environmental footprint.²⁰ However, for an effective investigation of existing frameworks for SMEs, a content analysis

¹⁹ Monica Singhania & Neha Saini 'Institutional framework of ESG disclosures: comparative analysis of developed and developing countries' (2023) 13(1) *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment* 516.

²⁰ Carolina Almeida, Cruz, & Florinda Matos, 'ESG Maturity: A Software Framework for the Challenges of ESG Data in Investment' (2023) 15 (3) *Sustainability*, 2610.

was carried out and some basic categories were selected from which comparative results were obtained. For the six ESG reporting frameworks (SASB, IRF, ESRS, GRI, CPD, and UNPRI), the indicators used per pillar were recorded and then the most widely used indicators were identified.

The analysis focused on the content of existing ESG reports across numerous European companies. Given the prevalence of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework, we chose to include five additional standards commonly followed by European companies.

Table 1 provides a comparative overview, offering the fundamentals of the most prominent ESG reporting standards. This information served as a foundational resource for crafting the template featured in this study. The proposed ESG reporting framework is rooted in the ESRS, (under the CSRD). Additionally, the framework incorporates indicators that have been defined by the EFRAG.

| | SASB | IRF | ESRS (EFRAG) | GRI | CDP | UNPRI |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Type of framework | Voluntary and Benchmark | Benchmark | Regulatory | Voluntary | Benchmark | Voluntary |
| Date of issue | 2011 | 2013 (revised in 2021) | 2023 | 2000 | 2000 | 2006 |
| Industry-specific | Yes | No | No | No | No | No |
| Stakeholders | Investors | Investors | Government, executives, investors | Executives, investors | Investors | Investors |
| Estimated number of companies using the framework | Over 2,500 | Over 2,000 | To be implemented | Over 18,000 | Over 13,000 | Over 3,750 |

Table 1. Comparison of ESG Reporting Frameworks.

The most frequently cited framework, the GRI Standards, is used by 54% of EU corporations to fulfil their non-financial reporting obligations, according to research by the Alliance for Corporate Transparency.²¹

²¹ Alliance for Corporate Transparency, *An analysis of the sustainability reports of 1000 companies pursuant to the EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive* (2020) available at <http://www.allianceforcor->

A comparison revealed that each standard utilises different indicators, and, in some cases, the mandatory nature of the indicators differs. For example, in the case of GRI, there are nine categories in the environmental pillar, each with their respective indicators. SASB has seven such categories with the key performance indicators (KPIs) corresponding to sector specific characteristics,²² while UNPRI has four general environmental categories.²³ Individual indicators also differ in the way the data is calculated and measured.

Building on these findings, the methodology employed in developing the framework for SMEs to facilitate ESG reporting is based on descriptive research. Descriptive research aims to identify the traits that define a specific person, condition, or group. To identify the indicators for assessing SMEs' performance across the ESG pillars, a search was conducted for the aspects deemed most critical, considering the unique characteristics of very small, small, and medium-sized firms. This methodological approach ensures that the developed framework is tailored to the specific needs and capabilities of SMEs, promoting practical and effective ESG reporting.

3.2 Comparison of ESG Reporting Frameworks

Creating frameworks and standards is a continuous, iterative process. Perhaps it is still too early to say whether the frameworks for creating ESG disclosures will develop into more flexible and decentralised guidelines or into a single global standard.²⁴ However, the need to find a commonly accepted standard that simplifies the process of ESG reporting for SMEs is a priority given that there is limited initiative from the creators of the standards, the scientific community, and governments.

As mentioned, to arrive at the indicators and structure for an ESG report for SMEs, this paper analysed six dominant reporting frameworks, specifically for the period from 2021 to 2023. The analysis included a systematic review of the literature

poratetransparency.org/assets/2019_Research_Report%20Alliance_for_Corporate_Transparency.pdf (last access date 12 2024).

²² IFRS Foundation, Download SASB Standards (2022), Available at <https://sasb.org/standards/download/>.

²³ PRI Association, *PRI Reporting Framework* (2019), available at https://www.unpri.org/Uploads/n/p/v/02.sg2019_144623.pdf (last access date 12 2024).

²⁴ Satyajit, Bose, 'Evolution of ESG Reporting Frameworks' in: Esty, D.C., Cort, T. (eds), *Values at Work*. (2022) 13.

and reports concerning the implementation of ESG reporting by international auditing firms^{25,26} and independent bodies.²⁷

One standard among the six is industry-specific (SASB), and the others are sector agnostic. The GRI Topic Standards, which outline disclosures relevant to specific subjects, the GRI Sector Standards, designed for specific industries, and the GRI Universal Standards, which are applicable to all organisations, collectively provide substantial support for the reporting process. In assessing environmental performance, each standard takes varying approaches when it comes to defining indicators and their calculation methods. Among the indicators, energy consumption was a common element in all the analysed standards, although with variations in segmentation and calculation techniques. Additionally, waste management, waste generation, biodiversity, and water usage were also identified as key indicators to evaluate environmental performance in accordance with the standards under review. Notably, differences were identified in the content of the IRF, which is investor-focused and includes an indicator related to environmental investments. Interestingly, the same indicator is also incorporated in the ESRS developed by EFRAG.

Regarding social performance, these standards collectively encompass indicators related to the workforce (including demographic segmentations like gender, age, nationality, and special group affiliations), the safeguarding of human rights, and employee training. However, several disparities were noted in the measurement of customer satisfaction. While indicators for customer satisfaction are present in IRF, GRI, ESRS, and SASB, they are absent in CDP and UNPRI. CDP evaluates company performance in areas such as employment, supply chain, and community, but does not provide guidelines for assessing customer relations.

When assessing ESG performance within the governance pillar, certain indicators emerged consistently across standards. These indicators are board composition, stakeholder engagement, and the integration of sustainability-related matters. There are also significant differences, particularly with the GRI standard, which includes a multitude of indicators that appear in some of the other standards under analysis.

²⁵ KPMG, *Big shifts, small steps* (2022) available at <https://kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights/2022/09/survey-of-sustainability-reporting-2022/global-trends.html> (last access date 12 2024).

²⁶ Bloomberg, *Comparison of ESG Reporting Frameworks* (2022), available at: <https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/brief/comparison-of-esg-reporting-frameworks/> (last access date 12 2024).

²⁷ Corporate Governance Institute, *What's the difference between ESG reporting standards and frameworks?* (2023), available at: <https://www.thecorporategovernanceinstitute.com/insights/guides/whats-the-difference-between-esg-reporting-standards-and-frameworks/> (last access date 12 2024).

On the contrary, ESRs's integration of only six indicators reflects a deliberate effort to streamline and reduce the complexity of ESG reporting.

Materiality analysis—determining the social and environmental issues that are most important to a company and its stakeholders—is another important aspect of ESG reporting.²⁸ The process here can vary according to the scope considered. For instance, in the case of SASB, materiality analysis is oriented on how sustainability impacts the development of a company's enterprise value. Meanwhile, ESRs embraces the concept of double materiality, which requires a company to identify actions that impact both people and the environment, as well as how sustainability issues may affect its financial stability.

In the examination of ESG reporting frameworks, the stakeholder approach emerged as another focal point. SASB adopts an investor-oriented approach, while the rest of the frameworks analyse the stakeholder categories. The stakeholder identification process is different among the six ESG frameworks analysed: ESRs proposes to divide stakeholders into groups, while GRI provides a list of stakeholders. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing an effective ESG reporting framework for SMEs, particularly in regions like Greece and Cyprus where ESG reporting practices are still maturing.

3.3 ESG Reporting in Cypriot and Greek SMEs

The stakeholder-oriented approaches identified in various ESG frameworks highlight the importance of considering diverse stakeholder needs in reporting. This is particularly relevant for SMEs in Greece and Cyprus, where the GRI standard is favoured. Understanding the maturity of ESG reporting practices in these regions provides valuable context for evaluating how SMEs can effectively implement these stakeholder-focused frameworks. In terms of the number of companies engaged in ESG reporting, it is important to highlight that the requirement according to NFRD (Non-Financial Reporting Directive) applies to large, listed companies like banks, insurance companies, and public interest entities. More specifically, these companies must have at least two out of three following criteria: (1) a balance sheet total of EUR 20M, or (2) a net turnover of EUR 40M, or (3) an average number of employees exceeding 500.

²⁸ Felix Beske, Ellen Hausteijn & Peter Lorson, 'Materiality analysis in sustainability and integrated reports', (2022) 11 (1) *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, 162.

However, for the smallest businesses (micro and small), there is a significant lack of aggregated data for ESG reporting, despite the fact that they represent the largest percentage of businesses in Greece and Cyprus. Specifically, 55,297 micro businesses (0–9 employees), 3,856 small businesses (10–49 employees), and 553 medium-sized businesses (50–249 employees) were operating in Cyprus in 2022.²⁹ Approximately 719,296 SMEs are in operation in Greece; the great majority of these (673,561) are micro-sized businesses that employ one to nine people.²⁵ Greece has the highest SME density in the EU,³⁰ with 96.9% of all businesses being very small, as opposed to only 93% in Europe. Greek SMEs account for 87.9% of employment and 63.5% of total value added in the Greek economy.³¹

Despite the fact that SMEs represent the largest percentage of enterprises in Greece and Cyprus, no aggregate data was found regarding their ESG reporting. Information on the percentage of SMEs that prepare ESG reports was thus sought and obtained from the Corporate Social Responsibility Networks.

It emerged that SMEs have made a start on reporting on sustainability. In 2018, a survey of Greek SMEs was carried out by the Hellenic Network for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR Hellas), which revealed that 16% of SMEs had produced a sustainability report the year before. Although this is a small percentage in comparison to larger firms, it shows that smaller Greek businesses are becoming more conscious of the need of sustainability reporting. In Cyprus, very few SMEs publish corporate sustainability reports, less than 0.01% according to CSR Cyprus.

The results highlight that many SMEs are not engaging with sustainability reporting, even though it holds the potential for substantial business advantages and the opportunity to establish trust and credibility with their supply chain partners and potential clients. Collecting sustainability data can be a very difficult and costly process for SMEs, primarily due to constraints in financial, technical, and human resources. Reporting frameworks involve a wide range of KPIs and competing demands from investors, financial institutions, large corporations, and other stakeholders within the supply chain. Moreover, beyond data collecting, SMEs often lack the expertise

²⁹ Eurostat, *Structural business statistics* (2003), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/sbs_esms_cy.htm (last access date 12 2024).

³⁰ Eurostat, *Structural business statistics* (2003), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/sbs_esms_el.htm (last access date 12 2024).

³¹ European Commission, *2023 SME Country Fact Sheet* (2023), available at <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/54968> (last access date 12 2024).

and resources required to ensure the effective monitoring and assessment of sustainability indicators.

The research emphasises the limited maturity in ESG reporting readiness among SMEs operating in Greece and Cyprus, thus highlighting the need for a framework that can be widely adopted.

4. Proposed ESG Reporting Framework for SMEs

This section introduces an ESG reporting framework for SMEs operating in Greece and Cyprus. Building upon the comparative analysis of existing ESG frameworks, the proposed framework aims to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in meeting sustainability reporting requirements. By incorporating stakeholder-oriented approaches and aligning with regulatory frameworks such as the CSRD and ESRS, this framework seeks to streamline the ESG reporting process, ensuring SMEs can effectively communicate their sustainability efforts and enhance stakeholder engagement.³²

The upcoming sections present a detailed analysis of the main components of the model reporting framework, which have been drawn from existing frameworks. The following sections outline the essential elements adapted from these frameworks, including key indicators, stakeholder engagement strategies, and methodologies for assessing ESG performance. This aims to provide clarity on how these components can be tailored and implemented within the context of SMEs in Greece and Cyprus, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable reporting practices.

4.1 General Disclosures

ESG reports for SMEs should encompass a range of key information about their operations, including:

- Company overview (main activities and location)
- Mission and values
- Composition of Board of Directors
- Composition of General Assembly (including ownership percentages)
- Organisational structure

³² European Financial Reporting Advisory Group, *First Set of draft ESRS (2023)*, available at: <https://www.efrag.org/lab6> (last access date 12/2024).

Incorporating these general details enriches the SME's profile, providing stakeholders with a more holistic view of the company's operations.

4.2 Materiality Assessment

The materiality assessment must encompass factors that can impact a company's ESG performance and is typically conducted by seeking feedback and views from stakeholders.³³ A stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest in a business who has the potential to influence or be affected by it. A typical corporation's investors, employees, clients, and suppliers make up its main stakeholders.³⁴

In the case of larger corporations, material issues are often identified through stakeholder questionnaires. However, for SMEs, especially during the initial stages of sustainability reporting, the process described in the table below may be more practical (Table 2). SMEs can utilise the table to identify their stakeholders and establish channels of communication with them. This approach enables SMEs to gather valuable stakeholder input, which serves as the foundation for conducting a materiality assessment and prioritising relevant ESG issues.

| Stakeholder group | Communication channel | Frequency of communication |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Employees | Email, social media posts, code of ethics, other internal reports | Every week and every six months |
| Local community | Email, social media, publications in local newspaper (online or physical) | Every month or every six months |
| Another stakeholder group | Communication channel used for this stakeholder group | Frequency of communication for this stakeholder group |

Table 2. Stakeholder analysis with examples.

The first column must contain the groups of stakeholders coming from the three different pillars (environment, society, and governance). Usually, the interested parties are employees, members of the community who are affected by the company, shareholders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other interested parties depending on the activity of the company. In the second column, companies are asked to fill in their communication method with the interested parties on issues related to sustainability. Such methods of communication could be emails, newsletters,

³³ Tamara Menichini & Gennaro Salierno, 'Using Materiality Analysis to Determine Actual and Potential Company Impacts on Sustainable Development', (2023) *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 12 (2)

³⁴ Pernille Eskerod, 'A Stakeholder Perspective: Origins and Core Concepts', (2020) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*.

posts on social media, ad hoc communication, and other ways, always depending on the strategy followed by each company in terms of communication. The last column includes the frequency of the company's communication with stakeholders on sustainability issues. This column is filled in using a Likert scale from one (rarely) to five (very frequently).

Additionally, the sustainability issues that are essential for each of the stakeholder groups should be identified. Table 3 should be completed in relation to the activities of the business and the role of the groups of interested parties in the business.

| Stakeholder group | Material issues concerning the environment | Material issues concerning society | Material issues concerning governance |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Employees | Total carbon emissions | Employee satisfaction, equal pay | Transparency of administration |
| Local community | Carbon emissions, anti-pollution measures | Voluntary programmes | Corporate governance, policy adherence |
| Another stakeholder group | Material issue for the environment | Material issue for the society | Material issue for governance |

Table 3. Material issues per stakeholder group

Table 3 should be filled to identify all the material issues per ESG pillar and stakeholder group. Even though the table can be filled with short descriptions, it is highly recommended that the company analyse each material issue and the reasons behind the materiality.

5. Environmental Indicators

In this section, we delve into the environmental pillar, outlining indicators categorised into two primary groups. The first group encompasses essential indicators that hold significance across businesses of all sizes. The second group comprises indicators that, while important to calculate, may have limited relevance within the context of very small enterprises.

Table 4 below outlines the indices to calculate and is followed by a description of the calculation or analysis process.

| Core Environmental Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|--------------------------------|---|
| E1 –Energy Consumption & Mix | E1-1 Energy consumption (kWh) per square meters E1-2 Fuel consumption (litres of fuel) per number of vehicles E1-3 Energy consumption for heating and refrigeration (% renewable energy, % mineral oil, % gas, % district heating % coal, % other), energy supply |
| E2 –Water Usage | E2-1 Water usage (litres of water/3months) E2-2 Water usage index (e.g., litres of water / employee) E2-3 Policies for saving water |
| E3 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions | E3-1 CO2 emission (3 Scopes) E3-2 Policies to reduce CO2 emissions |
| E4 – Total Waste Generation | E4-1 Waste weight produced per year |
| E5 – Recycling Rate | E5-1 Waste weight recycled per year E5-2 Recycling policies |

Table 4. Core Environmental Disclosures for SMEs

A calculation method is proposed for each indicator. The methodology is designed with the understanding that most SMEs may have limited experience, training, and data pertaining to the measurement of these metrics:

E1 - Energy Consumption & Mix: To measure energy consumption, businesses should use data from their monthly electricity bills. These bills typically include kilowatt-hour (kWh) consumption. This data should be collected annually over a three-year period to observe consumption trends. Energy consumption should encompass fuel usage for company vehicles and general energy consumption.

E2 - Water Usage: Companies can monitor water usage by referring to their water bills, which typically record consumption in cubic meters. Data should be collected annually over a three-year period. To calculate water usage per employee, divide the total usage by the number of employees. It is advisable to document water-saving policies and practices.

E3 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Businesses can utilise online tools to assist in this measurement. Additionally, businesses should outline policies aimed at reducing CO2 emissions.

E4 - Waste Generation: Businesses should record the annual weight of waste generated.

E5 - Recycling Rate: This may require collaboration with recycling companies that can provide accurate measurements. Companies without such partnerships can describe their recycling procedures and practices. Quantifying recycled materials is essential for generating both quantitative and qualitative data.

The table below (Table 5) lists additional environmental indicators that should be calculated.

| Voluntary Environmental Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|---|---|
| E6 - Environmental Management System Certification | E6-1 Indicates that the SME has implemented an internationally recognised EMS, such as ISO 14001, and obtained a certification. |
| E7 - Energy Management System Certification | E7-1 Indicates that the SME has implemented an internationally recognised Energy Management System, such as ISO 50001, and obtained a certification. |
| E8 - Environmental Investments | E8-1 Represents the number of financial resources allocated by the SME towards activities, projects, or initiatives aimed at improving environmental performance and sustainability. |
| E9 – Environmental Regulatory Compliance | E9-1 Measures the SME’s adherence to relevant environmental laws, regulations, and permits applicable to its operations. The indicator can be measured by the financial penalty paid by the SME for environmental non-compliance. |

Table 5. Voluntary Environmental Disclosures for SMEs

In Table 5, we introduce more intricate environmental indicators, acknowledging that their relevance may be somewhat limited for small and very small enterprises. However, if data is available to cover the requested information, it is advisable to include it. These indicators encompass the following:

These indicators may hold varying degrees of significance for smaller businesses. For example, environmental policies and certifications are often influenced by industry requirements, customer demands, or even creditor expectations.

Companies holding certifications such as ISO 14001 or ISO 50001 should include them in their ESG reports, along with results from external audits conducted by independent auditors. Reporting on environmental compliance involves detailing the actions and procedures undertaken to align with industry-specific environmental policies.

6. Social Indicators

Continuing from the exploration of environmental indicators, the focus now shifts to societal aspects, particularly emphasising the impact of small and very small businesses on their immediate surroundings, while larger enterprises exert influence on broader segments of society, including communities, regions, and cities.

For SMEs, the key stakeholders are employees, customers, and communities affected by the enterprise's operations. However, this focus is applicable only when the impact on these stakeholders is substantial. SMEs are primarily concerned with their immediate environment, and their efforts to address social aspects tend to centre on the wellbeing of employees, customer satisfaction, and engaging with the communities they operate in.

In the context of the social pillar, companies, including very small ones, can easily measure their performance for the presented indicators. Methodologically, there are no particularly significant difficulties in doing so. Companies of all sizes can effectively track and report on these social indicators, as they pertain to aspects that are manageable and relevant to their immediate operations and stakeholders.

| Core Social Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|--|--|
| S1 - Characteristics of SME Employees | S1-1 Number of employees (3-year trend) |
| | S1-2 FT / PT ratio |
| | S1-3 Gender distribution |
| | S1-4 Nationality distribution |
| S2 - Diversity & Inclusion | S2-1 Diversity policies |
| | S2-2 Gender distribution in number and percentage at top management level amongst its employees. |
| | S2-3 Distribution of employees by age group: under 30 years old, 30–50 years old; over 50 years old. |
| | S2-4 Percentage of employees with disabilities |
| S3 - Work–Life Balance | S3-1 Percentage of employees entitled to take family-related leave |
| | S3-2 Percentage of employees that took family-related leave, and a breakdown by gender |
| | S3-3 Extra hours the employees work per year |
| | S3-4 Policies regarding keeping balance between work and personal life (on-call/standby policies) |

| | |
|---|--|
| S4 - Training and Skills Development | S4-1 Percentage of employees that participated in regular performance and career development reviews, by employee category and gender S4-2 Average number of training hours per employee, by employee category and by gender. |
| S5 – Social Protection | S5-1 Percentage of employees covered by social protection, through public programmes or through benefits offered by the SME, against loss of income due to any of the following life events: (a) sickness; (b) unemployment; (c) employment injury and resulting disability; (d) maternity leave; and (e) retirement. |

Table 6. Core Social Disclosures for SMEs

Table 6 outlines the essential social indicators for SMEs, along with proposed methodologies for calculation and recording, offering a comprehensive view of a company’s performance within the social pillar:

S1 - Characteristics of SME Employees: This indicator focuses on understanding the composition of the SME’s workforce. It includes the number of employees over a three-year span, the full-time to part-time employee ratio, gender distribution, and nationality distribution. These indicators provide valuable insights into the size and diversity of the SME’s workforce, contributing to workforce planning and diversity strategies.

S2 - Diversity & Inclusion indicators: These indicators gauge the SME’s commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment. It includes the presence of diversity policies, gender distribution at the top management level, and the distribution of employees by age group. Additionally, it measures the percentage of employees with disabilities, highlighting the SME’s efforts in promoting equal opportunities and inclusivity across various dimensions.

S3 – Work–Life Balance: This indicator focuses on the SME’s efforts to support employees in maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life. It includes the percentage of employees entitled to take family-related leave, the proportion of employees who took such leave, and their breakdown by gender. It also considers the number of extra hours employees work per year and the policies to promote work–life balance, such as on-call or standby policies.

S4 - Training and Skills Development: These indicators assess the SME’s investment in enhancing employee capabilities and career growth. It includes the percentage of employees participating in regular performance and career development reviews, broken down by employee category and gender. The av-

erage number of training hours per person, categorised by employee type and gender, highlights the SME's commitment to continuous learning and employee development.

S5 - Social Protection: This metric evaluates the extent to which the SME provides support to employees against income loss due to life events. It includes the percentage of employees covered by social protection programmes, whether through public programmes or benefits offered by the company, for events such as sickness, unemployment, employment injury, maternity leave, and retirement. This indicator reflects the extent to which the SME provides a safety net for employees.

| Voluntary Social Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|--|--|
| S6 - Employee Engagement | S6-1 Average employee length of tenure measured through employee questionnaire |
| S7 - Employee Health and Safety | S7-1 Measures taken to protect health and safety such as certifications regarding health and safety at work. |
| S8 - Customer Data Protection and Privacy | S8-1 Evaluation of SME's adherence to data protection policies |
| S9 - Community Engagement and Support | S9-1 Number of community projects S9-2 Number of volunteering efforts (hrs of employee volunteering) S9-3 Support to community development programmes |
| S10 - Employee Compensation | S10-1 Male-female pay gap S10-2 Ratio of the annual total compensation ratio of the highest paid individual to the median annual total compensation for all employees (excluding the highest-paid individual) |
| S11 - Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty | S11-1 Percentage of satisfied customers S11-2 Percentage of returning customers |

Table 7. Voluntary Social Disclosures for SMEs

Table 7 outlines voluntary social indicators for SMEs, along with proposed methodologies for calculation and analysis. These indicators provide valuable insights into various aspects of the SME's social performance:

S6 - Employee Engagement: Employee engagement measures the level of emotional connection, involvement, and commitment that employees have towards their work and the organisation. The SME conducts regular questionnaires or surveys to gather feedback from employees, assessing their job satisfaction, motivation, sense of belonging, and overall commitment to the com-

pany. A high employee engagement score reflects a positive work environment, where employees are motivated, satisfied, and contributing their best efforts.

S7 - Employee Health and Safety: This indicator focuses on the SME's efforts to protect employees' wellbeing and ensure a safe working environment. The SME can implement various health and safety measures, such as risk assessments, safety training, and emergency response procedures. It may also hold certifications indicating compliance with relevant health and safety regulations. The goal is to prevent work-related accidents, injuries, and illnesses, fostering a safe and secure work environment for all employees.

S8 - Customer Data Protection and Privacy: This indicator assesses the SME's commitment to protecting customer data and maintaining data privacy. The SME must ensure compliance with data protection policies and relevant regulations while handling customer data. Transparent communication about data collection practices and customer consent mechanisms are essential components of customer data protection and privacy. By safeguarding customer data, the SME can build trust with customers and demonstrate responsible data management practices.

S9 - Community Engagement and Support: This indicator measures the SME's involvement and contributions to the local community. The SME should actively engage with the community through social initiatives, charitable donations, volunteering efforts by employees, and partnerships with local organisations. It can also support community development programmes, such as education, environmental conservation, healthcare initiatives, and infrastructure development.

S10 - Employee Compensation: This indicator assesses the SME's approach to rewarding and retaining its employees. The SME can address pay equity by monitoring and reducing the gender pay gap, ensuring fair and equal pay for equivalent roles and performance. *Total compensation* reflects the overall remuneration and benefits provided to employees, including base salary, bonuses, incentives, and other benefits.

S11 - Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty: Customer satisfaction measures the level of satisfaction that customers have with the SME's products, services, and overall customer experience. The SME can collect feedback from customers through surveys or assessments, using a satisfaction rating scale. Customer loyalty reflects the extent to which customers prefer the SME's products or services over competitors. It is measured through customer retention rates and repeat purchases.

7. Governance Indicators

Following the exploration of social indicators, the focus now turns to governance disclosures, where companies are expected to detail their administrative, managerial, and supervisory structures, including roles, responsibilities, and expertise relevant to sustainability. Current standards lack specific criteria for evaluating knowledge and skills in sustainability matters.

Companies should begin by providing disclosures concerning their governance structures, encompassing administrative, managerial, and supervisory bodies, in their reports. Within this framework, it is essential to encompass roles, duties, expertise, and proficiencies pertinent to sustainability. It is worth noting that there are no specific criteria for the knowledge and skills pertinent to sustainability subjects.

Reports addressing sustainability matters typically aim to shed light on the leadership team, oversight personnel, and entities that wield authoritative influence, as well as on how inclusive these are.

Table 8 below outlines several fundamental indicators associated with the governance aspect of SMEs.

| Core Governance Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|---|--|
| G1 - Board Diversity and Independence | G1-1 Composition of the Board (gender, nationality, skills, expertise) G1-2 Percentage of independent directors |
| G2 - Corporate Governance Policy Adherence | G2-1 Key corporate governance policies (code of conduct /ethics, anti-corruption, internal audit, risk management, protection of whistleblowers) |

Table 8. Core Governance Indicators for SMEs.

Table 8 outlines the core governance indicators for SMEs, along with methodologies for calculation and analysis. These indicators provide valuable insights into various aspects of the SME's governance:

G1 - Board Diversity and Independence: This indicator focuses on the composition of the SME's board of directors, assessing elements such as gender representation, nationality diversity, and the range of skills and expertise among board members. This index recognises the importance of a well-rounded board that reflects a diverse array of backgrounds and competencies, contributing to effective decision-making and strategic guidance. Independent directors are those who do not have significant financial or personal relationships with the company, and the percentage of such directors provides insight into the level of

objective oversight and impartial judgment within the boardroom, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and good corporate governance practices.

G2 - Corporate Governance Policy Adherence: This index evaluates the SME's commitment to upholding corporate governance policies that serve as guiding principles for ethical behaviour, risk management, internal oversight, and transparency within the organisation. The index emphasises adherence to policies relating to code of conduct/ethics, anti-corruption, internal audit, risk management, protection of whistleblowers.

Together, these governance indices provide stakeholders with a comprehensive view of the SME's commitment to transparent and ethical governance.

| Voluntary Governance Disclosures | Calculation/Analysis |
|--|--|
| G3 - Supplier Relationship Management and Sustainability Strategy | G3-1 SME's approach to supplier relationships G3-2 Percentage of SME's suppliers adhering to environmental and social criteria / standards. |
| G4 - Performance-Linked Executive Compensation Ratio | G4-1 Percentage of an executive's total compensation that is variable and tied to performance metrics |
| G5 – Stakeholder Engagement | G5-1 Customer satisfaction G5-2 Employee satisfaction G5-3 Community engagement |

Table 9. Voluntary Governance Disclosures for SMEs

Table 9 outlines voluntary governance indicators for SMEs, along with methodologies for calculation and analysis. These indicators offer insights into various dimensions of the SME's governance practices:

G3 - Supplier Relationship Management and Sustainability Strategy: This indicator records SMEs' relationships with its network of suppliers. This index delves into the intricacies of SMEs' supplier interactions, unveiling the strategies, policies, and practices that are created to not only ensure fair conduct but to also champion sustainable procurement processes. By elaborating on its approach, an SME presents the strategy for ethical supplier relationships. In tandem, the percentage of SMEs' suppliers adhering to environmental and social criteria/standards emerges as a quantifiable reflection of SMEs' alignment with its suppliers on matters of environmental stewardship and social responsibility. This percentage encapsulates the extent to which SME's partners are committed to sustainability, ethical conduct, and responsible business practices.

G4 - Performance-Linked Executive Compensation Ratio: This indicator focuses on the alignment between an executive's total compensation and the company's performance. It calculates the percentage of an executive's compensation that is variable and linked to performance metrics such as financial targets, strategic objectives, or sustainability goals. By quantifying this linkage, the index shows the extent to which SMEs' reward executives based on their contributions to the organisation.

G5 – Stakeholder Engagement: Stakeholder engagement can shape organisational ethos. Three key indicators serve as barometers here: The *Customer satisfaction* index provides a window into the degree of contentment among its valued customers. The *Employee satisfaction* index, on the other hand, reveals the job contentment and engagement levels of its workforce. Meanwhile, the *Community engagement* score encapsulates SMEs' active involvement in local communities. These indices collectively refer to an SME's approach to stakeholder relationships.

These governance-related indices provide a comprehensive perspective on the SMEs' supplier relationships, executive compensation practices, and engagement with various stakeholders. By quantifying these aspects and providing descriptive insights, SMEs can showcase their commitment to sustainable business practices, transparency, and responsible governance.

8. Results and Discussion

The framework for ESG reports is currently vague, given that companies remain unsure of how to create ESG reports aligned with legal and regulatory requirements. The present study found significant variation in the content of the most widespread ESG reporting frameworks, including in terms of complexity. The comparison exercise carried out in this research was used to propose a new ESG reporting template.

The study also highlighted the low degree of maturity of SMEs in Greece and Cyprus regarding the preparation of ESG reports. The challenge and the importance of implementing a commonly accepted ESG reporting template is heightened by the fact SMEs represent the largest percentage of enterprises in Greece and Cyprus.

The European Commission recently announced a plan to delay the adoption of requirements for companies to provide sector-specific sustainability disclosures and for sustainability reporting from companies that are not based in EU. So, ESG reporting schemes might remain unclear for the upcoming years. Nevertheless, current

legislation makes mandatory the ESG reporting for large companies meeting at least two out of three criteria: more than 250 employees, and/or more than EUR 40M turnover, and/or more than EUR 20M total assets. Also, the CSRD affects companies based in the EU, where SMEs get a three-year extension to comply.

SMEs will thus need to fulfil their legal responsibilities in the upcoming years; in fact, the laws may become more expansive during this time. This is because reports on how businesses are performing in the ESG pillars are becoming increasingly significant for all parties involved.

The study also demonstrates that preparing ESG reports is a labour-intensive process for SMEs: At least during the first few years of operation, it necessitates the presence of qualified executives who can improve the ability of businesses to gauge their performance in the ESG pillars. Given that there are independent consultants who can create the reports, these executives do not necessarily need to be employed on a permanent basis in a corporation.

Another important result that emerges from this study is the fact that SMEs should collect the required data for the calculation of ESG indicators on a long-term basis. For this reason, this template is also accompanied by a guide in a spreadsheet, where the required data that companies need to calculate ESG indicators is analysed. It is important that this data is collected on a longitudinal basis and for at least three years to provide a comparative picture to the consumers of the reports.

The study's focus on Greece and Cyprus highlights the specific challenges and practices of SMEs operating within these regions, particularly in aligning with local ESG reporting standards and sustainability expectations. While this regional focus may limit the generalisability of the findings, it underscores the broader lesson that SMEs, regardless of geography, must tailor their ESG practices to the unique demands of their operating environments. By emphasising the importance of consistent and reliable data, the study provides insights that transcend national boundaries, offering a framework for SMEs worldwide to enhance transparency and credibility in their sustainability disclosures.

9. Future Research

Future research efforts focused on ESG reporting should emphasise practical implications that enhance reporting effectiveness at a reasonable cost for businesses. Particularly, there is a need for research that explores the practical application of ESG reporting templates, evaluating the associated costs, challenges, and overall effective-

ness for SMEs. Conducting comparative studies across additional EU countries can broaden the understanding and applicability of these templates.

Furthermore, EFRAG's publication of a draft set of voluntary sustainability reporting standards for non-listed SMEs (VSME)³⁵ presents a compelling avenue for investigation. Exploring these standards alongside this paper's proposed reporting template could provide valuable insights into enhancing sustainability reporting practices among SMEs.

Another potential area for future research involves implementing the proposed ESG reporting template in SMEs to assess its practicality, identify barriers, and evaluate its effectiveness. This research could provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by SMEs in adopting and implementing structured ESG reporting frameworks, shedding light on practical adjustments needed for successful integration.

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³⁵ European Financial Advisory Group, *Voluntary reporting standard for SMEs (VSME)* available at <https://www.efrag.org/en/projects/voluntary-reporting-standard-for-smes-vsme/concluded> (last access date 12/2024).

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Dance Genealogy: Tracing the Unarchived Epistemology of Practice

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Abstract

The epistemology of dance, namely, how dance is understood and the circumstances through which it is utilised and re-enforced as knowledge-making, is paramount to the development of dance and its history. I am not concerned about defining what dance is—that is separate from the main discussion of this article; rather, I address the way and the conditions in which it is captured, archived, transmitted, and re-used. A dance genealogy can be synthesised by examining one’s autoethnographic dance archive, including unarchived content. Applying dance genealogy to trace the historiographic and ethnographic lines of thought about matters pertaining to dance and performance is a crucial requirement for further study and exploration. In this article, I discuss an excerpt of my autoethnographic dance-based journey and piece together the experiences I collected, as well as the practices and knowledge that shaped my dance genealogy. Using my background helps form a point of reference for further critical analysis. It offers a method of combining research on the performativity of dance, as experienced from the practitioner’s and archive user’s perspective, and the liveness of dance through reflecting on experiential knowledge. This creates another relationship of critical analysis between the epistemology of the (dance) practitioner and their genealogy so as to open up a post-structural methodological approach to inscribing cultural and social history.

Keywords: dance genealogy; memory; embodied practice; embodied archive; autoethnography

1. Memory as material and process

The consideration to piece together my ‘self-archive’ as a standpoint, like a mnemonic device with a set of ‘hypomnemata’—an anthology of work and life experiences and events, akin to journaling or memo-writing—first arose at the beginning of my

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doctoral research (2017–2021) as a Cotutelle PhD Researcher at Coventry University in the UK and Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia. I looked to establish an autoethnographic worldview as a dance practitioner and to value learning by ‘osmosis’, in other words, the practice-based knowledge I had accumulated over the years. Thinking of the archive in this way enhances the provenance of the raw material of one’s artistic oeuvre and the intrapersonal relationship of the material with one’s sense of selfhood and how this is identifiable in an artist’s work, profile, and archive.

Hypomnema is a type of journaling that was popular in ancient Greece. Foucault highlights that Plato refers to *hypomnemata* in his *Phaedrus* dialogue (ca. 400 BC), which was a type of notebook, a copybook, and a trend during a period in which writing was considered ‘a material support for memory’.² Foucault refers to *hypomnemata* as a technology of the ‘self’, in which, during ancient Greek times, the practice of writing about the ‘self’ to increase communication with oneself to understand what the ‘self’ is; as a collective ‘self’ embedded in the sense of the ‘self’ as an individual. It was a new technology in those days since many philosophers moved from oral transmission to the written record as the embodiment of memory and the transmission of words, history, and literature. *Hypomnemata* are also accounts, registers, notebooks, and a sort of scrapbook which serves as memoranda:

Their use as books of life, guides for conduct, seems to have become a current thing among a whole cultivated public. Into them one entered quotations, fragments of works, examples, and actions to which one had been witness or of which one had read the account, reflections or reasonings which one had heard or which had come to mind. They constitute a material memory of things read, heard or thought, thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation. They also formed a raw material for the writing of more systematic treatises in which were given arguments and means by which to struggle against some defect [...] or to overcome some difficult circumstance.³

I drew on my ‘memory’ as a tool and my ‘memory’ as a dancer or, in the context of *hypomnemata*, my ‘material memory’ to develop each piece of writing, like this article. Moreover, piecing together a type of dance genealogy, like a family tree, gave

² M. Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress: From Michel Foucault – Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics”, *The Foucault Reader: An introduction to Foucault’s thought*, London: Penguin Books, [1984] 1991, pp. 363.

³ M. Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress: From Michel Foucault – Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics”, *The Foucault Reader: An introduction to Foucault’s thought*, London: Penguin Books, [1984] 1991, pp. 364-365.

me an overview of my autoethnographic dance practice trajectory and revealed ideas, themes, and concepts related to my practice, ethnographic background, cultural standpoint, and research interests that seem to continue to perform and transform according to the topic that I address.

In other social and cultural contexts, dance and the aspect of embodiment have offered invaluable methods of being in the world as a ‘body specialist’; with this, I mean that I trained my body through my dance and somatics-based training, and I gained a vast amount of knowledge through experience. To some extent, this knowledge is stored or archived in the body as an organism and is also associated with how my body and myself relate to the environments within which I (we) move and work. Drawing on pre-Socratic philosophy and ancient Greek poetry and literature, in which I was educated at school while growing up in Cyprus, I collected a set of concepts about the self, the body, and time, which I carry with me in life. I learnt that during the 5th and 6th centuries BC, philosophers and historians viewed the self and the body as a collective substance and essence, both material and immaterial and part of everything and nothing. These concepts and theorisations stem from thinking that predates Western philosophy. Some pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Heraclitus, argued that all things are in a state of constant change, which he named ‘becoming’.⁴ He is known for claiming ‘Τὰ πάντα ρεῖ’ (Ta panta rhei)—‘all flows’ and ‘you cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you. It scatters, and it gathers; it advances and retires’ (Heraclitus in Laertius 300 BC).⁵

Heraclitus argued that all is changing; therefore, it is impossible to identify what is real because constant change is what is ultimately real, which can be a problem for ‘being’ in the world. However, Heraclitus did argue that the only constant was the *logos*, which can mean several things in Greek. *Logos*, in this context, refers to a strategy or a plan but can also mean reason. For Heraclitus, *logos* was a strategy to find and form structure through differentiation by identifying commonalities in differences, positioning and placing material and immaterial things, and making sense by inventing a formula. I borrow Heraclitus’ concept of ‘becoming’ as a way of

⁴ P. Pecorino. An Introduction to Philosophy: An online text book. Introduction to Philosophy by Philip A. Pecorino (see references for more details)

⁵ The references in these paragraphs are based on original Greek source material compiled by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Zurich: Weidmann, 1985). Much of the biographical information on the pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Heraclitus, comes from Diogenes Laertius (3rd century BCE), *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, available in various translations. <https://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/class/110/1-presocratics.htm>.

viewing matter/material⁶ as constantly transforming and searching for a structure or form that organically develops from the material itself.

Likewise, I connect Foucault's notion of the technology of the 'self', whether collective or individual and offer a notion of the 'body/self' as a reference in my analysis; I consider that to be a type of arena, a place, a location where events take place. Similarly, Tim Ingold writes about understanding the 'self' as a locus, as he refers to how the Ojibwe people refer to the self as a location that is not necessarily inside or outside, or even anywhere specific. So, 'in short the self, as a locus of ideas, plans, memories and feelings, seems to exist as a substantive entity, quite independently of where it is and what it does'.⁷ The 'body/self' is a place where events happen, and its *hypomnemata* are the archived 'material memory' of its becoming.

As a dancer, one becomes a 'body specialist' who is well-versed in embodied knowledge, collecting information and moulding it in one's movement repertoire and body memory, as well as understanding how to transmit this knowledge in various contexts. In order to acquire this dance knowledge, one needs to travel, significantly if one has grown up on a small island with insufficient access to knowledge of the arts. I travelled for dance knowledge based on practice and acquired it through 'enskilment' and 'wayfaring'. Here, I am referring to Ingold's concept of 'enskilment' to emphasise that the acquisition of skills in dance requires, as he suggests, the embodiment of skills, 'capacities of awareness and response environmentally situated agents'.⁸ Then, 'wayfaring' highlights the element of journeying, literally moving through and testing concepts by practising these physically and processing information through perception-in-action as a way of moving through and absorbing content as 'a sense of knowledge-making, which is equally knowledge-growing'.⁹ Through 'wayfaring', I developed and refined practice-based skills and came across many interesting tensions between the practice of dance, the archive, and the materiality of dance content. Throughout my practice and research, I have been interested in find-

⁶ This is a reference to how Laurence Louppe refers to dance content in her book *Poetics of Contemporary Dance* (2010) and her suggestion for discussing the matter of dance and the production of dance-based content, which she refers to as matter/material produced by an author (or collectively).

⁷ T. Ingold. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skills*, Routledge: London, UK, 2000, p.103.

⁸ T. Ingold. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skills*, Routledge: London, UK, 2000, p.5.

⁹ T. Ingold. "Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 16, *Making knowledge*, pp. S121-S139. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4066068>, 2010, p.122

ing ways and words to name what I do as a dance practitioner, whether in the context of creating and producing dance, teaching dance, and applying contemporary dance as a pedagogical approach. This demanded a tentative approach to the translation of experiences and movement practices into written texts.

To weave the various themes and ‘matters’ of my research, I draw upon ancient Greek mythical practices and metaphors such as the Titaness of Memory and Time, Mnemosyne and her daughters, the Muses. According to Greek Mythology, Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (music), Erato (lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (hymns), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy), and Urania (astronomy) were the Muses and keepers of the arts and sciences who shared one mind. In the following digital copy of a photograph of a mosaic of the Titaness (Titan Goddess) (Figure 1), Mnemosyne (Memory) places her hand on the back of a man’s head, symbolically aiding his memory. This also recalls my upbringing and high school education in Cyprus, in which emphasis was given to the island’s connection with ancient Greek linguistic and philosophical traces. According to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, kings and poets received their powers from Mnemosyne and the Muses, thus controlling and accessing memory, knowledge, oral history, and oral tradition, which predated written literature. Mnemosyne was also one of the names of the five rivers at the entrance of the Underworld; it was known as the river of Memory from which souls would drink in order to remember. Otherwise, souls would drink from the river Lethe (forgetfulness) to forget (delete all their life’s content) before the migration of their souls to the afterlife. Once the souls of mortals arrived in the Underworld, they had to choose to drink from Mnemosyne and remember all their pains and the lessons learnt from their life or drink from Lethe and forget all they had experienced and knew. The souls that drank from the river of Mnemosyne in Hades’ Underworld were those who could migrate to the Elysian Fields.¹⁰ This idea of Memory, being accessed as water from a river, inspired me to consider dance as a fluid—moving content that transforms into something liquid, solid (ice), and vapor (gas).

Plato offers another way to consider the embodiment of memory when he references Socrates in *Theaetetus* 191c (trans. Fowler), referring to the Titaness:

Can he [man] learn one thing after another? . . . Please assume, then, for the sake of argument, that there is in our souls a block of wax, in one case larger, in another smaller, in one case the wax is purer, in another more impure and

¹⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony* (trans. Evelyn-White). 915 ff. [online] available from <www.theoi.com> [20 July 2018], ca. 800-700 B.C.



*(Figure 1.) 'Antioch, House of Mnemosyne' (2nd – 3rd century AD).
An image of a Mosaic depicting Mnemosyne.*

harder, in some cases softer, and in some of proper quality . . . Let us, then, say that this is the gift of Mnemosyne (Memory), the mother of the Mousai (Muses), and that whenever we wish to remember anything we see or hear or think of in our own minds, we hold this wax under the perceptions and thoughts and imprint them upon it, just as we make impressions from seal rings; and whatever is imprinted we remember and know as long as its image lasts, but whatever is rubbed out or cannot be imprinted we forget and do not know.¹¹

Many authors, historians, and poets of the ancient world called upon the Titaness to tap into the river of Memory to access ideas, thoughts, reason, and knowledge, and the Muses' gifts of creativity, poetry, theatre history, music, astronomy, and dance. However, Mnemosyne's association with reason and knowledge disappeared due to the establishment of the written word and literature occupying more cultural space. Nevertheless, she is occasionally remembered as the goddess of oral tradition and

¹¹ Plato, Theaetetus (trans. Fowler) Greek Philosophy C4th B.C. 191c [online] available from <<http://www.theoi.com/Titan/TitanisMnemosyne.html>> [20 July 2018], 400 B.C.

intangible knowledge. This mythical story provides a helpful entry point for writing about dance because it mirrors how dance has shifted its place in the archive.

I also invite the reader to consider ‘the body of the archive’ as a somatic matter/material that continually changes. Like the block of wax in the above quote, Plato references Socrates’ description of the gift of Mnemosyne (memory). Combining pre-Socratic and Socratic notions of matter/material forming and transforming, I suggest that ‘the body of the archive’ of dance transforms itself through in-depth embodied engagement with the archived material, just as our experiences constantly shape our memories according to our current standpoint. In the same vein, a dance performance continues to perform and emit further impressions and narratives as we recall it.

Many memories are ignited throughout my research and when engaging in any form of dance research, such as visiting different archives, interviewing dance practitioners, choreographers, dancers, and performers, and looking at artefacts. Memories of conversations, moments of dance improvisations and sketches I kept in unsorted files for years resurfaced and took on a whole new meaning. Originally kept to serve as evidence for funding bodies who have sponsored or otherwise supported my work, the material contributed to developing a portfolio. I also kept them for myself as souvenirs, memorabilia, and as part of experimental journaling and creating memory boxes that one day would become a body of my work and dance genealogy. Images, such as those in the following pages, which I kept stored away, evoke a new sense of meaning to my practice and perception of archiving dance and become an inventory of resources for further development.

Many encounters and collections of information through my dance practice along the way kept pointing in the direction of dance transmission, dance documentation, capturing dance, and dance archiving. Collecting and holding on to these materials was necessary to make my practice tangible and serve as an archive to draw upon. In addition, the drive to constantly collect the very few traces (ephemera), which are both evidence and memorabilia of the act of dancing, helped me identify a need for access and connection to dance content in general, especially in Cyprus. Whether they are the traces of my dance practice or another dancer’s or choreographer’s, the work we produce and the creative strategies we synthesise to compose and transmit this material and knowledge are part of a cultural tapestry and dance heritage that is constantly moving and always on the verge of disappearing.

Considering disappearance as fluidity and plasticity as an act of transformation, knowledge is remembrance, and memory is embodied knowledge. In this article, I pay tribute to my formative years as a dancer in a Greek-speaking environment in Cyprus. I evoke Mnemosyne's spirit and invite her daughter Terpsichore and her sisters to don their sneakers¹² in exploring the ephemeral dance matters across the archives of dance history, present, and future, as I trace my dance genealogy journey.

2. Dance Genealogy

Performance scholar Diana Taylor advocates for performance as a means of preserving and sharing local cultural knowledge that also gives insight into a broader global context.¹³ Through my practice as a performer, creator, and producer of work, I have often found myself needing content—seeking sources or resources of existing practice for an idea I was developing or for proposing work and developing interdisciplinary dialogues for the creation and production of work. Along these lines, creating a repository of works with the digital means we possess today is imperative. Furthermore, digital preservation scholar Laura Molloy encourages the next step—how to store and share this knowledge further by providing practitioners, especially those outside of institutions, with the tools and expertise to digitally preserve and curate their performance work.¹⁴ As a process of tapping into my river of Memory (inspired by Hesiod's poetic description in *Theogony*), my dance training background and how I accessed knowledge about dance and dance history serve as a starting point to map out one's dance genealogy. I started by writing down the people, techniques, and practices learnt through body-to-body transmission in dance classes, workshops, pixelated images in books and magazines and videos of dance performances, and some rare performances in Cyprus and Greece.

In this context, it is essential to mention that I was born and raised in Cyprus, a land with thousands of years of history. Cyprus only became an officially recognised country in 1960. In 1977, it reverted to half a recognised Republic and, in 2004, it be-

¹² This is a reference to Sally Banes's book *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (1987), in which she documents the history and development of postmodern dance, its artists, performance works, and trends of the sub and popular culture produced by this movement.

¹³ Taylor, D., *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 2003.

¹⁴ Molloy, L., 'Digital curation skills in the performing arts – an investigation of practitioner awareness and knowledge of digital object management and preservation', *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* [online] 10(1), 7-20, DOI: 10.1080/14794713.2014.912496, 2014.

came part of the European Union. A land on which its people speak a 2,500-year-old vernacular Arcadocypriot Greek, which has been orally transmitted for centuries and is still spoken, but Greek and Turkish are its officially recognised languages. Cyprus has a wealthy and complex intangible cultural heritage that appears to be fragmented in historical outputs in different places globally, in museums, and archives, according to ongoing colonial empires that settled on the island throughout history. So, I grew up in a country with hardly any archived history of its own but with many adopted post-colonial tendencies.

Much of Cypriot history relies on storytelling, family photographs, and many archaeological digs. Growing up in Cyprus in the 1980s and 1990s, seeing a dance performance, especially a contemporary one was rare. In those days, the only two indoor theatres on the island hardly hosted any dance performances. The small number of dance performances were guest appearances from a representative ensemble of a Bolshoi ballet performance group, a tour of Flamenco dancers, many ancient Greek tragedies and comedies (it was a tradition to perform these in outdoor amphitheatres in summer), several folk dance festivals and a small number of dance performances from local dance practitioners who had just arrived from studying dance abroad (mainly in the UK and some in Greece, Germany and Canada).

The first two dance companies producing contemporary or modern dance in Cyprus were formed in the mid-1990s—Echo Arts and Corpus Animus—and I had the privilege to dance with the latter. Unfortunately, the only footage I had access to regarding contemporary dance was from VHS tapes that my dance teacher, Natasa Georgiou, shared with us as part of our afternoon modern dance class in the mid-1990s, for which I had to travel three hours to another town and back to take the class. However, I remember watching Mats Ek's reworked version of *Giselle* (1982) and Ultima Vez's *La Mentira* (1992), a dance video by Wim Vandekeybus and Walter Verdin. I still have vivid images of these recorded dance performances I had seen as a teenager. I was so impressed by them that I was curious to know more about this type of dancing and how bodies could move and dance like this. I was also lucky to have viewed a live performance with Steve Paxton in Cyprus in 1997, aged 17, in the context of the first Mediterranean Dance and Disability Program Extended Mobility (1997–2000). I still remember how curious I grew about all matters pertaining to dance, movement, and the body. There was no internet then, so my investigation into studying dance relied heavily on body-to-body transmission from taking classes with teachers in Cyprus who had taken courses with specialists trained abroad.

My undergraduate dance education—in Athens at Rallou Manou Professional Dance School—and practice were based on classical ballet, modern dance technique, rhythm and dance composition, dance improvisation, Greek dance drama (Rallou Manou), contemporary dance techniques, and choreographic methods closely related to European and American dance lineages.¹⁵ As a dancer, I learnt to store, embody, and apply these techniques according to the demands and vision of each choreographer regarding each dance work, and this varied with each dance company or project. After working as a dancer in Cyprus, I moved to Germany, learnt the language, delved into teaching ballet and contemporary dance to children and young adults, and began developing workshops on dance composition and dance improvisation for adults. As a dance educator in Germany, I tried to find ways to break down all this stored and embodied knowledge in order to communicate it and offer a foundation for others to build on.

Beyond merely documenting one's ethnographic background and dance education, it is advantageous to employ a tailored set of inquiries aimed at gathering comprehensive data regarding diverse practices, performance experiences, and professional connections. Insights can thus emerge concerning collaborative endeavours and knowledge-sharing dynamics alongside the immersion in specific techniques or practices fostered within particular places, venues, and institutions. Employing a visual representation, such as a mapped inventory, enables the delineation and contextualisation of pivotal elements including individuals, venues, concepts, narratives, and milestones, which can be further organised chronologically or thematically. In the following sections, I exemplify this approach by elaborating on two distinct periods of my own dance genealogy, focusing on practice-based improvisation experiences and the resulting thematic outcomes. Furthermore, I delineate the research-oriented aspects, outlining the conceptual framework and empirical findings derived from these endeavours.

As a dance practitioner between 2005 and 2010, I often worked with an art professor, Wolfgang Mannebach (b. 1959), from the European Academy of Arts in Trier.

¹⁵ The specific techniques, artists and methods associated to the dance education I have been trained and educated in include: classical ballet (RAD – Royal Academy of Dance and Vaganova method), modern dance techniques (Graham and Limón technique), rhythm and dance (Delsarte, Dalcroze and Laban system), dance improvisation (stemming from early 20th century Isadora Duncan, Eva Palmer-Sikelianos and ancient Greek drama influences), Greek dance drama (Rallou Manou), and contemporary dance techniques (Contact Improvisation form of dancing, Release technique and dance composition - Doris Humphrey) closely related to European and American dance lineages.

Mannebach conducted *Tanzmalerei*¹⁶ workshops throughout Germany, and I was engaged as a dancing model for his workshops. Directly translated, *Tanzmalerei* stands for ‘dance drawing’ or ‘drawing dance’. Mannebach would refer to his practice and drawing method as *Der Tanz auf dem Papier* (dance on paper) or *Bleistiftmusik* (pencil music) due to the sound of pencil or any other writing tool on paper. As a dancing model, I would engage with movement, stillness, and improvisation with or without music. On some occasions, with live music, the painters would capture the ‘dance on paper’ and improvise with the ‘pencil music’.

On rare occasions when the workshops took place as a drawing dance residency or retreat for a series of days, a musician and two dancers performed for the workshop participants. The dancing artists and musical companions would interact either all together or through the medium of their art practice in a lengthy improvisational *pas de deux* or *pas de trois* for days. The workshop participants would capture and record the *Tanzmalerei* in their own way, using whatever painting material they applied on paper or canvas. The drawings were then displayed, discussions followed, and another round of improvisation in dance and drawing would follow until lunch or dinner time intervals. This was similar to the dance ensembles of the *Ausdruckstanz* era. That expression, through movement and the body as a means to communicate emotions free from balletic restrictions, was inherently elemental in the creative process. Some drawings were preserved by spraying a fixative type to keep the paint from dripping or the chalk from disappearing, while others were thrown away. I kept some that would be otherwise thrown away. This habit reflects my ongoing interest in dance documentation—collecting traces and creating archives or memory banks to recollect and (re)use as a type of databank.

In *Tanzmalerei*, I was not concerned with a ‘signature practice’¹⁷ as an improviser, but rather with exploring the ability of the dancer’s body to become a vessel for expression. The rhythm of the communication between dancer and painter generated the drawing impetus, and the dance was captured through the imprints of drawing, putting pen or brush or chalk to paper. Similarly, my experience and practice in fa-

¹⁶ *Tanzmalerei* is a word often used by Wolfgang Mannebach to mean draw dance. Mannebach’s website with the same name (<https://tanzmalerei.jimdo.com/>) describes his method and explains his other two concepts of dance drawing called *Der Tanz auf dem Papier* (dance on paper) and *Bleistiftmusik* <https://tanzmalerei.jimdo.com/das-projekt-bleistiftmusik/>.

¹⁷ ‘Signature practice’ is a common term in dance scholarship and dance artistry. Promoted by dance theorist Susan Melrose, it refers to a type of trademark practice of a choreographer encompassing all the dance influences that a choreographer may have learned, collected, and embodied; it includes what makes their body of work and style identifiable. Source: <https://www.sfmelrose.org.uk/jottings/> (Melrose 2009)



(Figure 2.) Another dancer and me dancing at the Bosener Mühle Tanzmalerei workshop in spring 2007, sketched by workshop participant and painter Renate Gehrke.

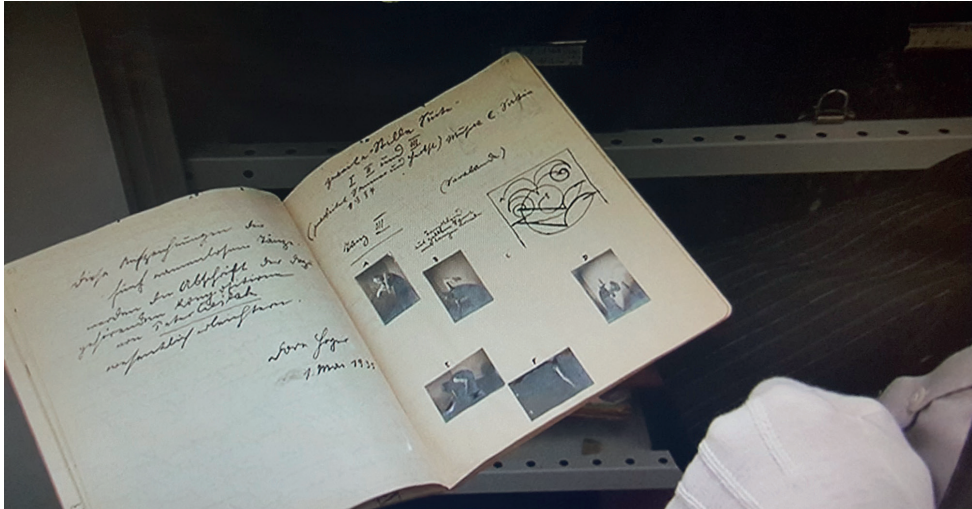
Facilitating workshops felt like an organic approach to developing an environment for learning and exploration. Additionally, investigating concepts, ideas and content in a workshop that requires embodied inquiry offers a researcher like myself the potential to investigate through somatic engagement. This is familiar and reinforces my approach to generating knowledge through my dance practice. Moreover, facilitating workshops creates an environment for learning, analysing, and discussing within the



(Figure 3.) Drawing of my dance improvisation by Tanzmalerei workshop participants, Ansbach, Germany, 2006.

context of a group through body-to-body transmission, thus sharing knowledge and practices and allowing new, unexpected ideas and narratives to form.

Mannebach focused on facilitating a sense of creative flow for the painters, the dancer, and the musician by using rhythmical impulses, words, poems, and, now and then, playing with pauses. He would request from the painters that they pass around a piece of paper where they would draw the dance, one painter after another, capturing the dancer moving in space, and he would give this to the dancer as a gift (Figure 4). The influence of expressionist dance and dance theorist and choreographer Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) would often be mentioned in Mannebach's workshop, who also had great admiration for dancers and choreographers such as Dore Hoyer (1911–1967) (a page from her notebook is presented in Figure 5). Hoyer was a student of Mary Wigman (1886–1973) and Gret Palucca (1902–1993), and Mannebach often mentioned that my way of moving reminded him of *Ausdruckstanz* dancers. It was interesting that although I was not trained in *Ausdruckstanz*, and it was never taught as such during my early dance studies, these expressionist aesthetics had bled into my dance practice through various other dance techniques I had been exposed to, such as Graham and Limon dance techniques, as well as rhythm and dance analysis. Such drawings are part of the sparse documentation of my dance improvisation sessions.



(Figure 4.) An excerpt from Dore Hoyer's diary taken from a snapshot of *Mind Your Step: Fünf Tanzarchiven auf der Spur* (2009), a documentary about the trails and traces of five German dance archives. Produced by Ulrich Scholz and the Deutsche Tanzfilminstitut Bremen, and published by Tanz Plan Deutschland. The item can be found in the Tanzarchiv Leipzig special collections, Albertina Library, University of Leipzig, Germany.

There are three points that are relevant to my own dance genealogy in this short section: 1) Mannebach referenced *Ausdruckstanz* as an art form in the context of visual arts workshops; 2) I gained experience of this through references during my undergraduate studies, and as a moving model, and through this experience, I became curious about how dance is transmitted and by which means and media it can be made tangible; and 3) it prompted me to ask how a dance lineage or genealogy of dance can be identified. In other words, what was it that Mannebach saw in my movement, which reminded him of Hoyer's dancing, a dancer he had never seen dancing live and a choreographer I had never heard of until then? Similarly, the poet William Butler Yeats asks: 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' in his poem *Among School Children* (1933). It is interesting how Yeats, as a contemporary of *Ausdruckstanz* dancers, hints towards the idea of not distinguishing the dancer from the dance, which helps respond to the question about a particular style of dancing that can be identifiable in another dancer decades later. It also highlights that the questions about distinguishing the artist from the artwork are not new. The analysis of his poem and that particular quote have been interpreted in various ways. Still, in the context of this article and the theme of dance genealogy and preservation, it high-

lights how intricate the connection is between the dance artist and the dance work and how this amplifies the challenge of documenting and preserving this art form. In hindsight, however, it also reflects the nuanced and intelligible set of aesthetics and bodily sculpting developed by dance practitioners and choreographers into a dance style and how other artists can identify these in allied fields of study and art practices.

Mannebach introduced me to Renate Gehrke (b. 1948), a visual artist and frequent workshop participant whom I had encountered in these workshops. Gehrke is one of Laban's grandchildren. She and Mannebach suggested that the dance archive in Leipzig was worth a visit due to its collection of Laban and Wigman's legacies, other choreographers' works, and their 'dance on paper' traces. I grew curious about the traces that dance leaves behind and how we transmit dance, and I wanted to know more about dance documentation and archiving. The intriguing challenge of transmitting dance and developing my dance practice in more depth led to my post-graduate studies (2009–2011).¹⁸

During my MA research project, 'Communicating Choreography: Managing and Fine-tuning Creative Process' (2012), I excavated how dance practitioners and choreographers use their practice to transmit dance. My curiosity was born out of frustration while working in creative processes and encountering communication hindrances in group settings. I felt the need to improve and enhance how dance was communicated within the parameters of production¹⁹ of performing arts-related works and events. This led me to investigate further how dance and choreography can

¹⁸ I learnt, studied, and collected practices from in-person workshops, artistic research laboratories, and courses and sessions on choreographic practices and methods from a variety of practitioners such as: Yuval Pick, Crystal Pite, Deborah Hay, Mary Overlie, Rob Hayden, Bruno Caverna, William Forsythe, Kurt Koegel, Trude Cone, Ka Rustler, Gabriela Staiger, Lance Gries, Dieter Heitkamp, Jean-Guillame Weiss, Gill Clarke, and Myriam Gourfink, amongst others. I also explored dramaturgical methods related to dance making and dance composition from dance scholars Freya Vass-Rhee, Petra Sabisch, Ana Vujanovic, and dramaturge Guy Cools.

¹⁹ The parameters of production are the circumstances and conditions under which we can identify the social and cultural parameters of creating dance. These modes of production were discussed in workshops and a series of talks on referenced publications, and were delivered through conceptual games and strategy building. The social and cultural backdrop of these games drew on concepts of cultural capital, cinematic obstructions, everybody's toolbox, walking theory, and valorisation of the ways in which we create and produce work. This segmentation model of the modes of production was delivered and shared in the context of Motion Bank Workshops No.1 (2012). Source: <http://motionbank.org/en/event/motion-bank-workshop-no1.html>. In this video, Petra Sabisch and Ana Vujanovic briefly summarise what was addressed in the workshop Everybody's and Walking Theory and propose Modes of Production: Games and Discussions. The link and further details can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQSj7ZA-od4>

operate as a strategy in broader social and cultural contexts, and then later, where all this knowledge ends up, for whom, and how it can be accessed.

At this point, I was deeply interested in dance history, how choreographers transmit dance, and how they communicate choreography throughout a creative process. For my MA research project,²⁰ I followed a qualitative data collection methodology in which participant observation and interviews were central. I conducted a series of interviews with choreographers Gabriele Staiger and Lance Gries, and communication specialist Kirsten Brühl. I found that through interviewing and discussing methodologies or methods of dance transmission with Staiger and Gries, I learnt more about their dance genealogy and their autoethnographic stories and how this information fed into their creative practice and eventually influenced their creative material. I could better understand and then distil their composition or movement language method, which made it easier to embody and transmit them further. My interview with Brühl gave me insight into effective communication strategies and ways of transmission in various contexts, which proved necessary for creative practice and performance production.

Staiger's choreographic methodology, which I recorded in my thesis, drew heavily on Laban Movement Analysis (LMA).²¹ Reflecting on Staiger's methodology, I can also detect a deconstructivist approach to how she diffracted her dance-making process with her dancers and utilised Laban's methodology in fine-tuning the communication of her concepts. As a system of analysis, LMA investigates movement by describing with precision what actions are taking place, where in space they are

²⁰ 'Communicating Choreography: Managing and fine-tuning creative process' (2012) was the title of my MA thesis where I investigated different ways in which choreography can be communicated. My data collection entailed interviewing two choreographers, a communication specialist, documentation from attending several dance workshops and working as a choreographic assistant during my placement opportunities. Moreover, within the framework of practice as research modules at the University of Music and Performing Arts, I was able to collect more data through participant observations in several workshops and research projects in the context of the Motionbank Project at Frankfurt Lab. I collected the methods applied by the dance practitioners and explored the distillation of these methods, along with various ways of documenting them; I presented a selection of methods and tools to support effective communication within creative processes (Charalambous 2012)

²¹ Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a method for describing, visualising, interpreting, and documenting varieties of human movement. Related to Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis, the method uses a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating contributions from anatomy, kinesiology, psychology, Labanotation, and many other fields. It is a type of Laban Movement Study, originating from the work of Rudolf Laban, developed and extended by Lisa Ullmann, Irmgard Bartenieff, Warren Lamb, and many others. (Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies 2021). Source: <https://labaninstitute.org/>

happening, with how much effort, all in relation to the other bodies in space. The descriptions and action of ‘writing it down’ can assist in making the performance of the movement more tangible. It is a helpful way of recording movement with words, signs, or symbols used in Labanotation, notes in a music score, or words placed in a sentence. Movement (inevitably a vague term) thus becomes disentangled, moment by moment, into smaller actions orchestrated to form a dance sequence with a calculated set of codes. Labanotation and related ways of scoring dance can be used for analysis and re-enactment. However, writing and reading Labanotation requires specialist training.

During this period of my postgraduate studies, I was lucky to witness and be part of several projects that focused on dance documentation. One was Dance Plan Germany,²² a project that traced contemporary dance technique lineages and assembled them in a large-scale publication (book, DVD, and web platform). Additionally, I was involved in initiatives and projects that attempted to link resources such as dance archives, dance documentation projects, and publications on contemporary dance.²³ Consequently, through my dance education, I absorbed and embodied a variety of movement styles and techniques, some of which were influenced by *Ausdruckstanz*²⁴ and modern dance traditions. I had heard of *Ausdruckstanz* through the ‘History of

²² Dance Plan Germany (*Tanzplan Deutschland*) was a project funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation from 2005 to 2010 to develop sustainable dance measures. The goal was to comprehensively and systematically strengthen the field of dance. Dance Plan Germany promoted artists and young talent, dance training, cultural education, and the cultural heritage of dance. Source: https://www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/en/programmes_projects/theatre_and_movement/detail/tanzplan_deutschland.html

²³ Digital Dance Atlas aimed to collect dance archives and other dance resources from across the globe. A number of projects were launched between 2009 and 2011, amongst them MotionBank and RePlay. A list of these projects can be found on the Dance Plan Germany website (mentioned in the previous footnote) and in an editorial by dance scholars Scott deLahunta and Sarah Whatley that can be found at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1386/padm.9.1.3_2.

²⁴ *Ausdruckstanz* means expressive dance in German. It is a dance style and methodology of dance practice and/or choreography that combines various choreographic languages, with themes closely related to expressionism. According to Susan Manning, *Ausdruckstanz* artists often used the definitions ‘new’, ‘artistic’, ‘modern’, and ‘rhythmic’; they brought to the fore the free-moving, almost naked body (Manning 2007). *Ausdruckstanz* was defined as ‘German dance’ because of artists’ international tours and to differentiate it from other modern dance styles at the time. During the Second World War, *Ausdruckstanz* was used as a national and racist tool and was therefore misunderstood by the rest of the Western world. It was wrongly translated into ‘expressionist dance’ in other European countries and further developed as *Tanztheater* (dance theatre) in West Germany. It was taught in institutions under different names or within other practices. An interest in *Ausdruckstanz* resurfaced in the 1970s through publications on Mary Wigman, one of them by Walter Sorell (1973) and an exhibition on Laban at the *TanzArchiv Leipzig* (Franco 2007).

Dance' module during my studies in Athens. It was mandatory to learn and devise dances through training rhythm and dance practices from European and American genealogies of dance, for which we were also assessed. To develop a cohesive portfolio of my own ethnographic mapping of my dance background, I sought to eventually create a dance family tree, a mesh of genealogies branching out and connecting with my interest in documenting, tracing, and tracking, so that I could fully grasp these lineages and how they correlate, and what ideas or concepts they may carry and relate to.

However, I always felt the way dance was transmitted, captured, and codified within the dance studies framework in higher education was insufficient, and I observed that there was an absence of any discourse relating to this in Cyprus. Through my doctoral research (2017–2021) and engagement with dance archive content, I had the opportunity to reflect on my autoethnographic journey and dance training development. To retrospectively contextualise my dance genealogical journey, I pieced together my dance practice lineage and body of knowledge. I examined the many items I collected over 25 years of dancing: images, drawings, ephemera, photographs, and video recordings became an informal mini archive. Through this process, I gained a broader perspective on my dance practice, as well as the styles, aesthetics, and concepts that informed my practice. Also, the various narratives that inspired my approaches and the findings came through reflecting on and reconsidering the relationships between situations and narratives in one's archive and, in a broader sense, in a dance archive.

3. Conclusion

Piecing together one's practice-based background and dance genealogy helps to utilise memory and position one's work and research. It gives a rationale for the necessity of embodied enquiry while using one's training and excavating existing practices and knowledge. The last two decades have seen increasing discourse on 20th century dance and performance in Cyprus, although the topic remains sparse and unarchived. It is known through discussions and talks with practitioners. Furthermore, there has been ongoing development of contemporary dance and performance activity over the last two decades. This leads me to a question how we preserve and archive this development of cultural growth in Cyprus other than through our collective and subjective mnemonic devices.

However, how this diverse type of content should be organised, preserved, and utilised or how the archival should function is a process of learning by osmosis—ex-

ploring dance genealogy-based approaches can offer a way of writing up the archival. This hints towards the impossibility of finding and fixing one absolute method of archiving dance, but instead requires a subtle and ongoing process of gradual structuring and restructuring based on the process and the practice of genealogy through developing a writing practice akin to ‘hypomnemata’, which allows for multiple methods to arise suitable to the variable nature of dance as live art.

Moreover, the intersection of artistic inquiry and the exploration of ephemeral dance phenomena has ignited my passion to conceptualise and cultivate dance genealogy as both a mnemonic tool and a tangible practice. This conviction crystallised as I delved into cultural policy, arts administration, and the orchestration of expansive dance and performing arts ventures under the auspices of the European Capital of Culture Programmes. This journey compelled me to interrogate: Where do our records reside? How do we access and disseminate our collective output within the dynamic realm of live art? These questions underscore not only pedagogical necessities but also the need to nurture our field’s interdisciplinary evolution. Consequently, my commitment to documenting and preserving dance narratives transcends mere archiving; it seeks to galvanise multidisciplinary dialogues and scrutinise the socio-cultural significance of dance and corporeality within historical frameworks.

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Figures

(Figure 1.) 'Antioch, House of Mnemosyne' (2nd -3rd Century AD) Museum Collection, Hatay Archaeology Museum, Antakya, Turkey, Mosaic, Imperial Roman period. [online] available from <<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/Z19.1.html>> [18 July 2018]

(Figure 2.) A sketch of the dancer and me in the Figure above while dancing at Bosener Mühle *Tanzmalerei* workshop in Spring 2007, sketched by workshop participant and painter Renate Gehrke. Capture: Erica Charalambous

(Figure 3.) Drawing of my dance improvisation from *Tanzmalerei* workshop participants, Ansbach, Germany, 2006. Capture: Erica Charalambous

(Figure 4.) An excerpt from Dore Hoyer's diary was taken from a snapshot from *Mind Your Step: Fünf Tanzarchiven auf der Spur* (2009), a documentary about the trails and traces of five German dance archives. Produced by Ulrich Scholz and the Deutsche Tanzfilminstitut Bremen and published by Dance Plan Deutschland. The item can be found in *Tanzarchiv* Leipzig special collections, Albertina Library, University of Leipzig, Germany. Capture: Erica Charalambous

Re-visioning the Political in the Performance Works of Arianna Economou: The Context of the Seascape of Trauma in Cyprus

VASILEIA ANAXAGOROU¹

Abstract

The seascape of trauma in Cyprus has been integral to the island's history. The colonial legacies of the past, the 1974 Turkish invasion, the displacement, and the ethnic and gender divides have foregrounded contesting subjectivities of where and to which side of history one belongs. Performance art in Europe and the United States emerged as a site of contestation against the grand narratives imposed by the canon of art historical discourses and as a commentary on social-political themes. However, in Cyprus, performance art arrived later and faced barriers to being accepted as a credible mode of artistic inquiry. Traces of artistic representations in performance followed the European avant-garde and were foregrounded in the experience of aspects of political life. Artists arriving on the island with influences from abroad who rejected traditional art forms of dance and theatre were treated in dismay. Arianna Economou, one of the pioneering figures that introduced avant-garde performance art in Cyprus, unfolded in her practice theories of the performative as a political subject that challenged conventional modes of artmaking through her body and through her activism in bringing together inter-communal exchanges with Turkish Cypriots artists as well as her contribution to the performance art scene of Cyprus.

Keywords: Performance Art, Arianna Economou, Seascape of Trauma, Activism in Cyprus, Political Subjectivity

1. Introduction

The political in performance is found in dance and theatre, from the oldest play of Aeschylus, *The Persians*, to Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, in the numerous efforts of Erwin Piscator and Brecht's *Epic Theatre*, the Existentialists with the *Theatre of the Absurd*, the Judson Dance Theatre, the understanding of contact improvisation, the body on stage, where all had a responsibility towards the audience to create a 'forum

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that [dealt] with questions that were politically a taboo'.² In this regard, performance art that emerged from the 1960s avant-garde was seen as an 'essentialist resistance to the representationalism of dominant theatre practice'³ and came to deploy radical acts in extreme and experimental settings, and question the complexities of power matrices by being subversive, notwithstanding its intention to be essentially political in methodology and meaning. The participatory nature of performance, the presence of the live body, and the unconventionality of movement were also 'intended as an effective practice of politicization of social life'.⁴

In terms of theoretical frameworks, performance art aligns with theories of performativity as the public sphere gains an opportunity to be turned into a 'battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted'⁵, impelling activism, elaborating on how 'art [can] mimic the intricacies of public grievability and memorialization'⁶ of certain events in light of how different forms of oppression and situations affect the body, thus telling a story on stage and at the same time blurring art and life.⁷ The phenomenon of memorialization serves as a focal point for the examination of memoro-politics, a concept articulated by gender theorist and philosopher Judith Butler, alongside feminist scholar Athena Athanasiou, in their 2013 collaborative work *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Memoro-politics delineates a dynamic socio-political process characterised by the contentious negotiation surrounding the creation, ownership, and accessibility of memory within a given society. While being like the idea of enacting memories, memoro-politics is a process that engenders ongoing debates and struggles concerning the determination of what warrants remembrance, the distribution of authority over memory, and the identification of entities or narratives susceptible to marginalisation or exclusion from collective remembrance.

In the context of performance art, memoro-politics is explored through the interventions of Arianna Economou, who has often been referred to as a pioneer in the field of performance art, as she was one of the first to introduce the ontology of

² Leo Kerz, "Brecht and Piscator" (1968) 20 *Educational Theatre Journal* 363.

³ Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (Routledge 2004).

⁴ Andrea Pagnes, "Notes on Performance art, the Body and the Political" (Society for Artistic Research 2017) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.22501/rc.343455>> accessed April 7, 2024.

⁵ Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces" (2007) 1 *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*.

⁶ Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (John Wiley & Sons 2013).

⁷ Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Expanded Edition* (University of California Press 2023).

performance in Cyprus, aligning with the framework that has been grounded by performance studies and feminist theorist Peggy Phelan that describes how performers unveil a new language between “interactive exchange” of the audience and the performer on stage along with “supplement[ing] the real”⁸ in locales where the parameters of memorability are established and enshrined within the communal consciousness of Cypriots. This article seeks to scrutinise acts of reclaiming, interrogating, or subverting prevailing narratives in Cyprus, particularly considering its historical division in 1974 between the north and the south and the intricate power dynamics entwined with the construction of memory from its colonial past until the present. More specifically, the primary aim of this article is to narrow its focus to the specific lived experiences of Arianna Economou, within the framework of the *seascape of trauma* that revolves around the complex history and translucent impact of the colonialism and division on the bodies since 1974 found in the north and the south of the island, as well as the gendered positionality that resides in the physical topos of the island.

This article employs a methodology grounded in semi-structured interviews with Economou, conducted from January 2023 to March 2024, with the objective of re-visioning three seminal performance pieces: *Σώμα, Χώρος* (1983) (transl. Body – Space), *Walking the Line* (1983), and *Shared Echoes I & II* (2004). This study seeks to elucidate how Economou persistently asserts an alternative subjectivity, critically interrogating the notion of memory and home as a form of belonging that diverges from the dominant nationalist narratives that have prevailed in Cyprus since its independence from British colonial rule in 1960. Through these interviews, specific themes have been extracted, focusing on *the seascape of trauma*, as it will be further elaborated, and the intricate relationship between the personal and the political.⁹ The idea is centered around the feminist axiom coined by feminist activist Carol Hanisch, who first claimed that “the personal is political” as a subtle yet profound framework for understanding the interplay between individual experiences and broader political structures. This concept is instrumental in contextualising how Economou’s work challenges entrenched cultural narratives by highlighting how personal experiences of trauma and displacement are intrinsically linked to political realities and power dynamics. Tracing a trajectory from the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, in the United States, where women vigorously advocated for the recognition of their

⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge 2003).

⁹ Carol Hanisch, “The Personal Is Political,” *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists* (NY Radical Feminism 1969).

voices in the public domain, the relevance of this framework connects these historical feminist movements to the under-representation of female artists in Cypriot historiographical texts and unpacks the ways in which Economou's performances operate as acts of subversive resistance against normative gender roles and exclusionary cultural practices that have historically marginalised women's contributions.

In the context of Cyprus, the exclusion of women has been markedly evident following the island's independence, where nationalist discourses have predominantly exalted male figures and militaristic ideologies. Women were systematically relegated to traditional domestic roles, thereby constraining their engagement in public and artistic spheres. This marginalisation extended to female artists, whose creative contributions were frequently overshadowed by those conforming to dominant nationalist themes. In the context of Cyprus, women in colonial and post-colonial Cyprus could not have been considered professional artists as the 'majority of Greek-Cypriot art historians... until recently privileged the "fathers" of Cypriot art'.¹⁰ Therefore, the work of female artists was systematically underrepresented in major art exhibitions and historiographical documentation, reflecting a pervasive societal tendency to prioritise male-dominated narratives and perspectives. The normative framework of the period reinforced these exclusions, presenting formidable challenges for female artists seeking acknowledgment and validation of their artistic practices.

Economou's performances, as this article seeks to show, directly confront and subvert these exclusionary practices by reclaiming space for female narratives and contesting traditional gender norms. Her embodiment on stage serves to question and disrupt societal expectations imposed on women, while simultaneously redefining the concept of belonging beyond the restrictive confines of nationalist discourse. Through her artistic practice, Economou embodies the convergence of the personal and the political, utilising her performances to elucidate the complexities of gender, identity, and cultural memory within the Cypriot context. By re-visioning her historical performance pieces, Economou's oeuvre offers a compelling critique of the systemic marginalisation of women in Cyprus, presenting an alternative narrative that seamlessly integrates personal experiences with broader political and cultural discourses. This re-visioning highlights the enduring significance of feminist principles in challenging exclusionary practices and advocating for the equitable recognition of female contributions in the arts and broader societal contexts.

¹⁰ Elena Stylianou, Evanthia Tselika and Gabriel Koureas, *Contemporary Art from Cyprus: Politics, Identities, and Cultures Across Borders* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts 2022)

As one of the themes involved the political aspect in the work of Economou, the focus of this article will be narrowed down on the public perception of her work, in other words, how the audience received and interpreted her work, her personal resistance towards dominant narratives of nationalism that came in making the specific performance pieces as a female subject and female practitioner, along with the tools that helped her maintain performance as a mode of activism. One should bear in mind that Economou through her long presence in the Cyprus art scene has been viewed as a dance activist on the island,¹¹ mainly because of her practice as a performance artist, her active contribution in bi-communal exchanges with Turkish-speaking Cypriots at a time where bi-communal work in 1980-1990 was not predominantly deployed through personal initiatives, and her input to the field of performance in Cyprus by being the co-founder and director of the Dance House in Nicosia in 2012 for more than ten years,¹² a space that aims to fulfil the needs of the (dance) community in Cyprus.

2. The Seascape of Trauma

Before re-visioning Economou's work, it is imperative to establish a foundational understanding of *the seascape of trauma*. This entails the transcendence of the model implied by traditional trauma studies, which often adhere to a limiting event-based model, as articulated by the post-colonial scholar Stef Craps in his work *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* which initiates a new phase in postcolonial and trauma studies.¹³ Craps challenges how the traditional trauma model construes trauma as stemming from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic occurrence, an understanding encapsulated in definitions such as 'a frightening event outside of ordinary experience'.¹⁴ However, Stef Craps contends that this paradigmatic framework may not adequately capture the experiences of non-Western, minority groups, or even certain individuals within Western societies. Moreover, it overlooks the multicultural and diasporic dimensions of contemporary culture hindering a nuanced compre-

¹¹ Melissa Hakkers, "The Maturity of a Compelling Dance Artist" (*melissahekkers.com*, August 7, 2014) <<https://melissahekkers.com/maturity-compelling-dance-artist/>> accessed April 14, 2024.

¹² Karin Varga, "Arianna Economou" (*Goethe Institut Cyprus*, 2021) <<https://www.goethe.de/ins/cy/en/ueb/60j/mem/22609668.html>> accessed April 14, 2024.

¹³ Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Springer 2013).

¹⁴ Otto Hart van der and Besse Kolk van der, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" (1991) 48 *American Imago*.

hension of trauma.¹⁵ Trauma theory's fixation on this conventional model warrants scrutiny, particularly concerning racial inequalities and gender-based trauma experienced by women. Judith Lewis Herman, a prominent psychiatrist in the field of trauma and its recovery, posits that for women trauma often extends beyond commonplace misfortunes, encompassing threats to life, bodily integrity, and encounters with violence or death.¹⁶ The gendered aspect of trauma adds layers of complexity, shaped by societal norms and expectations imposed on women.

Approaches to trauma by theorists like Elizabeth Loftus and Richard McNally, who rely heavily on empirical evidence, illuminate how trauma narratives can be affected by false memories, potentially overlooking the multifaceted nature of gender-based trauma and racism. These traumas resist easy categorisation or repression, often manifesting in violent, whether exerted mentally or physically. Acknowledging these complexities underscores the necessity for trauma theories to broaden beyond Western-centric definitions, exploring the intersections of racial, class, and gender-based traumas, particularly those inflicted on female subjects and colonial histories. This expansion involves decolonising trauma definitions, recognising global contexts and diverse forms of suffering, and varied representations of trauma. While Craps introduces models addressing the everyday, normative nature of racialised trauma, there remains a need to interrogate the personal experiences of those involved—the colonial subjects—in defining trauma. This paradigm shift opens avenues for understanding how gender, societal norms, and colonial legacies intersect with trauma experiences and lived realities, a notion that is embedded in articulating *the seascape of trauma* in Cyprus. Hence, the work of Michael Rothberg, a scholar specialising in memory studies, literature, and postcolonial theory on the 'multidirectional memory'¹⁷ proves invaluable for cross-cultural analyses, acknowledging memory as an intercultural, multidirectional process involving negotiation and borrowing among communities, and in this context, involving Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots. This approach emphasises the dynamic interplay between memory, gender-based trauma, and colonial legacies, urging a more inclusive perspective accommodating diverse strategies of representation and resistance.

¹⁵ Rosanne Kennedy, *Word Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

¹⁶ Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (Hachette UK 2015).

¹⁷ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press 2009).

Consequently, in what follows, the discourse on trauma theory will be expanded, incorporating the words from the interviews conducted with Arianna Economou to frame *the seascape of trauma* to address the complexities of female positionality experienced by female colonial subjectivities within the context of colonial legacies and the history of Cyprus from antiquity to the present. This expansion involves a theoretical framework, where Arianna Economou managed push and challenge social and cultural rules creating alternative spheres and spaces of civic engagement between the audience and the live body which addressed the 1974 division of the island. This investigation seeks to understand how Economou has negotiated the complex terrain of bodily materiality and the immateriality of her work within an art scene that operates under the exigencies of control and power and the negotiation of her subjectivity with this framework. Her embodiment on stage and beyond is examined through the lens of the 'performative turn',¹⁸ which elucidates how the theory of performativity can manifest in performance art. This is achieved through an 'intermediality approach'¹⁹ that considers various elements, such as the surrounding, and the topos as a physical space, which aligns with memoro-politics extending beyond the body and its experience on stage.

Hence, as Arianna Economou's artistic practice has evolved in response to the historical context of Cyprus, beginning with the island's partition, colonial legacies, and the division between Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots, these notions have influenced her deeply, leading to an active negotiation with her own body on and off stage and igniting her passion for activism within the island's artistic scene. As *the seascape of trauma* in Cyprus has been applied throughout this research, it works as a framework that considers Cyprus as a contentious space where several histories have come to define the sea and a contribution to the literature that contextualises her physical place surrounded by the fluidity of the waters that is in contrast with the static nature of the landscape, extrapolating how certain boundaries of the sea engage bodies to swim in it. The sea of the Mediterranean has been an integral part of historical continuity from the past to the present. Also, it marks the geographical space and a specific topography as the material, but it sentimentally reverts to abstract notions of identity. The shores of the sea gain a morphology as the door that works either as

¹⁸ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Routledge 2008).

¹⁹ Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt and Andy Lavender, *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (Amsterdam University Press 2010).

an entry or exodus point for the ones who have invaded the island and the ones that have left, often presented through dominant narratives and historical information.

The sea salt that chuckles in the rocks on the shore, brought out by the waves, resonates with the history that unfolds that is never truly ours but fabricated from narratives that dominated, from colonial legacies to the 1974 Turkish invasion, to gendered positionalities and political subjectivities. The seascape is not simply an experience but a condition that manifests several times. It could be a process of challenging grandiloquent nationalist narratives, where different subjects have positioned themselves against Hellenocentric Cypriot nationalism that remains attached to Greece, the motherland, and the Greek Orthodox Church often seen in discontent.²⁰ It could also refer to how the category of women within the socio-political saw them unfit for any political involvement as ‘women’s place was primarily [thought to be] in the home’²¹ and the broader nexus of the personal that becomes political. In this process of searching for one’s identity, there appears an abyss. The abyss is the darkest element of the seascape; it is where subjects are homogenised and defined by one dominant narrative comprising a singular dimension of the subject; the one who praises nationalism differentiates oneself from all those branded as traitors and maintains that of which remains as *truly* Cypriot: the white, the male, the protector. The one who sustains Greek Cypriot nationalist discourse evoking ‘the purity and chastity of the land as the body of the nation, equated with femininity (Greece the mother, Cyprus the maiden)’.²² On the other side, it may also involve the discouragement of women’s initiatives in the public sphere, through art and other modes of civic engagement to create a metadiscourse of voices and desires for peace, reunification, articulation of one’s trauma, and resistance to the norms that have defined them—a process in which Economou has constantly found herself and renegotiated her very essence through her work and practice.

3. Re-visioning the Works of Economou

Re-visioning the work of Economou, one such notable work is “*Shared Echoes I & II*” (2004), a collaborative project focusing on peacebuilding and participatory art in conjunction with the European Mediterranean Artist Association (EMAA) supported

²⁰ Leonard W Doob, “Cypriot Patriotism and Nationalism” (1986) 30 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 383.

²¹ Maria Hadjipavlou, *Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict* (IB Tauris 2010).

²² Cynthia Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus* (Zed Books 2004).

by the United Nations, that involved two guest teachers, an invited artist, Joshua Bisset, musician Edward Shocker from the US and Alexandra and Horst Waierstall. It was performed at Kastellotissa Hall in Nicosia in 2004 where the visual artist, Horst Weierstall, led a group of Turkish-speaking visual artists with Nilgun Gunay. This bi-communal project challenged dominant narratives of the Cyprus Problem, which has kept both communities separated and their stories unshared by bringing to the surface the shared experiences of the two communities, transcending the guilt of being labelled as traitors for seeking to connect with the corresponding divided part of the island. The performance involved all artists coming together to achieve a collective approach of remembrance elaborating on the idea that inter-communal exchanges were limited, making Economou's approach fundamentally participatory at the grassroots level as well as fitting into socially engaged artistic practices that focus on the community and the social which 'encompasses a genealogy that goes back to the avant-garde and expands significantly during the emergence of post-minimalism'.²³

The most important aspect of the work, however, was the initiation to work around shared stories of the two communities that had been marginalised due to the division of the island and who worked around the notion of their limited interaction. In this aspect, the project worked on how trauma can be redefined, interrogated, or sometimes shared for conflict transformation. Simultaneously, Economou's active negotiation to leverage performance art as a platform for creating spaces of emotional and interpersonal vulnerability echoes the notion put forth by queer theorist Eva Kosofsky Sedgwick when referring to how bodies can perform and enact vulnerability.²⁴ Such vulnerability is not a fixed, innate quality but rather something that is socially constructed and enacted to either challenge or negotiate the norms that constrain those bodies in given spaces. In this aspect, and through expanding Sedgwick's concept on vulnerability beyond a queer theory framework, there is a connection on how the performative can be observed in Economou's work, particularly in how she chooses to negotiate her vulnerability in relation to other subjectivities (the Turkish-speaking Cypriots).

Economou through this project encouraged participants to openly express their emotions, memories, and personal narratives. Such intercommunal projects led by Economou involve dialogical engagement between participants, both verbally and

²³ Helguera P, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Jorge Pinto Books 2011)

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press 1990).

non-verbally through performance. This form of dialogue requires a level of vulnerability as individuals open themselves to the perspectives and experiences of others. Economou's exploration of such vulnerability through shared historical experiences encourages participants to actively listen, empathise, and connect with one another, leading to a deeper understanding of shared histories and the complexity of the Cyprus conflict. This dialogical vulnerability challenges existing narratives of conflict and division. Through the act of performing and engaging with one's own and others' stories and emotions, all subjects involved became part of a shared experience that transcends historical divisions and challenges societal expectations that wished to keep the two communities separated in the past, as well as in the present. While *Ech-oes I & II* did not fall into the domain of what has been defined as performance piece in Cyprus at the time, it was a socially engaged art in a 'new genre of public art'²⁵ that consisted of series of actions and activities that would have been impossible to repeat because of the time and the context, focusing on the presence of bodies from both sides of the divide. The body, as discussed by Judith Butler is not merely an isolated entity but rather a complex interplay of relationships intricately entwined with infrastructural and environmental conditions,²⁶ shared not only among humans but also with the space in which they reside. This vulnerability becomes most apparent when infrastructural support deteriorates, or when individuals find themselves in a state of radical support in precarious circumstances. Thus, Economou has managed to cultivate the notions of memory, creating a space for memoropolitics to allow potentially an emancipatory dialogue that is central to the understanding of socially engaged art practices that produce a generative process of activism through performance²⁷.

It can be deduced that Economou's work represents a departure from traditional demarcations that have historically delineated Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots. Within the framework of her research and artistic initiatives, the performative aspect of shared vulnerabilities serves as a catalyst for transcending these delineations, both physical and emotional. This form of performative vulnerability entails a willingness to venture beyond one's accustomed sphere and engage with the concept of the 'Other'. Drawing upon the theoretical insights of discourse analyst and linguist Teun Van Dijk, who has extensively examined the intricate dynamics

²⁵ Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Bay Press 1995).

²⁶ Judith Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Duke University Press 2016) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11vc78r.6>> accessed May 5, 2024.

²⁷ Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially Engaged Art" in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (eds), *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985* (Blackwell Publishing 2005).

of ‘us’ versus ‘others’, Economou’s interdisciplinary approach seeks to deconstruct entrenched societal divisions and challenge the prevailing polarisations within Cypriot public discourse, fostering thereby a nuanced understanding of collective identity and communal belonging.²⁸

As a gendered subject, socially inscribed with specific norms, the piece *Σώμα/Χώρος* (1983), which translates to ‘Body/Space’, marks the inception of Arianna Economou’s career. This performance involves the embodiment of the topos of Cyprus, with the performer engaging on stage with a white fabric, interacting with other performers through contact improvisation. This work, which was televised by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (RIK CyBC), received contentious criticism from the press at the time. Several factors contributed to the negative criticism Economou received. Her work challenged the prevailing paradigms within the performance art scene, provoking diverse reactions from the public—hereinafter referred to as ‘the audience’—and signifying a paradigm shift in the representation of movement and the body within performance. This shift disrupted established norms and expectations, highlighting the tension between traditional and contemporary artistic languages in Cyprus. The selection of Arianna Economou for this research is informed by the intersection of social narratives that have historically dominated the island and have been intricately woven into her artistic practice. Economou has often been referred to as a dance activist due to her inclination to challenge social expectations and redefine the artistic canon within the Cypriot art scene—a canon that historically favoured male artists at the expense of female practitioners. In this vein, Economou’s work not only interrogates the gendered dimensions of performance but also offers a critical commentary on the sociopolitical context of Cyprus. Her performances serve as a site of resistance and transformation, where the body becomes a medium through which broader cultural and political discourses are both contested and reimagined. This research aims to elucidate how Economou’s practice contributes to a deeper understanding of the performative body within the context of Cypriot art and society, foregrounding the ways in which her work navigates and negotiates the complexities of gender, space, and identity.

In that regard, her work, particularly her embodiment on stage, serves as a ‘corporeal resistance to the processes of social inscription’.²⁹ Analysing the reasons why the public perceived her as a dance activist, I came to realise that throughout my encoun-

²⁸ Teun Dijk a Van, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Sage 1998).

²⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana University Press 1994).

ter with Economou she articulated her methodology as a performance artist around processes of ‘drawing parallels of the landscape of Cyprus and its long history and because of this [she has been referred to by the dramaturgist and scholar Dorinda Hulton]³⁰ as an ethno-anthropologist who thinks of traditions, history, colonialism, digesting how [her] parents were being affluent and had ties with the British”.³¹ These parallels are not utilised to reinforce dominant narratives but rather to serve as tools to challenge norms, interrogate intergenerational and historical trauma as evident in many of her pieces that focus on inter-communal exchanges between Turkish-speaking Cypriots and Greek-speaking Cypriots. Extrapolating from the above, the choice of Arianna Economou as the subject of exploration in this research is grounded in how she has challenged and founded Cyprus’ performance art scene and her profound engagement with the socio-political and historical complexities of the island.

In her solo performance piece *Walking the Line* (1998), there is an evocative exploration of a significant moment in the life of a Cypriot woman. The concept of this performance art piece encapsulates the multifaceted experiences of the protagonist, who finds herself increasingly constrained by various literal and metaphorical lines and borderlines. Central to the narrative is the omnipresent Green Line, a poignant symbol of the island’s enduring division and conflict, which infiltrates every facet of her life. In her pursuit of liberation and understanding, the performance adopts the structure of a journey. This journey is reminiscent of the mythological figure Io in ‘Io in the presence of Prometheus’,³² where Io, tormented by a gadfly, embarks on a restless and agonising quest for relief. Similarly, the protagonist (Economou herself) in *Walking the Line* traverses her metaphorical wounds, embodying the pain, restlessness, and desperation for emancipation and clarity. Through this allegorical and deeply personal journey, Economou not only highlights the physical and psychological ramifications of political and social divisions but also highlights the universal struggle for self-determination and inner peace.

Economou used her voice and invited the audience to relate to the fears which connects to the idea of lines as symbols once they are created as borders and certain divisions manifest. Stretching a long string from one side of the stage to the other, as an allegorical performative of the real –the borderscape that is visible across Cyprus and herself—she became the subject that divided the space into two and, at the same

³⁰ Dorinda Hulton, “The One Square Foot Project” (2007) 27 *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 155.

³¹ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

³² Echo Arts, “Walking the Line 1998” (*Echo Arts, Living Arts Centre*, 2013) <<https://www.echoarts.info/index.php/projects/24-solo-performances/53-walking-the-line-1998>> accessed May 12, 2024.

time, the performer who experienced the division she has created for herself and others. The audience was invited to draw parallels, consciously or unconsciously, with the topos of Cyprus, as she began using the shape of her body as a border iconography that forms a sculptural idealisation of a fictional border using paper at one end, slowly embodying a shift in who she is—the victim or the perpetrator—but in a fluidity that cannot be easily defined. The work creates an insider language, blurring the borders of art and life, especially considering 1998 when the re-opening of the checkpoints on the island was not yet introduced until April 2003. The border semiotics in the performance was two-fold: first, it forestalled how the line that divided affected bodies concerning the conflict. At the same time, it engaged with tactile sensations through the sense of touching and creating and forming it in space that entailed a storytelling on how the division began involving one's subjectivity. But the presence of Economou on stage, carrying her multiple identities and subjectivities, may open another account that suggests how women took on the conflict in Cyprus, but it was more precisely translated into an artistic language and the body on stage.

4. The Political Self/the Political Body in Performance

In conducting this research, and in re-visioning the works of Economou, I had to go back to the meaning of the political of the female body in a phenomenological perspective where lived experiences are presented in modes of being in the world. It is where the 'I cannot' superimposition had been implemented and restricted for the female.³³ Lived experience is contested in feminist theory,³⁴ but the thinking derives from Merleau-Ponty where the experience of the body is not separated from the 'natural' and the 'social'.³⁵ In this regard, the political embodiment of Economou becomes related to the material world in the natural that has been analysed as affecting 'all perceiving, moving and acting bodies'³⁶ suggestive of a memoro-politics that is enacted through the theory of phenomenology. Aspects of the political in Economou's work indicate how she has been forced to embody an imposed gendered and post-colonial subjectivity, as expected by societal norms in Cyprus at the time. This has been profound through Economou's words and her urgency to speak up that opens a

³³ Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press 2005).

³⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Psychology Press 1993).

³⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishe 1996).

³⁶ Sara Heinämaa, "Embodiment and Feminist Philosophy" in Ann Gary, Serene Khader and Alison Stone (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (Routledge 2017).

phenomenological thematisation that includes the lived experience of the artist concerning the contentious space of Cyprus and the essence of the political. Contextualising the above, the female political bodies in such contentious spaces were formed from contesting narratives from Turkish-speaking Cypriot and Greek-speaking Cypriot communities that related their positionalities to the same historical events and periods from the early 1960 when the unrest between the two communities started up until the lines of division that were drawn in 1974. Examples can be found in the 2001 organisation of 'Hands Across the Divide' (HAD), which brought together Cypriot women from both communities to present their struggles. 'HAD [was] the first women-only group that included both Greek and Turkish Cypriot women, [bridging] a revolutionary stance in and of itself, defying the status quo by envisioning a non-divided, non-militarized and non-patriarchal Cyprus'.³⁷ The HAD initiative involved women across Cyprus that had been put on the margin and 'subjected to a vicious personalized and directly threatening attack'.³⁸ The conditions that marginalised and hindered women in their resistance until today constantly remain in flux and are products of a *seascape of trauma* that cannot be essentialised. Women's involvement in the contentious Cypriot society indicates how specific constructions have been made, positing the female solely at home, marking their resistances as less important in shifting narratives of the occupation and their work in peace and gender equality in Cyprus.³⁹ Their bodily presence in the streets is indeed performative, falling outside the notion of performance art but invigorating how their mobilisation could contribute differently to given discourses and grand narratives. Therefore, to resist as a female subject, to go against the habitus that contains a 'system of internalized structures, common schemes of perfection, conception, and action, which are the precondition of all objectification and apperception', requires a return to the body as a domain of experience to create an alternative discourse that opposes cultural significations, manifesting the political.⁴⁰

Patrice Pavis (1996), a distinguished French theatre scholar, is widely recognised for his seminal contributions to performance studies and theatre theory. Pavis posits that the performing body becomes inherently 'political' due to specific 'inscriptions of

³⁷ Sophia Papastavrou, *Women's Organizations for Peace: Moving Beyond the Rhetoric of the Cyprus Problem* (Springer Nature 2020).

³⁸ Maria Hadjipavlou and Cynthia Cockburn, "Women in Projects of Co-Operation for Peace: Methodologies of External Intervention in Cyprus" (2006) 29 *Women's Studies International Forum* 521.

³⁹ Cynthia Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus* (Zed Books 2004)

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press 1990).

culture' and internalized 'ensembles of rules of behavior'.⁴¹ In response to these behavioural norms, Economou enacted the political through her practice, which, though did not manifest in the streets, was fundamentally rooted in a methodology she obtained by walking in the streets, or rather by interacting with others. This approach aimed to provide an alternative narrative within the Cypriot context, challenging the prevailing cultural conditions influencing Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriot relations. The complexities of marginalisation in Cyprus are deeply entwined with the persistent Cyprus Problem, which reflects the enduring partition and the de facto border separating the south and north. This situation amplifies feelings of ambiguity and complexity regarding notions of belonging, dislocation, and the intricacies of longing for return—specifically, to where and to whom. Narratives of belonging are diverse and unique to each individual on the island. The societal trauma experienced by Turkish-speaking Cypriots can be traced back to the 1950s, characterised by a constrained existence within enclaves. For Greek-speaking Cypriots, the trauma of dislocation is marked by the events of July 1974, following the Turkish army's incursion into northern Cyprus.⁴² Having grown up on a divided island and educated in the south, my exposure to history has been shaped by a one-sided perspective, predominantly highlighting the Greek-speaking Cypriots' loss of homes and family members in 1974. Hence, the production of competing discourses of nationhood in Cyprus is inevitable, heavily influenced by one's upbringing, as well as the colonial legacies and the ongoing division both physical as well as mental between Turkish-speaking Cypriots and Greek-speaking Cypriots, with the years of non-reunification resonating profoundly in the collective memory of those who remember.

In this aspect, Economou's performance works reject nationalist rhetoric and instead focus on how the body is 'not a machine, but an active relation to other social practices, entities, and events'⁴³, and consequently, this active relation is the reasoning behind Economou's stepping in front of dance activism and the inter-communal artistic exchanges found throughout her career, such as the *Sites Embodied Cyprus Festival* (2017), a bi-communal Festival in the Akamas Peninsula, in the villages of Androlikou and Droushia in Paphos, as well as the *Shared Echoes I & II*. The festival evolved around themes that constantly questioned the essence of home and belonging for all Cypriots. Economou, in her embodiment as a postcolonial subject, always

⁴¹ Patrice Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (Psychology Press 1996).

⁴² Vamik Volkan, "Trauma, Identity and Search for a Solution in Cyprus" (2008) 10 *Insight Turkey*.

⁴³ Grosz E, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana University Press 1994)

thought of ways to bring dialogue into the public sphere through art and performance in a society that never accepted the non-heterogeneous bodies that questioned their belonging and association in relation to grand narratives found in the *seascape of trauma*. Contextualising her practice, therefore, such artistic practices and initiatives in the context of this *seascape of trauma* may evolve as processes of conflict transformation art that, as art historian Evi Tselika states, have been gaining focus between 1990-2000 when ‘experience-based artistic endeavours’ began integrating ‘peace-building artistic practices’.⁴⁴ Literature informs us how in post-violent conflict zones, art can be used as a bridge of communication with the Other.⁴⁵

However, Economou’s political performances may to an extent not only be related to her direct conversation with the socio-political themes and her inter-communal exchanges, but it was the methodology she used, ‘from the streets’, that intersects with the alterity she experienced as a female practitioner, as well as a postcolonial subject living in a post-conflict zone. In our interview with Economou, which prompted one theme in my broader research, she broached the preconceptions of what it meant for a woman artist and her body to be present and resist on stage as a mode of enacting possibilities of future representations of female artists. In her words:

I learned techniques and styles of dance from pioneer women and men that made them, but I so needed to have my own voice as a creative, away from Martha Graham and Cunningham and all that history. To explore and not to be shown what and how to do it. Going back to the body for me after learning dance, theatre, and ballet techniques was so liberating. I finally started learning to stand in my own centre line or figure out what that line was about. I flourished away from the constraints of being judged as to whether I was good enough to learn others’ moving styles. I suppose I have always been an anarchist. I was never able to follow the rules. Rules of what is the way to do things. I had enough of being under others’ understanding of what dance is. After all, Cyprus dance under colonialism is and has been the Royal [pause]—the ballet. By rejecting this, at least, I was free to own my body.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Evanthia Tselika, “Conflict Transformations Art in Nicosia: Engaging Social Groups across the Divided City through Artistic Practices.” in Evanthia Tselika, Elena Stylianou and Gabriel Koureas (eds), *Contemporary Art from Cyprus Politics, Identities and Cultures across Borders* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts 2021).

⁴⁵ Candace Jesse Stout, “The Art of Empathy: Teaching Students to Care” (1999) 52 *Art Education* 21.

⁴⁶ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

Analysing the above, it is worth mentioning how Economou arrived in Cyprus in 1981 from Dartington College of Arts in England, where she received her Theatre Studies and Movement for Performance training. Her methodology in performance, which has been taught in Theatre Studies and dance, incorporated elements of post-modern dance that emerged from ‘the use of pedestrian movement; the denial of meaning and spectacle’s use of tasks or games as structural devices’.⁴⁷ Having her ‘own authentic voice’ was precisely the primary purpose—as we learn from history—of performance art that came in conjunction with the avant-garde and that allowed women ‘to enter the art scene through performance’.⁴⁸ Since males mainly dominated the art world, performance art became inextricably linked with feminism as a platform for female artists to engage in the politics of everyday life. In a way, Economou, in searching for her ‘own voice’ outside the knowledge she has been given, asserted her female body as being political by rejecting the male trope and notions of the spectacle, focusing on how her lived experience on stage can interact with the audience and that was to an extent a radical gesture. From a phenomenological perspective, feminist theorist Helene Cixous contributes to those mentioned above and could reflect how Economou enlarged from the confinements of Theatre studies, reconfiguring her subjectivity through a ‘body-presence’ on stage that permeated how ‘life is lived’ expanding it ‘by her look, her listening’.⁴⁹ Situating the authenticity of Economou’s voice in Cixous’ discovery reveals how her path on stage, her artistic practice, and her relationship with the audience’s gaze, as well as the history of Cyprus, can demystify ideological perspectives and practices dominating the Cypriot art scene which, as mentioned, favoured the ‘fathers’, or in other words the male artists who worked around the production of culture after the independence of the island in 1960.

Even though, in the 1980s, Cyprus entered a new phase of economic prosperity after the 1974 Turkish invasion, and people started to have access to more education, there was limited understanding of the ‘paradigm shift’ that extended theatre to performance studies, and as the Cypriot art scene was surrounded more by painting and dance in its conventional form, Economou was working around the shift.⁵⁰ As Econo-

⁴⁷ Judith Mackrell, “Post-Modern Dance in Britain: An Historical Essay” (1991) 9 *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 40.

⁴⁸ Lynn Leeson Hershman, “!WAR Women Art Revolution” (*ZKM*, 2010) <<https://zkm.de/en/media/video/war-women-art-revolution>> accessed April 15, 2024.

⁴⁹ Hélène Cixous, “Aller à La Mer” (1984) 27 *Modern Drama* 546.

⁵⁰ Richard Schechner, “A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy” (1992) 36 *TDR* (1988-) 7.

mou forestalls in one of our interviews, society could not accept interdisciplinarity in theatre, dance studies and avant-garde performance. In our interview, she explained how Cyprus at the time was a society that did not follow institutional recognition in performance practices outside the ballet: the ‘Royal’, as she mentions. Art at the time was still judged by standards where beauty norms were paramount. It followed the colonial legacies of the past that considered ballet the only acceptable form that a female performing body could be viewed through. The dancer’s body, in the means of ballet aesthetic, remained “in service” that was dependable to the ‘support of the ruling class’.⁵¹ Upon her arrival in Cyprus, Economou did not focus on the techniques of the theatre and dance but insisted on a different language, that involved contact improvisation, ‘release work’ based on the ‘language of axis’ methodology that was influenced by Mary Fulkerson⁵² that required her to ‘move rather than execute a particular set of moves’.⁵³ In that aspect, Economou incorporated what the postmodern dance has taught us: the ‘language of the street’, positing her as the ‘anarchist’ who fell outside specific structures and boundaries.⁵⁴

Her practice moved beyond the ideal body and instead focused on the phenomenology of dance, which impelled movement as an immediate experience.⁵⁵ Rejecting what was considered ‘high’ art in cultural matrices, Economou reimagined forms and content of performance outside the aesthetic objectification of the body. While she stretched the boundaries of conventional ‘high’ art, she also rejected embodying the glorifying ballerina who was ‘an object of beauty and desire’.⁵⁶ As ballet entered a phase of being recognised as a ‘female profession’⁵⁷, the prejudice began from literary critic, Théophile Gautier, who believed that ballet developed ‘from the lines agreeable to the eye’.⁵⁸ Based on this, for Economou, going against ballet did not only go against

⁵¹ Peter Stoneley, “Ballet Imperial” (2002) 32 *The Yearbook of English Studies* 140.

⁵² Stephanie Jordan, *Striding Out: Aspects of Contemporary and New Dance in Britain* (Dance Books Limited 1992).

⁵³ Novack CJ, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (University of Wisconsin Press 1990)

⁵⁴ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁵⁵ Sondra Fraleigh, “A Vulnerable Glance: Seeing Dance through Phenomenology” (1991) 23 *Dance Research Journal* 11.

⁵⁶ Ann Daly, “The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers” (1987) 31 *The Drama Review: TDR* 8.

⁵⁷ I Karthas, “The Politics of Gender and the Revival of Ballet in Early Twentieth Century France” (2012) 45 *Journal of Social History* 960.

⁵⁸ Théophile Gautier, *The Romantic Ballet as Seen by Théophile Gautier, Being His Notices of All the Principal Performances of Ballet Given at Paris During the Years 1837-1848* (Dance Horizons 1947).

an aesthetic inquiry but also made her a pioneer in a place where her methodology focuses on communication with her embodiment in space as well as with the audience who observes it, and did not comply with the external matrices of power that were internalised and inhabited. By referring to her 'own voice' and 'gravity',⁵⁹ she incites a contestation with the institutionalisation of performance arts, introducing a cultural form outside existing genres and institutions. Articulating performance art as a space of new possibilities, contradictory to institutional boundaries, she resisted the codification of one specific practice and re-visited an autonomy and agency that was a transgression between her relationship with the audience as a performer, but also her relationship with existing normative thinking of how the female should penetrate in society.

Hence, in her practice, Economou exemplifies the concept of gender theorist Judith Butler, who explores subversive bodily performance, a notion deeply rooted in both theory and practice. By articulating her subjectivity through her embodiment on stage, Economou engages with Butler's articulations on gender performativity, yet distinctly challenges the rigid, formalised iterations of how her gender should appear.⁶⁰ Economou's rejection of conventional beauty standards and societal expectations constitutes a deliberate act of resistance, using her physical expression to disrupt and redefine traditional gender norms. Butler asserts that gender is produced through the stylisation of the body, creating the illusion of a stable, gendered self; however, Economou's performances subverts this by presenting an alternative way that questions and deconstructs these norms that posited her in specific structures. This subversive approach not only critiques the societal constructs of gender but also serves as a form of political expression, demonstrating how performance art can transcend the stage to challenge and reshape public and private perceptions of identity. Through her embodiment on stage, Economou's work foregrounds the political, engaging in a cultural and historical discourse of the art scene in Cyprus and perhaps subtly opens up the the limitations and possibilities experienced by female artists, thereby forestalling traditional narratives and fostering new understandings of gender and identity.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁶⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (Routledge 2011)

⁶¹ Victor Witter Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (Paj Publication 1988).

5. The Public Reception

The public reception often corresponds with how audiences are being involved within a “non-matrixed” participation⁶² while observing a performance piece on and off stage. Within these structures, non-hierarchical spaces are ideally instigated as forms in which performance art can be found highlights a potentiality of political consciousness and agency that registers how subjectivities (both performer on stage as well as the person viewing it) and representation unfold in the broader nexus of power. Economou, having the above in mind, entered a new direction that incorporated the live body in its material form, actively resistant in its praxis against the formalities she had been taught in her training and the societal expectations of the female subject while performing on stage that came along from the ballet. Her practice did not focus on representation but rather the presentation of her corporeal on stage, and her subjectivity which suggests an immediacy of authenticity. Distinguishing representation from presentation becomes integral in analysing the political in Economou’s work. There is no “destruction of aura,” as Benjamin would describe, as her bodily presence sustains an authenticity “that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from [her] substantive duration to [her] testimony to the history which [she] has experienced”.⁶³ As a result, the presentation of Economou on stage, when performed, maintains an aura that focuses on her embodiment on stage, inextricably linked with liberation from all constraints and an all-embracing aspect of one’s lived experience in certain spaces and places in which she has experienced. However, the public reception of her works does not necessarily follow the binaries of authenticity that have been suggested. Economou focuses on an ambiguity of interpretation toward points of view, and her interactions with the public may sometimes come across as unwelcoming, as it will be further discussed.

In our interviews, we kept going back and forth on how her gender meant that she was obliged to participate in specific representations that hailed her subjectivity in the context of Cyprus. Referring to her piece, 1983 *Σώμα- Χώρος* (transl. Body – Space), Economou confessed how the public perceived her first-ever piece performed in Cyprus at first glance. The received reactions to the performance that were published in traditional newspapers were primarily adverse, as she referred to a newspaper review that mentioned how “this was an ανωμαλία (transl. perverse) and not

⁶² Michael Kirby, “The New Theatre” (1965) 10 *The Tulane Drama Review* 23.

⁶³ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (HMH 1968).

art”.⁶⁴ The specific performance was a rejection of any authorial and directorial authority as it was a collaboration with Theodoulos Gregoriou, Nicolas Economou, and Panikos Economou. Still, it was Economou’s body that came forward on the screen and received the negative criticism. I developed an urgency to understand how this piece that referred to the space, the *topos* of Cyprus as a locality, focusing on re-enacting the landscapes of Cyprus through the performer’s body and a veiling cloth instigated so much negative criticism. Going back to Goldberg, it seemed clear that “the material and means of performance were limitless” and perhaps did not serve its purpose of being “art for all”.⁶⁵

The “art for all” rhetoric, of course, is rhetoric that sometimes contests the very nature of performance art that goes against normative modes of artistic representations and the canon. However, contextualising how female artists had no room for possibility in Cyprus as they received little and no attention in art history textbooks, an artistic inquiry was essentially the art the male masters created in a predominantly gendered field. The presence of a female artist and her ability to disrupt any voyeurism⁶⁶ reintroduced how the female body was no longer merely the muse or the model and called upon a radical bleakness and the confrontation which precisely resided in Economou’s piece and received an unwelcoming approach. Despite this, one cannot neglect that there was an essence of reclamation in the performance piece and its entirety, albeit the veiling cloth that covered Economou’s body parts. Even if the responses were reactionary and hostile, her bodily presence was pioneering, and an “alternative mode of perception [was] brought to the public”.⁶⁷ The reception, albeit being televised and received on screen, referred to the composition and the material in which Economou’s choice exposed her very own intimacy, a connection to the object; her body, concerning the *topos*; the space. It was woven against the expectations of media culture and the public representation of the female body on screen, stage, and performance. The question remains on the reasoning behind the criticism: was it a product of Economou’s avant-garde that went against the exigencies of the consumer ideals, or was it because she was no longer the female, the performer seen in ballet that fulfilled the spectator’s desire?

⁶⁴ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁶⁵ RoseLee Goldberg, “Performance--Art for All?” (1980) 40 *Art Journal* 369.

⁶⁶ Sophie Anne Oliver, “Trauma, Bodies, and Performance Art: Towards an Embodied Ethics of Seeing” (2010) 24 *Continuum* 119.

⁶⁷ Bonnie Marranca, *The Theatre of Images* (John Hopkins University Press 1996).

On this basis, it was then that Economou's body became abject⁶⁸ - the point of negative criticism – in the public eye. She became the failure of a particular categorisation, a subject that initiated a specific *undoing* by undermining existing interpellations that constructed her identity as a female performer. As Judith Butler explains, bodies become a matter through a “process of materialization that stabilizes over time produces the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface” that is prevalent in “regulatory power”.⁶⁹ Hence, for one's subjectivity to avoid abjection, exclusion, and marginality, it must embody the materialisation of the norms wielded in power to produce culturally viable subjects, which Economou did not do.

For the spectators – and it is intended that I am avoiding the term audience, as no physical presence and interaction were activated due to the televised form of the performance - Economou did not comply with the predominant components of the female body, hence redefining a subjectivity that did not appropriately signify specific boundaries. Perhaps it was then and there that Economou re-oriented a new logic of artmaking and the female body, positing her as a pioneer in the field. The lack of the feminine body to be presented in performance through a discovery of a new body that did not involve the flesh, so to speak, but a political praxis was “a transformation of understanding performance outside the theoretical frameworks of theory”.⁷⁰ However, one shall not consider this an endpoint of the personal moving to the political. Economou's style moved beyond the marginality and enacted a different language in the masculinist economy that term the conditions of the female artist in Cyprus. She refused to follow any given knowledge or predisposition that privileges colonial legacies and masculinist modes of thought of how the female body should be performed and understood on stage from the 1980s up until today. Going against traditional understandings of what was considered “high” art, the ballet, her movement presents an agency that is assertively feminist in style.

On the other side of the spectrum, the public cannot be considered homogeneous; it is not one and cannot be defined in singularity. This thinking stems from Economou's live re-enactment of the same piece *Σώμα - Χώρος* at the Nicosia Festival in Famagusta Gate, a few months later, which received a positive response. This aligns with the literary critic, Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory, which posits that au-

⁶⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press 2009).

⁶⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (Psychology Press 1993).

⁷⁰ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

dience interpretation varies widely based on cultural and historical contexts⁷¹, and is further elaborated through the work of political philosopher Jacques Rancière's where he describes the audience as active participants rather than passive consumers, through his theory on "the birth of the audience," which frames the audience as an active and fluid collective which occurs when both entities are present within performances. Rancière's notion emphasises the emancipated spectator who actively engages with and interprets performances, highlighting the diversity and dynamism of audience reception.⁷² Influenced by our conversation with Economou, we discussed how the live, the ephemeral nature of performance might have affected the reception of the piece, reflecting the work of performance theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte and her discussions on the transformative and transient qualities, specifically her theory of the autopoietic feedback loop and the transformative power of performance⁷³, which highlight the co-creative role of the audience and the dynamic interaction between performers and spectators. For Economou, this opened a new dimension on how the female artist is historically and culturally positioned to negotiate the space she resides in, compelled to enter a mode of acceptance to public perception while simultaneously rejecting consumerist ideals to be taken seriously.

6. The Spaces of Negotiation

Thinking of the contesting responses that Economou received in the early stage of her career, I began investigating the relationship between her art practice and the space she works and performs. Her work, albeit being criticised as perverse, years later entered a new domain as she was referred to as a 'dance activist'.⁷⁴ However, the lack of historical bibliography on performance artists on the island shows no exact trace of where this label came from. Still, I remember reading it, considering that Economou's work was soon seen as a revitalisation of a resistance that was very much needed in the art scene of Cyprus.

The 1980s also saw the establishment and growth of cultural institutions in Cyprus. The art scene in Cyprus, significantly shaped and still is by the geopolitical

⁷¹ Paul Hunter Rockhill, *The Reception Theory of Hans Robert Jauss: Theory and Application* (Portland State University 1996).

⁷² Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (Verso Books 2021).

⁷³ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Routledge 2008).

⁷⁴ Melissa Hekkers, "The Maturity of a Compelling Dance Artist" (*melissahekkers.com*, August 7, 2014) <<https://melissahekkers.com/maturity-compelling-dance-artist/>> accessed April 17, 2024.

division of the island in 1974 and ensuing modernisation initiatives, exemplifies a complex interplay of external influences, predominantly because of the Greek cultural ties. The lack of substantial artistic academic infrastructure until the late 1980s necessitated that aspiring Cypriot artists and art historians sought education abroad, predominantly in Greece and the United Kingdom. Even if this fostered a robust cultural and academic exchanges between Cyprus and Greece, it profoundly shaped the ideological orientation of Cypriot art, which often incorporates an expansive Hellenic narrative linking. The opening the Cyprus State Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1990 marked a pivotal institutional advancement, establishing a dedicated space for the exhibition of Cypriot art and symbolising broader state-driven modernisation efforts and consolidating that such practices were essential. Concurrently, the rise of both private and public educational institutions that incorporated art history into their curricula—albeit often as a supplementary subject allied with disciplines such as architecture or multimedia—reflects an emergent yet fragmented interest in formulating a distinct Cypriot art historical narrative that resonates with both national and regional identities. Understandably, the island’s division continues to influence educational practices and cultural policies, with institutions in the north, under Turkish influence, often deemed ‘illegal’ by the Republic of Cyprus and the United Nations.⁷⁵ This distinction complicates discussions concerning art education’s legitimacy, highlighting the persistent challenges related to cultural identity and heritage in a politically segmented landscape. As a result, the evolution of the art scene in Cyprus mirrors the broader socio-political dynamics of the region, highlighting further how art serves as a medium for negotiating cultural and political identities amid ongoing national and intercultural tensions, making it clear that there has been an ideological perspective that has undervalued the arts.

Considering all factors, when Arianna Economou invited Steve Paxton, a prominent dancer and choreographer, to Cyprus in 1989 following his tour of the Goldberg Variations, it underscored Economou’s profound pioneering influence in the island at that time. In my interviews with Economou, I have realised how she has contributed to these developments of modernization through her close ties with Paxton and their shared project *Extended Mobility* (1997), a workshop and conference that took place in Cyprus and focused on able and disabled people coming together in dance through contact improvisation. She shared with me how ‘everything was so new for

⁷⁵ Areti Adamopoulou, “Born of a ‘Peripheral’ Modernism: Art History in Greece and Cyprus,” *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks* (BRILL 2012).

everyone, and I had all these ideas to teach contact improvisation for the first time in Cyprus with Steve Paxton'.⁷⁶ The new methods of working, which might not have been so unique in Europe, were re-orientated and negotiated in the Cyprus art scene for performance artists to follow later. The methodological tools of contact improvisation introduced a sense of awareness in 'sensing time'⁷⁷ between bodies on stage. Economou's ability to stretch the language in a different, more abstract apparatus in performance art began a relational disruption to the broader space in Cyprus outside the rehearsal room and the stage.

Going deeper into Economou's vision to move outside the specific instructions in choreography and theatre assumed emancipation, where her embodiment on stage became a tool of resistance. Her methodology on contact improvisation introduced a new dance practice of non-stylised movement that aimed to eliminate restrictions and raise a 'freer type of movement and contact'.⁷⁸ This freer capability attunes a corporeal communion on stage that engenders a deconstruction in subjectivity and suggests a conjunction between the 'physical world that enables [one to freely] act'.⁷⁹ Hence, the body, even if it is in a conversation with its surroundings, with the space it inhabits, while entering the space of performance art, can assume a new domain that engages dialogue and witness. The philosophical implication of this approach suggests a matrix between space, relationality, and the body in which autonomy is not invoked as a possibility but rather as a process of experimentation. This remains, to an extent, a cross-examination of the importance of place and its impact and connection to Economou's sense of responsibility as an artist concerning the *seascape of trauma* I am trying to articulate.

I went back to the works of Economou in their documented form, which move beyond the ephemerality found in performance pieces. In the writings of performance art history, this process is thought to 'lessen the promise of [the performance's] ontology';⁸⁰ however, it does not lessen its impact. In this aspect, I understand how I moved beyond the artist's presence in the physical space. She negotiated intentions concerning the performance piece and entered a domain where I extrapolated new

⁷⁶ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁷⁷ Steve Paxton, "Contact Improvisation" (1975) 19 *The Drama Review*.

⁷⁸ Robert Turner, "Steve Paxton's 'Interior Techniques': Contact Improvisation and Political Power" (2010) 54 *TDR/The Drama Review* 123.

⁷⁹ Kate Rigby, Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher, "Contact Improvisation: Dance with the Earth Body You Have" in Katherine Gibson (ed), *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene* (Punctum Books 2015).

⁸⁰ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge 2003).

modes of trauma presentation through her own works. In her piece *Walking the Line* (1998), Economou uses her voice and invites the audience to relate to the fears inherently brought when lines are created as borders and divisions manifest. Revisiting the work done in 1998 in a linear progression of time, 25 years later, I realised that my questions were contained from memory and history, perhaps internalised by my interpretations of *the seascape of trauma*. I situated this re-visioning through certain predispositions which were unavoidable. The line pulled through the string in the performance resonates in the context of Cyprus, carries a precise connotation, and can be identified in the discourse of trauma I grew up with. It brings to the surface the seascape I am referring to as a cultural setting, circulated by trajectories of certain narratives that extend as records of personal experiences. The understanding seascape of the island, which is an integral part of the identity, does not simply work as a memory container but shapes how memory is experienced, performed, and remembered from the past in the present—through the body of the performer, to the audience that experiences it either live or documented. For Economou, this notion of trauma is connected to a cultural setting. In our interviews, she states: ‘Trauma is a cultural setting, and this is how trauma works. It is in the body. It is cellular, and it has a repeating effect, whether it is with the topos that serve to remind us or with the individual. The person and the topos are intertwined’.⁸¹ Her words shed light on putting the *seascape of trauma* into a cultural setting to understand how trauma works in her understanding. Anthropologist Eric Hirsch informs us that landscapes cannot be representational, as they are part of people’s everyday practice in constant flux.⁸² This flux avoids essentialism or stasis in meaning. In this way, the repeating effect might unveil. The landscapes are engaged with the body as we create relevance, a symbol connected thoroughly through fabricated narratives or imposed subjectivities that are often repeated. Connecting her words to the performance piece, it is relevant to how the string unveils. It opens possibilities for a new understanding of a seascape that remains in fluidity. At the same time, the static nature of the physicality of the string, as a division visual symbol in Cyprus (that divides the north and the south), questions the boundaries of the political space that has been shaped and mediated through the artist’s subjectivity and the audience’s subjectivity when perceived, juxtaposing further how the person and the *topos* can be intertwined. As a tool in her per-

⁸¹ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁸² Eric Hirsch and Michael O’Hanlon, *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space* (Clarendon Press 1995).

formance, there is communicative competence of an explicit material which involves an assumption of accountability, while she listed names of people who shared their traumatic experiences of 1974 and thus creates a verbal connotation of the trauma in the actual context of Cyprus, where the performance piece negotiated the immaterial (the body/ thevoice) with the material (the string) in a constitutive domain that reinstates a verbalism that is shared through the use of language that co-creates the performance piece.⁸³ In her piece, Economou is concerned with the narratives of who has left us, who preceded us, and who has crossed the lines, questioning specificity in haziness. She becomes a singular voice that speaks of the sociality of bodies presented in grand narratives. She refers to this as ‘invoking previous generations of women and their stories’ in the present.⁸⁴ All those names mentioned in her performance, Andri, Maritsa, and Persefoni (among others), were practices of remembrance, of stories of women she had been told as a child in Paphos and Nicosia of people who had to abandon their land in search of another, exercising endurance as they were on the run looking for a home. She creates a dynamic of relatedness and mutual vulnerability by bringing her body to perform and on stage, along with the stories of other females that preceded her. In that position, her role appears as a challenger



Photo 1: Still from the performance piece Walking the Line (1998), Kasteliotissa Medieval Hall. Courtesy of the artist.

⁸³ Jones D and Bauman R, “Verbal Art as Performance” (1986) 45 *Western Folklore* 34

⁸⁴ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

or a creator of certain *Othered* narratives that have been suppressed but articulated to mediate different understandings of a *seascape of trauma* that has not yet been defined in history books in Cyprus.

When I asked Economou to comment on what the string meant for her, she referred to it as ‘the line, the horizon, the mountain, the line that is fluid, the line on the shore’.⁸⁵ I found myself crisscrossing these boundaries of ordinary life in the performance of Economou with her negotiation with both the symbolic and the literal space of Cyprus as a contentious society with all the narratives that carry their meanings, along with my personal ones. Through that, the relationality to the fluid structure of the line that moves (as embodied in the string) is where the *seascape of trauma* can be articulated. As a fluid transition in which subjectivities are often asked to negotiate with, through, and within their lives.

Economou’s negotiation with the space can not only be interpreted solely on the experimental quality of her performance but rather on the part where she embodies (borrowed by performance artist Vito Acconci’s teachings) a ‘social dimension, projecting social, political and ideological influences that reflect social conditions’.⁸⁶ By doing so, *Walking the Line* (1998) invites the audience to an awareness of the complex surrounding events and situations, albeit not met in the streets in the form of protest. As art historian RoseLee Goldberg identifies, it coincides with the viability of the performance art to create a field of interdisciplinarity through poetry, literature, dance, and other domains, in a combination that would enact a reconstruction of thinking.⁸⁷ In a visual interpretation, the tactile presence of the string that indicates a border iconography envisions a monumental-like figuration that captivates or posits the audience in a narrative of an existing situation that is relatable and helps us explore the past in a rewriting of history.

In our interview, when I narrowed down the discussion to this specific performance piece, prompting Economou to describe her thinking and process behind the performance:

I considered it my duty. What kind of an artist would I be if I had not addressed the fact that every day, I wake up looking at the mountain of Kyrenia, pretending it does not exist or is not there? I wonder what this did to me and my whole

⁸⁵ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁸⁶ Thomas Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art: Interviews with Vito Acconci, John Ahearn* (MIT Press 2000).

⁸⁷ RoseLee Goldberg, “Performance Art from Futurism to the Present,” *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader* (Routledge 2013).

life. In this process, we almost all see it and pretend we are not seeing it. This cultivates personalities of denial. Seeing that landscape and pretending, deciding it was not important whether we were seeing it or not. Perhaps this is a result of trauma. I didn't think of all this when doing my work related to the Cyprus conflict. I didn't go deeper into it as the politicians created this denial. Nobody addressed the fact that we were grieving. Grief was not acknowledged, so people went further in their denial. We never received an acknowledgment or recognition of the pain, the sorrow, and the fact that the island we grew up in was founded on loss, on the restriction of mobility of what was throttling my throat, as that was prohibited from crossing all streets in one island. I recognise the denial twenty-three years after (1998 marked the twenty-third year of the invasion). And then said no, this can't be it, and started putting into context all this trauma in my work.⁸⁸

In analysing the above, her words during our interview opened up space for other understandings, where I stopped examining subjectivities in concrete ways and started thinking about the *seascape of trauma* more broadly and how identities have been fluidly constructed. I narrowed down the words: *duty*, *denial*, *grief*, and *trauma*, and began exploring how these words were used interchangeably. This witnessing of the traumatic history of Cyprus compelled Economou to accept that there is a collective responsibility to remember—that one should take it in as a 'duty'—and invert it in her performance practice to a relational embodiment in conjunction with the space, in its broader sense, Cyprus—a process in which has been referred to as 'memoration'.⁸⁹ In her words, it can be inferred that scripting history and performing the trauma in her work was a vital process to transcend in time and space that required her to recognise the denial. The land as a space opens how the landscape can work as a monument of remembrance, aiming the same way as the monument to be an 'emblematic embodiment of power and memory'⁹⁰ and, at the same time, serve its purpose to remind that intergenerational trauma exists and is still very much profound. The space transfers into a collective memory where fragments of personal memory are gathered and reconstructed. The land is not a blank slate, it comprises parts of an

⁸⁸ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

⁸⁹ Leah Decter, "Dis/Locating Preferential Memory within Settler Colonial Landscapes: A Forward-Looking Backward Glance at Memoration's Per/Formation" (2022) 7 *Performing (in) Place: Moving on/with the Land* 51.

⁹⁰ M Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (MIT Press 1994).

identity, and histories and the body are entangled within it.⁹¹ In this vein, once embedded in identified places, trauma suggests that our knowledge of particulate sites, like landscapes of seascape, is 'linked to knowledge of the self',⁹² suggestive of how memoro-politics function. It is questionable whether such formations are the rubric of ethnogeography that preserves the lived-in-worlds of the subjects situated in each space at a given time. However, for Economou, it seems that the physical space she resides in has inescapably worked in her practice's political and social framework. Her understanding of space introduces us to a way of seeing and knowing the deep history of events in Cyprus.

Going back to *Walking the Line* (1998), the semantics of the string in this regard, activate a representation of the material ground of Cyprus and its division since 1974, and her embodiment on stage suggests that there is an experience of that landscape, and the *topos* through a sensual and sensing body. By re-staging a metaphorical division on stage, she performs an identity in action the same way it is constituted in the identity already formed by the conditions of the *seascape of trauma* and her subjectivity. All these come with the boundaries of remembering. However, those acts of remembering are reclaimed when her body is assembled to exercise a particular performance piece that is then moved into the public domain as a performative force aiming to be read as a process of 'we are still here', meaning 'we have not yet been disposed of'.⁹³ As she mentioned, she reclaims agency that has been taken from her, not being allowed to cross all streets, and not being able to have a voice as a female practitioner. Borrowing from Butler and Athanasiou on the politics of the performative, I cross-connect Economou's activism with that of protest through art, which enacts a different story in a body politic that might be different on stage but can be kept as a historical record of memoro-politics and constant contestations of how silenced our memories have been in the *seascape of trauma* in Cyprus.

I was particularly entangled with her words that mentioned 'grief' and 'denial', extrapolated by the interview, as they reveal a constituting personal and public memory in the aesthetic space she has created and negotiated in her praxis. In the form of witnessing, LaCapra informs us how testimonies in history are complex as they

⁹¹ Dan Hicks and Mary C Beaudry, *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (OUP Oxford 2010).

⁹² Keith H Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (UNM Press 1996).

⁹³ Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (John Wiley & Sons 2013).

initiate a 'secondary witness' that intertwines both a subject-position in the form of testimony that confess the story as the witness.⁹⁴ Economou's work, to an extent, incorporates this theoretical framework of witnessing by simultaneously embodying other people's narratives and her narrative as a postcolonial gendered subject. The question is whether Economou adapts her performing body in an overlap between the real, the fictional, and the potential. To answer this question, her linear body sets up the space, and the borderscape becomes the imaginary perception of what could have been. At this point, the seascape can be fully articulated as a fluid spectrum in which one can explore and embody different notions of the self and others and in re-defining identities imposed by certain narratives and various understandings of the political as a being in the world and with others.

Walking the Line (1998), therefore, obtains a threefold structure in terms of intentionality: the autobiographical, the documentary, and the visual. This range of re-visioning adapts our understanding of grief and shapes how we exist and negotiate with the space in a present understanding. In some of our e-mail exchanges, Arianna Economou replied to these thoughts interestingly, positing herself similarly to a mythology character. As "Io beaten by the gadfly in Aeschulus Tragedy of Prometheus, where I run look in for the end of the road. I am not looking for a home, but I ask where will this road lead me to?"⁹⁵ The notion of being at home, of belonging, is perhaps what has instigated Economou to elaborate on an artistic practice that constantly searches for other meanings, always having in mind her lived experience, as well as the experiences of others in the context of Cyprus.

Reflexively, I have focused on the aesthetic and political aspects of Economou's performance through a perception where affect has been introduced based on a corporeal dynamic with her body on screen for those that saw it live and in our discussions. I acknowledge that most of the analytical aspect of *Walking the Line* (1998) was a result of contextualising the unclaimed memories of Economou and the urge to adjust this research on the work of disremembered female artists in the context of Cyprus.

7. Maintaining Dance as Activism

Economou's work is multifaceted, and one of the central aspects it carries that disrupts dominant systems is her methodological tools and her political self that initiat-

⁹⁴ Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999) 25 *Critical Inquiry* 696.

⁹⁵ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, January 19, 2023

ed intercommunal collaborative youth projects in 2004. As mentioned, throughout our meetings, we went back to the definition of the *seascape of trauma* that I kept mentioning and her relatability of it being referred to as a ‘dance activist’. In one of our discussions, she confesses: ‘I was isolated from some that would dare to call me a traitor. Some thought that working on inter-communal works was a betrayal, and even the state officials would not fund such projects’.⁹⁶ What was particularly intriguing is how Economou’s feminist activist-aesthetic method grew resentment in Cyprus, either because of the political contestations or because of other types of internalised traumas that did not allow the notion of mutual respect for both communities (Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots) to flourish, either coming from the state or the people.

While I explored *Shared Echoes I* (2004), a collaborative project with Joshua Bisset, Edward Svhocker, Alexandra Waierstall, and Horst Waierstall, I realised the aim of Economou in collaboration with EMAA (The European Mediterranean Artists Association) did not stop her peacebuilding initiatives through the physical existence and presence of bodies and the articulation of various performance events. As she mentions, *Echoes II* followed *Echoes I*, which also focused on establishing through a creative process a common ground of personal histories and relationships with a common thematic framework that incorporated peace and understanding for both communities. Both collaborative projects stimulated social and political action, referred to as ‘redressive performances’,⁹⁷ where several subjectivities embodied in space politicise their presence, that aimed for change. In the context of the *seascape of trauma* in Cyprus, initiating new thinking in performance outside the mere physical presence of just one artist was foreign, let alone incorporating other subjectivities that were further marginalised (the Turkish-speaking Cypriots). This assembly of different subjectivities and audiences was a pedagogical tool that could easily be standardised as an essential hidden curriculum embedded in a space that has endured division and conflict for 50 years.

Economou ruptured with institutions and dominant narratives since 2004, and trim work has been made or was widely accepted as expected in terms of intercommunal exchanges. Doing this, she entered or voiced art’s autonomy as a value. The collaborative project was a valorisation of a new language that moved beyond ‘sub-

⁹⁶ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, March 15, 2023

⁹⁷ Meiling Cheng, *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* (Univ of California Press 2002).

jection [as a] negative disciplinary definition of a subject by discourse, to subjectification: the self-creation of a new subject-position through the imagination and performance of other forms of (artistic, social) subjectivity'.⁹⁸ Hence, the production of several collaborative projects with all the artists involved, as well as the audience, opened a space of radical engagement that forged a challenge in dominant narratives that insisted on separating the two communities for so long. As mentioned, 2004 marked the opening of checkpoints that allowed the two communities for the first time after so many years to re-communicate. Art's involvement in its autonomous form suggested a visible form of artistic and political engagement that insisted on a sovereign structural reform of thinking and practice. The fact that Economou was referred to as a 'traitor' because of the agency to follow political art and openly share her stance on the Cyprus Problem suggests that performance art in its form must not only be viewed as an artistic inquiry but also in terms of a socio-political context.

Further in her contribution to creating and initiating collaborative pedagogical inter-communal projects, Economou was also involved in the initiative to set up the Dance House of Nicosia, which aimed to be a space for collective and individual action for all performers residing on the island, and the future generation to come. For her, the creation of new space was:

To provide a physical space for professional work to develop and create programmes for dance development that will lead to a broader understanding of performance art in an interdisciplinary approach. I had envisioned a space for the artists to work and cultivate new audiences, to work on the ideals of audience development.⁹⁹

Even if Economou did not refer to it as a characteristic of feminist art, her involvement in creating a space that would question 'aesthetic and social assumptions [with] a new respect for [the] audience' was not simply fused with activism and education. It was a pioneer way to address the under-representability of a field that has long been on the margin.¹⁰⁰ It was a mode of moving against the inscribed normative thinking of what performance meant outside ballet and the colonial rhetoric ingrained in certain stereotypes. As performance studies scholar Sovini Madison argues, 'performance

⁹⁸ G Grindon, "Surrealism, Dada, and the Refusal of Work: Autonomy, Activism, and Social Participation in the Radical Avant-Garde" (2011) 34 *Oxford Art Journal* 79.

⁹⁹ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, March 15, 2023

¹⁰⁰ Lucy R Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s" (1980) 40 *Art Journal* 362.

pedagogy has moral, artistic, political, and material consequences', which calls upon new voices to strike in, including the differences that reshape subjectivities, audiences, and performers.¹⁰¹ It brings along a mode of inquiry where performance is, by default, activation of the political in its true meaning. The artist's role in this regard is further negotiated in a public sphere that inscribes a new mode of artistic education and unravels a contribution to mapping performance in a politically discursive domain. It is unavoidable, given how artmaking is created in a spatial-temporal dimension that may, at times, move beyond the setting it is initially created in. The role of human agency in art cannot be put aside as it is 'influenced by the historical circumstances in the given time and space' that formulates its shape.¹⁰² In this conception, therefore, Economou, through her inter-communal exchanges and involvement in creating a dance space, encapsulates the essence of the political, the one whom, as philosopher Hannah Arendt defines, is political through speech and action.¹⁰³

8. Conclusion

This article focused on only three specific performance pieces: *Σώμα, Χώρος* (transl. Body, Space) in 1983, *Walking the Line* in 1998, and *Echoes I & II* in 2004. All these works refer to the context of Cyprus and its deep history of colonial legacies, displacement in 1974, and the gendered ramifications resulting from years of suppression and alterity that formed subjectivities. Economou's positionality is negotiated through her gendered subjectivity imposed by normative matrices of power; nonetheless, through my encounters with Economou, I have realised how this suppression made her articulate the political in her life that translated into her practice. Performance art has been an under-represented field in Cyprus precisely because of what comprised 'high art' in the public's general understanding, as well as the divisions between the north and the south.

Economou, as a pioneer in the field, did not simply let her practice on stage speak. Instead, she worked on pedagogical tools, determined to change the broader scene of how performance has been perceived and understood on the island. Our one-to-one interviews discussed the works referred to in this chapter with Economou. Several

¹⁰¹ Sovini Madison, "Performances, Personal Narratives and the Politics of Possibility," *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions* (National Communication Association 1998).

¹⁰² Girma Negash, "Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political" (2004) 25 *International Political Science Review* 185.

¹⁰³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: Second Edition* (University of Chicago Press 2018).

extrapolations were being made on how the public perceived her early in her career, placing her as an ‘inappropriate/d other’ that refused to align with the reiterated female subjectivity being imposed on her.¹⁰⁴

There has been an overlapping use of the *seascape of trauma* that was intentionally not given a specific definition, but instead was unpacked in a way that unravels the fluidity of trauma where all subjectivities are formed that are often negotiated by the surrounding, a concept that coincides with memoro-politics and can be symbolic of the geographical locality of Cyprus on the map as an island in the Mediterranean. What was kept from our interviews with Economou is how she always referred to her ancestry as one that defines her. At times she mentioned them as ‘the ones that preceded her or came before’, suggesting that the intergenerational trauma does not reside in temporality; and, relatively, it is fixed, but its impact on those who witnessed it as an actual event, alongside with the meta-witnesses of the narratives that we have been told.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps it is there that the responsibility or how Economou refers to it as a ‘duty’ to be political in her work prevails. The trauma in Cyprus needs to be addressed as it entails a seascape of violence that comes in waves in a spatial setting, where depending on the time is amplified or silenced.

It is worth mentioning that Arianna Economou’s practice emanates from her subjectivity located in a contentious space.¹⁰⁶ Contention in this analysis was used to describe contradictory experiences of space in terms of the spatial conditions of Cyprus and its partition that lay in Cyprus’ British colonial legacies long before the line of division between the Turkish-speaking Cypriots and the Greek-speaking Cypriots was drawn. Locating Economou’s practice in this terrain is based on her active negotiation to offer the alternative in the art scene both in content as an activist that worked with inter-communal projects between Turkish-speaking Cypriots and Greek-speaking Cypriot creators and audiences and her body on stage as a medium that differed substantially by the societal and aesthetic expectations of the time. Considering that there is ‘an aesthetic dimension in the political and a political dimension in art’, this

¹⁰⁴ Trinh T Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indiana University Press 2009).

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Arianna Economou, Nicosia, March 15, 2023

¹⁰⁶ Martin D and Miller B, “Space and Contentious Politics” (2003) 8 *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 143

research re-visions the political in Economou's subjectivity that is expanded in her practice.¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁷ Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces" (2007) 1 *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*.

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**BOOK
REVIEWS**

Turkish Imperialism and Deterrence **[Τουρκικός Ιμπεριαλισμός και Αποτροπή]**

Vassilis Fouskas

Epikentro Publishers

Athens, 2022 (pp. 249)

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This is a book that assesses the theme of Turkish imperialism and the potential Greek deterrence in a unique way. Vassilis Fouskas attempts to critically evaluate the Greco-Turkish antagonism and the dynamics around it. The author also attempts to examine the Turkish regional imperialism and the Greek efforts for deterrence.

Fouskas critically describes the structures of the Greek and the Turkish economy and state respectively –for the author this is of particular importance in comprehending the dynamics of the Greco-Turkish antagonism. He describes the limitations of the Greek capital, as well as its indifference to national issues.

‘Greece from the beginning of its existence (as a modern state), is a dependent state because its bourgeois classes are subservient to the foreign (western) capital.’ (p. 29)

At the same time he considers that the structure of the Turkish economy is such that the Turkish capital cooperates with the state for the achievement of national objectives. Fouskas also elaborates on particular socioeconomic indicators of Turkey and Greece –national debt, population, economic growth rates, etc.– which indicate that Turkey is ahead.

According to Fouskas, the Turkish working class and the Turkish people must cooperate with the socialist movement of the Greek people, because only such a working class –people’s rule in Greece in conjunction with the further development of a respective movement in Turkey- can put an end to the imperialism of the Turkish state and the internal authoritarianism which has tortured in various ways the Turkish society (p. 36). I do not share this approach. It is very idealistic –I consider it mission impossible. It reminds me of the Marxist hypothesis before World War I, which indicated that the confrontation would be prevented because the working classes would refuse to fight against each other.

Fouskas considers that the two major objectives of the 1821 Greek Revolution,

that of national independence and people's sovereignty and of social liberation, in other words a national people's and class objective, still remain unfulfilled (p. 41).

In relation to the theoretical positions about 'tolerance' and 'mercy' on behalf of the Ottoman Empire toward its subjects, they constitute a myth and not a reality according to Fouskas (p. 49).

The author also notes that the 'Greek state was created following a geopolitical intervention of England and France with the purpose to prevent the influence of Russia over the Greek territory' (p. 54). I would suggest that, as Russia was also involved in the creation of the Greek state, the objective of Britain and France was to contain the damage and the losses of the Ottoman Empire and, furthermore, to not allow Moscow to monopolise Greek sympathy and support.

According to Fouskas, 'an interesting conclusion with sustained historic and political significance that is derived from these international political circumstances is that, if the relationship between Russia and Turkey is problematic, this benefits the Greek interests to the extent that in the Greek government there are competent diplomatic skills which exercise a multidimensional foreign policy, like in the case of Kapodistrias' (p. 59).

I think this has not always been the case; Fouskas' argument seems to be absolute. I think the outcome also depends on the West and its relations with Turkey. One could also suggest that, when the antagonism between Russia and the West is heightened, it is more likely that Turkey will have its way with the West. And in such an event, the Greek interests are not served.

Fouskas also notes that, while Greece was liberated from the Ottoman yoke, it was enslaved to the West (p. 62). Furthermore, according to the author, the struggle continues on various levels and domains, with threats in Cyprus, the Aegean and Thrace. At the same time there is the need to struggle for social liberation. I think it is up to the Greeks to influence, if not define, the relation of their country with the West.

Fouskas raises several questions that revolve around the record of the state, the struggles for social justice and the position of the country in the international system. He also notes that 'the turning point which must be understood in relation to the Greek historic ruling elite in the 2010 crisis was not what it declared to do, but what it decided to not do. And that was not to leave the Eurozone' (p. 108). In this regard he also refers to Lapavitsas, who had argued in favour of the return to the national currency.

Fouskas also notes that 'in June 2021 the public debt of Greece had risen to 235%

of its GDP, while that of Turkey was only 28,3% of the GDP' (p. 121). In this regard he takes the opportunity to criticise the dependence of Greece -in all domains- on Western institutions. He also presents several socioeconomic indicators to make his point that Greece is lagging behind Turkey and the West.

Fouskas also stresses that Turkey is much stronger than Greece and it asserts its independence in all domains of the international system. At the same time he notes that Turkey is a revisionist power with growing aspirations.

The author also refers to the relations between Turkey and the United Kingdom 'and explains why Britain is in favour of the partition of Cyprus' (p. 155). My view is that the issue is much more complex. Britain would support a loose federation or even a *sui generis* confederation, but not a two-state solution. With a two-state solution the British presence in Cyprus might be negatively affected.

Fouskas again calls 'for an effort for people's involvement to deter the Turkish regional imperialism.' Fouskas also quotes Davutoğlu: 'The Turkish world extends from the Adriatic Sea to the Wall of China' (p. 167). This stresses, among other things, the importance of the demographic factors in the international system and power dynamics.

Although I do not agree with all the arguments that Fouskas puts forward, I recognize that his work is a pioneering one. And the comparison of the structures of the Greek and Turkish economies and states respectively helps us better comprehend the specific issues under consideration.

Andreas Theophanous

Aspects and Refractions of the Cypriot 1821
- Faces, Sketches and Shadows
[Πτυχές και Διαθλάσεις του Κυπριακού 1821
- Πρόσωπα, Σχέδια και Σκιές]

Petros Papapolyviou

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Petros Papapolyviou's work *Πτυχές και Διαθλάσεις του Κυπριακού 1821* offers a meticulous examination of archival material, demonstrating both rigorous scholarship and an impressive attention to detail. Through careful exploration of every available scrap of documented evidence, Papapolyviou raises fundamental questions about familiar interpretive issues, exhibits philosophical reflections, and analyses historical phenomena. His idea of history follows the pattern of *longue durée*, questioning stereotypical historicist, closely context-oriented paradigms, and renders a structurally and intuitively unique contribution to Cypriological studies within a territory previously unexplored.

Papapolyviou traces the development of Cypriot irredentist visions, noting their evolution into one of the longest-standing historical trajectories in modern Greek history. Two key aspects of collective consciousness are addressed: the first relates to the subject of Cypriot history itself, which remains largely unappealing in modern Greek historiography, even 200 years after the Greek Revolution of 1821. As Papapolyviou observes, narrow, centralised perspectives in Greece often overshadow the revolutionary contributions of relatively smaller regions, such as Cyprus, that ultimately remained outside the Greek state. The second aspect concerns the trend within Cypriot historiography that frames the island's inhabitants as 'Ottoman Cypriots', suggesting a process of Hellenisation only beginning in the late 19th century. This issue, rooted in the deconstructive sociology of nationalism, has indeed shaped discussions in the past three decades. Papapolyviou's analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of Cypriot history as part of broader socio-political and cultural movements.

Furthermore, Papapolyviou invites reflection on broader questions of historical experience and its representation. History emerges as a rich journey into the past,

enriching perspectives and revealing a complex network of events, actions, progressions, manifold sufferings, and ideological and moral tensions. Over time, ideas and actions are transformed into remnants of history. These remnants, mere fragments of the past, leave traces that scholars and historians must meticulously reconstruct and interpret. Monuments, ruins, texts and manuscripts evoke a range of emotions, from sorrow to wonder, but they also prompt contemplation on humanity's enduring struggle toward fundamental ideals such as liberty and autonomy. The central thread running through history is precisely the pursuit of a universal purpose, often manifesting as the quest for freedom, which reappears consistently across various historical periods and is revitalised through sacrifice and perseverance.

The historiographical process, as illustrated in Papapolyviou's work, is not merely a collection of facts, but an intellectual and imaginative reconstruction of the past. History is viewed not as a static account, but as a dynamic dialogue between the past and the present (between the living and the dead). Ideas and experiences from previous centuries continue to inspire and inform, creating a dialogue that spans across time. This view aligns with Papapolyviou's method, which involves a deep engagement with historical figures, bringing them to life within contemporary discussions while ensuring that they remain rooted in their historical context.

Papapolyviou's discussion of the 'Cypriot problem of 1821' reveals how insufficiently explored this topic has been within historiographical discourse. The inclusion of Philios Zannetos, a figure of major significance in the third part of the book, emphasises the importance of this overlooked aspect of historical evolution. Zannetos, commissioned by the Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus in 1922 (a century after the Greek Revolution) to compile a special edition about Cyprus (*Κυπριακόν Δεύκωμα*), highlights the contributions of the island in the struggle for national independence. Papapolyviou presents Zannetos as a figure who contributes to a historical dialogue that transcends time. Zannetos' work, *Cyprus During the Century of Regeneration: 1821–1930*, published in 1930, provides insights into the sacrifices made by Cyprus over a century, forming a symbolic continuity with Papapolyviou's research in 2022.

The research conducted by Papapolyviou into the events of the 'Cypriot 1821' is a thorough investigation, offering more than a mere summary of past efforts. The analysis moves beyond a superficial reading of historical struggles, instead placing these efforts within the broader context of individual and collective aspirations. Papapolyviou not only revitalises historical actors, but also projects their struggles into future

considerations, ensuring that history remains an active, intellectual endeavour rather than a fossilised relic of the past.

Key Themes

Influence of the Enlightenment

Papapolyviou's work illustrates the profound impact of Enlightenment ideals on Cypriot intellectual circles in the early 19th century. This influence appears in various letters, declarations, and memoranda, notably in the two letters (signed 'Cyprus, Κύπρος') that Frangoudes delivered to Ioannis Capodistrias in 1828. These letters reflect core Enlightenment concepts, such as natural rights, freedom, rationality, and the idea of societal progress toward happiness. Educated Cypriots embraced these ideals during a transitional period marked by the unification of dispersed states into nation-states. This challenges the misconception, often propagated under British colonial rule, that Cypriots were primitive people isolated on a barren island. Instead, they actively participated in a dynamic intellectual movement shaping European political thought.

Internal Divisions and Discord

A recurring theme in Cypriot history is the pattern of internal divisions, conflicts, and disputes among Cypriots, whether exiles, fugitives, or residents of the island, including discords within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Papapolyviou's analysis reveals that these divisions, though often portrayed as signs of discord, were in fact inevitable and at times essential to the fabric of historical understanding. Historical experience shows that the synthesis of ideas through dialogue, however contentious, has always been a foundational element of political and social development. While these exchanges may not have mirrored modern democratic pluralism, they played a critical role in shaping political consciousness and rational decision-making in a fragmented society.

Capodistrias and the 'Great Idea'

Ioannis Capodistrias, Greece's first Governor, emerges as a central figure in Papapolyviou's exploration of the Cypriot irredentist vision. Capodistrias' correspondence with the British Secretary of State for War and Colonies reveals his sophisticated diplomatic thinking and steadfast commitment to expanding the Greek nation. Citing ancient geographer Strabo, Capodistrias argued that the historical boundaries of Greece, obscured by four centuries of foreign domination, were restored during the Greek War of Independence. As Papapolyviou notes, Capodistrias was the first Greek leader to explicitly include the Greeks of Cyprus within the envisioned Greek state

boundaries. His assertion positioned Cyprus as part of Greece's rightful territory, a bold stance that remained unparalleled in international diplomacy for decades.

Charalambos Malis and the Human Condition

In Part B of his book, 'Human Traces', Papapolyviou sheds light on the largely forgotten figure of Charalambos Malis, regarded as one of the most distinguished Cypriot fighters in the Greek Revolution. Despite his significance, little is known about Malis today, either in Cyprus or Greece, and the year and place of his death remain undocumented. Papapolyviou reproduces Malis' essay 'Characters or On the Unspeakable', published in *Athena*, in Nafplio in 1832. The essay critiques political opportunism and moral decay, with Machiavellian undertones. Malis' depiction of the 'uncharacteristic' politician -one who shifts allegiances and deceives both friends and foes- exposes the darker aspects of political life. The essay's philosophical depth, drawing on ancient Greek, Renaissance, and theological thought, underscores Malis' intellectual sophistication.

Eschatological Perspective and Cypriot Destiny

Papapolyviou's exploration of Cypriot history culminates in a reflection on the eschatological hope of union with Greece, a vision that once seemed to transcend historical constraints. However, historical reality has often revealed such aspirations to be utopian. The only certainty in history, as Papapolyviou presents it, is the human condition: people who struggle, act, and endure suffering. A letter from Kyprianos Theseus to the elders of Hydra, dated 5 October 1821, encapsulates this struggle, urging fellow Greeks to liberate their compatriots in Cyprus (p. 46). Despite being marginalised by the newly established Greek state, which prioritised other regions, Cypriots faced immense hardship in their participation in the struggle for Greek independence. Papapolyviou meticulously documents the contributions of hundreds of Cypriots who joined the revolutionary cause, raising the question of how many more remain unrecorded in history. This reflection on Cypriot sacrifices highlights the deeper complexities of historical remembrance.

Conclusion

Two centuries after the Greek Revolution, Cypriots remain divided over questions of national identity, their ancestors' contributions to the revolutionary struggle, and the broader meaning of historical consciousness. This division reflects deeper socio-political realities shaped by longstanding misunderstandings and ideological rigidity. Papapolyviou's work challenges simplistic narratives, urging a more nuanced

understanding of the evolution of ideas. Historians, like archaeologists, must delve into the layers of the past to uncover unfulfilled expectations and significant, hidden complexities. The Greek identity of Cypriots, their alignment with irredentist visions, and their cultural and religious traditions were not postcolonial constructs, but were rooted in deep historical processes.

The revolutionary upheavals of the late 18th and early 19th centuries produced independent states free from imperial rule. While these movements were not exclusively nationalistic, they left indelible marks on historical consciousness. The sacrifices of the Cypriots, notably the massacres of July 9, illustrate the tangible and painful realities of this historical period. Papapolyviou's meticulous work provides a sequence of historical events, offering valuable insights into the persistence of deferred hopes and expectations.

A recurring intellectual challenge lies in interpreting the past through a contemporary lens. This anachronistic perspective often leads to misinterpretations or overly modernised historical narratives. To truly understand history, the past must be approached from the vantage point of its own time, not through contemporary conceptual frameworks. Attempts to reshape historical narratives in light of present-day concerns can lead to distortions unless grounded in the chronology and development of historical facts.

Papapolyviou's work stands as a significant contribution to the study of Cypriot history, marked by a dedication and scholarship that reflect both intellectual rigour and a commitment to historical accuracy. His approach to history as a living memory invites further research and reflection on the historical trajectories that continue to shape the modern Cypriot identity.

Kyriakos Demetriou

The Middle East in Turmoil: Foreign Interference & Poor Leadership

Aris Petasis

Shilka Publishing

UK, 2023 (pp. 607)

ISBN: 9781804430415 (Hardback)

9781804430422 (Paperback)

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What's in it for the reader?

Unpack the complexities of the Middle East with Dr Aris Petasis' 'The Middle East in Turmoil.' This insightful book explores the multifaceted challenges of the region, from foreign interference to leadership struggles, highlighting the plight of minority groups. By delving into these pressing issues, Dr Petasis offers a comprehensive look at enduring conflicts and the geopolitical dynamics shaping today's Middle Eastern landscape. Whether you're a history buff, a political enthusiast, or someone keen to understand this volatile region, the book provides valuable perspectives and predictions about its future.

The Struggles of Minorities

The author examines the existential threats facing minority groups in the Middle East, such as the Greeks in Cyprus and the Kurdish populations. Many of these groups that have millennia-old roots, face the possibility of extinction. The book outlines how demographic pressures and foreign influence contribute to their precarious situation. For instance, the demographic decline among Lebanese and Egyptian Christians places them at risk of losing political influence. Without significant international intervention, the survival of these ancient communities appears grim, reflecting broader regional instability and historical neglect.

Foreign Interference: A Historical Perspective

Central to the book is the narrative of foreign interference significantly shaping the Middle East. Since the Suez Crisis of 1956, the US has supplanted former colonial powers like Britain, using its military and political might to exert influence, often for

strategic advantage. Dr Petasis details how the US provides military aid to allies such as Israel, Turkey, and Greece, helping to maintain regional balance or dominance. These external powers often prioritize their geostrategic interests over local needs, leading to entrenched conflicts and marginalized populations.

Turkey's Ambitions and Regional Tensions

The author discusses Turkey's expansionist policies, particularly its 'Blue Homeland' doctrine, which has heightened tensions with neighboring countries like Greece, Cyprus, and Syria. Turkey's ambitions for territorial expansion and control over significant maritime zones exacerbate regional conflicts. The book highlights Greece's diplomatic efforts to harness US support against Turkish aggression, a strategy fraught with delusion and potential backlash. This geopolitical chess game emphasizes the volatility and complexity of the regions affected by Turkey's strategic aspirations.

Leadership Crisis in the Middle East

The book underscores a critical leadership vacuum in the Middle East, attributing prolonged conflicts to poor governance and misguided political strategies. Petasis calls for robust leadership akin to historical figures, suggesting that a renewal of capable leaders could rejuvenate political landscapes and guide the region toward stability. The Middle East's failure to produce leaders who can inspire and drive change is a significant barrier to resolving ongoing conflicts, maintaining peace, and ensuring prosperity for all communities.

Forecasting a Turbulent Future

Looking ahead, Dr Petasis paints a sobering picture of the Middle East's future. Continued foreign interference, internal strife, and leadership failures suggest that regional challenges are far from over. The author stresses the importance of adopting time-tested traditional values and visionary leadership to safely navigate the upcoming storms. Despite the daunting outlook, Petasis insists that hope lies in the hands of emerging leaders who can unite diverse groups, protect cultural heritage, and work towards sustainable peace and development across the region.

Vasilis Polimenis



CALL FOR PAPERS

The Cyprus Review (CR) invites submissions
for a Special Section entitled

“Challenges and prospects of Cyprus education in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world”

This Special Section invites scholars, researchers, educators, policy-makers, and practitioners to contribute to a critical discourse on the transformation of the Cypriot educational landscape in the face of a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world.

As global dynamics and technological progress exert unprecedented influence on societal structures, the educational sector is compelled to evolve rapidly. Cyprus, with its distinctive socio-political landscape and multifaceted educational challenges, is at a pivotal juncture in devising strategies to prepare its learners for a future marked by unpredictability and constant change.

Key themes in this issue will include:

- **Navigating Volatility:** How can the Cypriot educational system respond to shifting political, economic, and social conditions, both locally and globally?
- **Managing Uncertainty:** What role do educational policy and leadership play in preparing students in Cyprus for careers and futures that are increasingly unpredictable?
- **Addressing Complexity:** In a world where interconnected challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and globalization impact education, how can Cyprus create flexible and inclusive learning environments?
- **Dealing with Ambiguity:** How can educators foster critical thinking and adaptability in students to thrive in ambiguous situations and make informed decisions?
- **Interdisciplinary Innovation and Assessment:** How can the integration of the arts with other disciplines enhance learning experiences, foster creativity and innovation in students, and what are the emerging methodologies for assessing student learning and competencies in the context of artificial intelligence and digital technologies?

Through this lens, we seek to uncover both the challenges and the potential pathways for creating a more resilient, inclusive, and future-ready educational system in Cyprus.

This section is Guest-Edited by Dr Christina Hadjisoteriou.

Guidelines and Deadline for Submission

- Authors should consult the CR's guidelines for submission, which can be found at: <https://cyprusreview.org/index.php/cr/about/submissions#authorGuideline>
- For specific enquiries, please contact the CR via cy_review@unic.ac.cy
- Submission should be sent to cy_review@unic.ac.cy or submitted through the CR's webpage, no later than **28th February 2025**. All email submissions should be identified in the subject line with the heading "International Law Special Section – Article Submission".

CRABA 2025
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE
CYPRUS REVIEW ANNUAL BOOKS AWARDS

The scientific journal *The Cyprus Review* hereby issues a Call for Nominations for its Annual Book Awards (CRABA 2025) and invites nominations in the following fields: (I) History and Political Science, (II) Law, and (III) Social Sciences. We accept nominations regarding books published during 2024, either in Greek or in English, which have Cyprus as their subject matter. Nominations may be submitted by the authors, publishers, or third parties.

This Call refers to the following awards:

- I. «Stanley Kyriakides Award» in History and Political Sciences.
- II. «Peter Loizos Award» in Social Sciences.
- III. «Constantinos Emilianides Award» in Law.
- IV. «Junior Researcher Award» in a) History and Political Sciences, b) Social Sciences, and c) Law
 - «*Junior Researcher*» is any scholar not older than 40 years of age.
 - «*Social Sciences*» include: sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, archaeology, education, communication, folklore studies.

The deadline for nominations is **28.2.2025**. All nominations should be submitted via email to the following address cy_reviewbooks@unic.ac.cy specifying expressly the award(s) for which the nomination is submitted. Books in physical form should be sent to *The Cyprus Review*, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Ave., CY-1700 Nicosia, Cyprus, P.O. Box 24005.

