

# Greece's strategy vis-à-vis Turkey: From 'hard' to 'smart balancing'?

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**Greece is geographically located on the verge of relative stability (Europe) and total instability (MENA region)**

**In an overburden and highly unpredictable security environment**

- **Traditional long-standing conflicts**
- **Potential conflicts over energy resources in contested areas**
- **Non-traditional threats and challenges (Islamist radicalization, international terrorism, irregular migration etc.)**

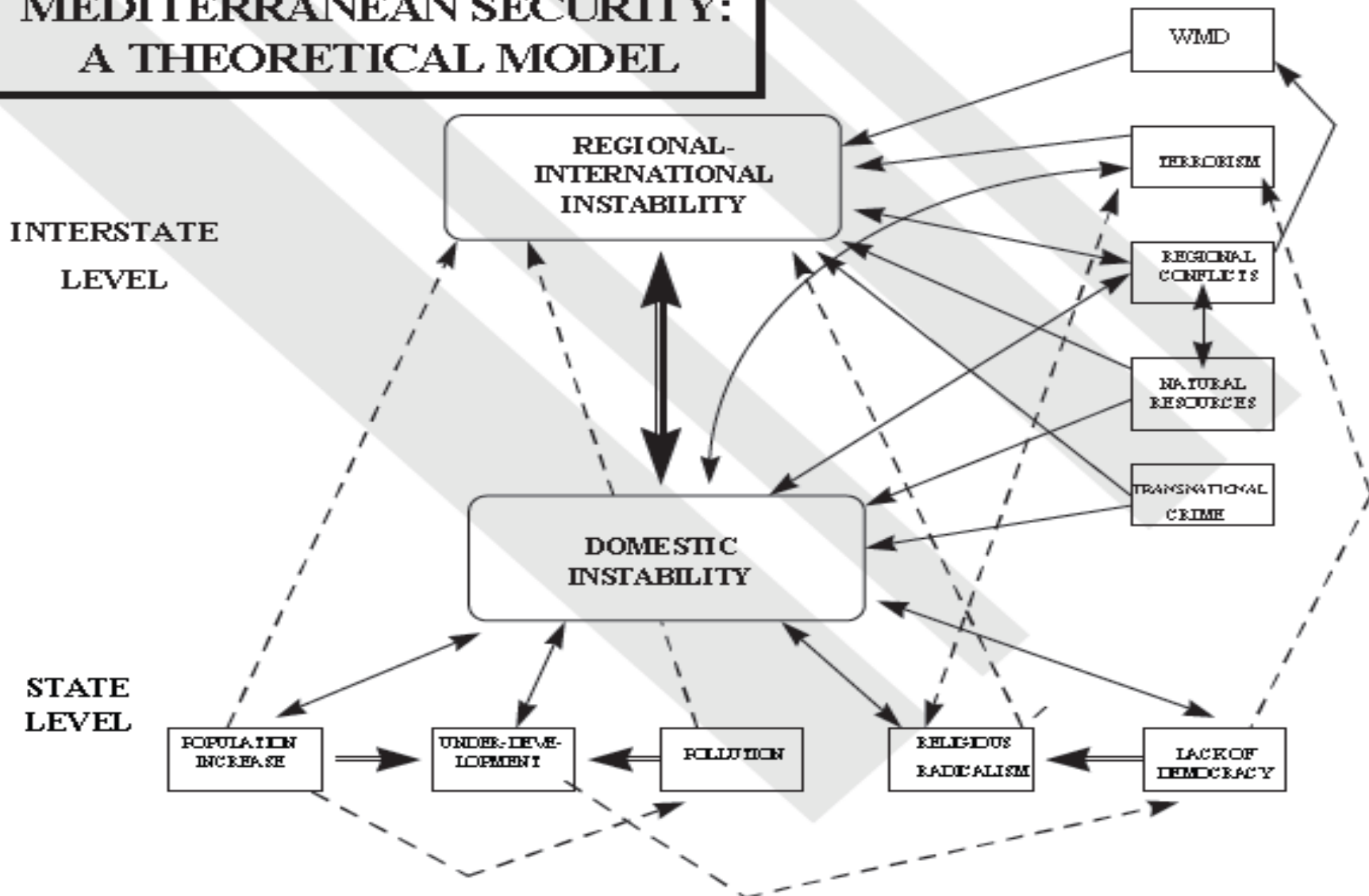
**“Poly-crises” is the new normality in the Eastern Mediterranean**

**Greece is the main recipient of most of the new security problems and challenges appearing in the Mediterranean region in the post-9/11 era**

**Greece is called to **punch above its weight** (“do more with less”)**

**The balancing strategy vis-à-vis Turkey is a part –although an essential one– of Greece’s national security strategy .**

# MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY: A THEORETICAL MODEL





# A threatened Greece attempts to balance a threatening Turkey

- From the restoration of Greek democracy in 1974 onwards the Greek political discourse has been dominated by the strong belief – which has also been reflected in a remarkable continuity of the views of all successive Greek governments – that **Turkey constitutes the gravest external threat** to Greece's (even Hellenism's) survival or, in the least, a major security concern
- Successive Greek administrations have embarked since the mid-1970s upon a series of **balancing strategies** whose basic element has been deterrence of the perceived Turkish threat. For balancing threats to its security, Greece has traditionally relied on a **combination of 'internal'** (strong Armed Forces) and **'external balancing'** (participation in all West European security and political organizations).
- **European Union** (and **NATO**) were viewed as **'security-providing' hegemons** or as **levers of pressure to deter Turkey** from potential adventures in the Aegean. Especially, the EU was for a lengthy period of time viewed **as a precious instrument of a 'strategy of conditional sanctions'** with regard to Turkey's European vocation or a strategy of 'reinforcement by punishment'

<p><b>Constantine KARAMANLIS (1975-1980)</b></p>	<p><b>MANAGEMENT/ RESOLUTION</b></p> <p>Goals: 'Crisis stability' in the Aegean and creation of the conditions for a bilateral compromise solution based on international law (reference to ICJ)</p>	<p><i>Military Deterrence</i></p>	<p>Strengthening of Greece's international standing through participation in major international institutions</p> <p>Participation in EEC provides economic prosperity and security</p>	<p><i>Active Dialogue</i></p> <p>Initiator and firm supporter of <u>bilateral</u> dialogue aiming at the resolution of the conflict</p>
<p><b>A. PAPANDREOU (1981-88)</b></p>	<p><b>CONTAINMENT</b></p> <p>Goal: Containment/deterrence of the revisionist neighbor</p>	<p><i>Military Deterrence</i></p>	<p>Weakening of Turkey's International Standing through the use of the international institutions of which the two states are members</p>	<p><i>No-Dialogue</i></p>
<p><b>A. PAPANDREOU (1988)</b></p>	<p>Following the April 1987 crisis</p> <p><b>CONTAINMENT/MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Goals: Deterrence and Management of the revisionist neighbor</p>	<p><i>Military Deterrence</i></p>	<p>Weakening of Turkey's international standing</p>	<p><i>Conditional Dialogue</i></p> <p>('No-war' policy, recognition for co-existence by agreeing over the Aegean differences)</p>



## Governments

Traditional Balancing  
Strategies towards Turkey

## Means employed

<b>K. MITSOTAKIS</b> (1990-91)	<b>MANAGEMENT</b> Goal: 'Crisis stability'	<i>Military Deterrence</i>	Strengthening of Greece's international standing through participation in major international institutions. Participation in WEU/EU's defence arm provides security	<i>Dialogue</i>
<b>K. MITSOTAKIS</b> (1991-93)	<b>MANAGEMENT/ RESOLUTION</b> Goals: 'Crisis stability' in the Aegean and creation of the conditions for a bilateral compromise solution	<i>Military Deterrence</i>	Strengthening of Greece's international standing through participation in major international institutions. Participation in WEU/EU's defence arm provides security	<i>Active Dialogue</i> Firm supporter of <i>bilateral</i> dialogue aiming at the resolution of the conflict
<b>A. PAPANDREOU</b> (1993-1995)	<b>CONTAINMENT</b> Goal: Containment/deterrence of the revisionist neighbor	<i>Military Deterrence</i>	Weakening of Turkey's International Standing Policy of conditional sanctions in Turkey's European ambitions	<i>Conditional Dialogue</i>
<b>C. SIMITIS</b> (1996-1998)	<b>MANAGEMENT</b> Goal: 'Crisis stability'	<i>Military Deterrence</i>	<i>Multilaterally</i> Efforts to turn EU into a 'security-provider' Policy of conditional sanctions on Turkey's European ambitions  <i>Bilaterally</i> # 'Step-by-step' approach	<i>Conditional Dialogue</i>

# The Breakthrough: The EU Summit in Helsinki

- Progress on Turkey's candidacy/membership in the EU was linked to the resolution of its border disputes with an EU member. + **Cyprus** (resolution of the Cyprus political problem is not a prerequisite for Cyprus' EU accession)
- The –peaceful-- resolution of outstanding border disputes was established as a community principle as it was made clear to Turkey (as well as to the EU member, Greece) that they have five years –until the end of 2004—to resolve their conflict. This in turn meant that for the first time in the history of the two states' conflict, there was a **clear reference** to a particular time-frame (2004 was identified as the deadline) and to the final forum and/or mechanism the two states should use for resolving/ending their long-standing conflict, namely the International Court of Justice in The Hague.
- EU can act as a **“framework”** and as an **“active player”**



C. SIMITIS (1999-2004)

**ACTIVE  
SOCIALIZATION**

**GOALS**

*Short and medium-run:*

- \* Stabilization of relations and promotion of economic cooperation
- \* Turkey's conditional engagement into EU integration system
- \* Cyprus' smooth accession in the EU
- \* *Resolution* of the Greek-Turkish dispute

*Military  
Deterrence*

*Multilaterally*

EU acts as a 'framework'  
# Active participation in all relevant EU organs (Councils, Parliament, Commission) for ensuring and enhancing Helsinki decisions in monitoring Turkey's domestic politics (promoting democratization) and external behavior towards Greece and Cyprus

EU also acts as an 'active player'  
# Cyprus' accession becomes possible regardless of the resolution of its long-standing political problem  
# Resolution of the conflict with Greece becomes a community principle, meaning a *prerequisite* for Turkey's future accession

*Bilaterally*

# Creation of an 'institutional safety net' through the initiation and advancement of an 'all encompassing type' of CBMs and through the establishment of a Joint Task Force for facilitating Turkey's alignment with the EU acquis.  
# Furtherance of cooperation on a plethora of 'low politics issues', including energy and 'people-to-people' contacts (e.g. NGOs)  
# Progress achieved on 'low-politics' issues is linked with negotiations on 'high-politics' issues

*Active Dialogue*

[active  
'Exploratory  
Talks' with  
Turkey]

Greece is committed to a *compromise solution* by the ICJ in the Hague, i.e. it is willing to *accept the compromise costs* a final agreement with Turkey would entail

# Positive Effects

- Turkey's EU path: the period **2001-2004** has been recorded as '**the golden years of the EU accession process**'. The normative and internalization effects of the EU on Turkey took place on a series of levels:
  - At the '**domestic institutions**' level
    - ✓ Political reform packages adopted in order to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria,
    - ✓ Regulation of the constitutional role of the National Security Council
    - ✓ Fulfilment of certain economic and legal conditions.
  - At the **elite level**
    - ✓ the civil-military elite entered a process of 'de-securitization'
    - ✓ Change in Turkey's elite interests over the Cyprus issue due to EU membership prospects
  - At the **societal level**
    - ✓ The candidacy empowered the domestic actors in both Greece and Turkey who were in favor of promoting Greek-Turkish cooperation (After 1999 a pro-EU coalition emerged which gradually and steadily gained ground over another vocal "anti-EU" coalition)
- Impact on the **process, style** and **content** of Turkey's foreign policy, leading thus towards a **more rationalized stance** on foreign policy issues.

# Change in Greece's strategy

- **December 2004 EU Summit** (Brussels):  
EU decides –obviously with Greece's concession—that **the Helsinki timetable** urging the two countries to solve their bilateral differences or else agree, by December 2004, to refer them to ICJ, **should be withdrawn.**
- In addition to the Copenhagen criteria, Turkey **is only asked** to commit to **good neighborly relations**
- **Jurisdiction of the ICJ is not an obligation** (“If necessary”)
- **Progress on Turkey's membership would no longer be linked to the resolution** of its dispute with Greece.

Kostas  
KARAMANLIS  
(2004 – 2009)

**PASSIVE  
SOCIALIZATION**

**GOALS**

*Short-run:*

- \* Continuation of Turkey's conditional engagement into EU integration system
- \* Decoupling the lack of a solution on Cyprus' political problem from Greek-Turkish relations
- \* Further stabilization of bilateral relations in the Aegean
- \* Further strengthening of bilateral economic cooperation

*Medium-run:*

- \* Normalization of bilateral relations ('Stability Plus')

*Long-run:*

- \* Settlement of the bilateral dispute with a more 'Europeanized' Turkey – under favorable conditions for Greece's interests

*Military  
Deterrence*

*Multilaterally*

*EU acts – only – as a 'framework'*  
# EU monitors Turkey's domestic politics and promotes democratization  
# EU monitors Turkey's external behavior vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus promoting good neighborly relations

*Emancipation from the commitments an EU active role would entail*  
# Decoupling of Turkey's future accession from the resolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute (resolution of the conflict with Greece is *not* a necessary prerequisite for Turkey's future accession)

*Bilaterally*

# Maintenance of the existing 'institutional safety net', esp. CBMs  
# Further advancement of economic interdependence, i.e. energy cooperation

*Conditional  
Dialogue*

[passive/nominal  
'Exploratory  
Talks' with  
Turkey]

Greece is *not* committed to a compromise solution in order to avoid the political costs a final agreement with Turkey would entail

# Negative Consequences

- For the EU's ability to act as **'an active player'** (i.e., to constructively intervene and contribute to the resolution of the Greek-Turkish conflict)
- EU's ability to be viewed as **'a framework'** with potential positive effects in the long-run was also affected by a series of **negative trends**:
  - (a) **EU-Turkey relationship**:
    - EU Commission added new requirements of "integration capacity" = enhanced Turkey's suspicions of the EU's good faith
    - Rise of 'turko-sceptic' governments in the engine-countries of the EU (Germany, France) and suspicion of EU citizens towards the enlargement project has turned into clear opposition to Turkey's accession
    - The freezing of Turkey's accession process suggests a rekindling of the advancement of a 'special or privileged partnership' between EU and Turkey (e.g. EU attempt [May 2016] to develop a 'positive agenda' for Turkey)
  - (b) **Within Turkey**:
    - Set-backs in the reform process –already evident since 2005
    - Turkish public support for EU membership at an all-time low (about 37%) since the beginning of the accession negotiation (73%)
  - (c) **Turkey's foreign policy**: Less EU, more Middle East-oriented



## Constraints

- **'Re-bilateralization'** of relations between Greece and Turkey
- **The prospects for a resolution** of the Greek-Turkish dispute are not simply dim, they **are shelved for good.**
- The freezing of Turkey's accession process negotiations suggests a **rekindling of a 'special or privileged partnership'** between EU and Turkey
- **Greece's** economic crisis has detrimental effects on its **international credibility** as well as on its ability to take initiatives
- **Turkey adopts an outward-looking and dynamic foreign policy**, i.e. the Middle East -- **BUT** it experiences a series of defeats at all fronts (from "zero-problems with neighbors" to "**zero neighbors**")

## Incentives/Prospects

- Since 2009 attempts are made for strengthening bilateral relations. In terms of **economic cooperation** (through the establishment of the "Greek-Turkish High Level Cooperation Council") and **trust building**, through the signing of more than 20 agreements on various domains of 'low-politics' issues, CBMS etc.
- On 'high-politics' issues: Continuation of the **'Exploratory Talks'** Cessation of the talks (2016) Revitalization (2021) Cessation (after 3 meetings in 2022)

# Post-coup, post-referendum TFP

- Turkey is **sliding further down** (from “one-man party” to “one-man regime” and to an “illiberal democracy”)
- Erdogan becomes **less predictable, less reliable**
- and with **less legitimacy**, both internally and externally, i.e., Turkey is distancing itself from/deterioration of relations with the West (US, NATO, EU)
- is running out of **counter-weights** (domestic and external)
- **The EU/institutional counter-weight is weakening**
  - EU is **not** a “**strategic priority**”
  - The **refugee crisis** is viewed as a **strong leverage** for achieving foreign policy goals (instrumentalization of refugees)
- Although not at the top of Turkey’s foreign policy priorities, **Greece** –and especially **Cyprus-- is a key-player in the Eastern Mediterranean** regarding exploitation and transfer of gas to Europe

- Since 2016 there has been a "geographical broadening" of the bilateral dispute beyond the Aegean Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean.
- The issue of the delimitation of the two states' Exclusive Economic Zones in the Eastern Mediterranean has been the new feature in the bilateral agenda.
- What is of particular concern to Greece's decision makers over the last three years is that Turkey is **not hesitant in coupling** the deployment of hard-power means and tactics in the Eastern Mediterranean and over the Greek-Turkish borders with an inflammatory rhetoric against Greece along with the fiercely nationalist narrative of "Mavi Vatan" (Blue Homeland).
- **By mid-2020**, it is made evident to Greece's decision makers that Turkey should be perceived as **a revisionist state**, who embraces the **"geography of the Ottoman empire"** and who exhibits the **same pattern of aggressive behavior** not solely against Greece but against **the whole Eastern Mediterranean**.
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KARADENİZ

BULGARİSTAN

GÜRCİSTAN

TÜRKİYE

MAVİ VATAN

EĞE DENİZİ

MUTLUK DÖNÜŞ

K.K.T.C.

T.C.K.B.

SIRİYE

İRAN

AKDENİZ

İTBAN



# Turkey: A Problem Partner?

## Global Map



### NATO

Described as NATO's 'elephant in the room', Turkey has had a growing number of strategic splits with its transatlantic partners on issues including Syria, its cosy relationship with Russia (including the purchase of the S-400 anti-aircraft system), the violation of the arms embargo in Libya, its constant demonization of Israel, and its illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean

### United States

### United States

Relations between Turkey and the United States have remained on a steady downward trajectory due to Turkey's strategic cooperation with Russia (in Nagorno-Karabakh and elsewhere) and its assertive behaviour against US allies in the wider Mediterranean region

## European Union

Ankara has used acrimonious language against the EU and certain member states; The EU has openly criticized Turkey's unilateral and assertive foreign policy activity in Syria, Libya, Iraq, the Eastern Mediterranean and Nagorno-Karabakh; The EU has expressed concern over Turkey's unilateral action in Varosha in November 2020 and called Turkey to respect the agreed basis for a solution of the Cyprus problem within the parameters of UN Security Council resolutions (550, 789, 1251); The EU has elaborated on a positive agenda combined with restrictive measures seeking to incentivise Turkey's constructive partnership with the EU or deter it from returning to unilateral actions and provocations in breach of international law, such as illegal drilling in maritime zones of the Republic of Cyprus; The refugee crisis on the Greek-Turkish border, late February 2020, undermined one of the few pillars of EU-Turkey cooperation; Rule of law and protection of fundamental rights remain a key concern for the EU in light of the democratic backsliding and human rights abuses in the country; Turkey has been diverging from Customs Union rules; Widespread corruption impedes Turkey's compliance with international and European law

## France

French-Turkish relations have deteriorated rapidly in recent years; The main issue of concern for France is Turkey's assertive foreign policy in Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Eastern Mediterranean; President Erdogan has further exacerbated the deteriorating relations by attacking President Macron personally, questioning his 'mental state'; France expects Turkey to abide by international law and commit to the EU's positive agenda

## Germany

Relations between Turkey and Germany have been tumultuous, despite strong economic relations; Germany has been critical over Turkey's unilateral policy in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean; Germany is also concerned about Turkey's democratic backsliding, and urges Turkey to commit to the EU's positive agenda

## Austria

Relations between Turkey and Austria are strained; Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, has asked the EU to terminate accession negotiations with Turkey immediately, since it has consistently distanced itself from Europe and its values; Austria has supported the implementation of sanctions on Turkey for its unilateral foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean

## European Union



## Turkey

Turkey's democratic backsliding and human rights abuses have reached alarming levels; Turkey tops the list for number of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgements regarding violations of freedom of expression; Since 2016, authorities have dismissed or suspended more than 60,000 police and military personnel and approximately 125,000 civil servants, dismissed one-third of the judiciary, arrested or imprisoned more than 90,000 citizens, and closed more than 1,500 NGOs on terrorism-related grounds; Turkey tops the list of countries with highest number of imprisoned journalists (around 70 in 2018); In March 2021, the country's senior prosecutor demanded that a court shut down the People's Democratic party (HDP), the second-largest opposition party representing the largest share of Turkish citizens of a Kurdish ethnic background; On 20 March 2021, Turkey pulled out of the Istanbul Convention, a comprehensive legal framework for addressing violence against women

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Human Rights Abuses
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Democratic Backsliding
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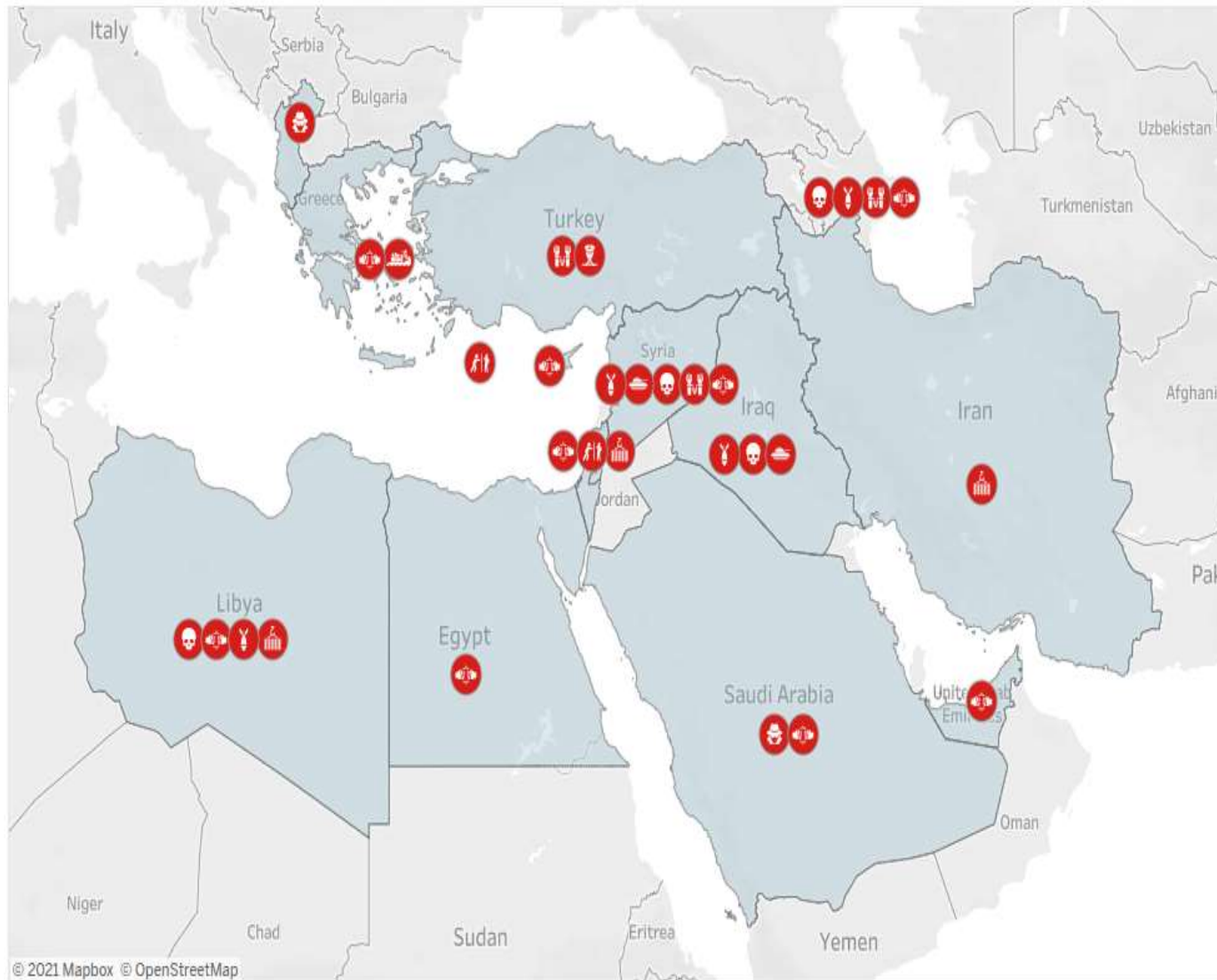
Weaponization of Refugees
- 

Major Diplomatic Dispute(s)



# Turkey: A Problem Partner?

## Regional Map



-  **Major Diplomatic Dispute(s)**
-  **Armed Forces Operations**
-  **Assertive Unilateral Actions**
-  **Democratic Backsliding**
-  **Renditions**
-  **Major Diplomatic Dispute(s)**
-  **Human Rights Abuse**
-  **Breaking Embassy/Consulate**
-  **Weaponization of Defense**
-  **Military Occupation**
-  **Paramilitary Exercises/Merarchies**

# Factors against intense hard balancing

- Expansion is more difficult (offensive capabilities in disadvantage)
- The norm of territorial integrity is present (weakened but present)
- The regional environment is not receptive to revisionist policies
- International institutions can be used for soft balancing and engagement
- Absence of “imperialist security dilemma”  
(Need to understand the nature of the Greek-Turkish security dilemma and the content of “Turkish revisionism”;  
from “interests based” to “security based” to “power-based” foreign policy # not a ‘predatory state’: security and ambitions)

# Smart Balancing

- Efficient use of the available limited means to
  - effectively balance the threatening power (Turkey)
  - deal with additional challenges and risks (“poly-crises”)
- Need for refinement of Greece’s current ‘balancing strategy’ vis-à-vis Turkey (now tilting towards ‘hard balancing’)

# Smart Balancing

## Rationale:

To change a threatening states' aggressive behavior

- by impeding the target state's ability to profit from aggressive policies,
- by increasing the marginal costs of these policies, and
- by delegitimizing the target state's behavior in the eyes of the broader international community

**Method:** Adopt an indirect approach of confronting security threats **by altering the target state's cost-benefit calculus** through international institutions and concerted diplomacy, allowing thus a state to avoid some of the costs and consequences of countering threats directly through traditional hard security strategies such as arms buildups or formal military alliances.

**Scope:** In conflict dyads = **the “end-state” matters**

- (Short-term) Crisis management & Stabilization of relations [Balance of power]
- (Medium/Long-term): Resolution of the conflict

# Smart Balancing

## ■ Limited hard balancing:

- **Limited arms build ups** to acquire the minimum deterrent ability (an equilibrium that preserves peace)
- **Investing in strategic partnerships** with key-neighboring countries (Israel and Egypt) and certain pro-Western Arab states (Saudi Arabia and the UAE)
- Build a coherent and functional **crisis management mechanism** (do not allow for “faits-accomplis” and prevent a “hot-incident” by accident)

## ■ Soft balancing:

- Keep **supporting Turkey’s European path** (although a weak leverage) by linking activation of elements of the ‘**positive agenda**’ (upgrade of the Customs Union; new deal on migration) **with** certain **conditionality** (e.g., Turkey to abandon the “casus belli”; to accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ)
- Be an “agenda-setter” for multilateral initiatives, e.g., **Multilateral Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean**
- Reactivate the “**Exploratory Talks**”
- Take initiatives for the establishment of a “**CBMs safety net**” in the Aegean



# Prerequisites for successful balancing

1. **“International legitimacy”**
2. **“Internal coherence”** (btw the basic pillars)
3. **“Efficiency”** (do more with less)