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Drivers of Indian Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Review of Indian Foreign Policy towards Greece and Egypt

Doğu Akdeniz'de Hindistan Dış Politikasının Belirleyicileri: Hindistan'ın Yunanistan ve Mısır'a Yönelik Dış Politikası Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Defne GÖNENÇ¹, Rajeev Ranjan CHATURVEDY²

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Abstract: The Eastern Mediterranean is a region entangled with shifting alliances and power rivalries. Being a part of the Ottoman Empire in the past and then suffering from colonialism in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the region is now disrupted by unexpected consequences of the Arab Spring, severe youth unemployment, intensifying religious movements, cycles of violence, continuous despair of migrants, the Syrian Civil War, and depressing socio-economic conditions. The gas discoveries in the region are further fueling competition between states and multinational oil and gas companies and putting regional peace and collaboration at risk. How is Indian foreign policy towards such a turbulent and volatile region and how is it shaped? Despite India's growing importance in global affairs, research about the India-Eastern Mediterranean region remains scarce. This article first outlines and studies the key drivers of Indian foreign policy in the region. It then scrutinizes India's relations with two key Indian partner states in the Mediterranean, namely Egypt and Greece. Indian relations with Egypt and Greece are put under scrutiny both due to these countries' divergent sociological composition and varying locations within the Eastern Mediterranean region. The article finds that navigating the turbulences in the Eastern Mediterranean, India has adopted a cautious policy guided by the "middle path" tradition, "strategic autonomy" principle, and a multipolar approach.

Keywords: India, Eastern Mediterranean, Indian foreign policy, Greece, Egypt

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Öz: Doğu Akdeniz, değişen ittifaklar ve güç rekabetleriyle iç içe geçmiş bir bölgedir. Geçmişte Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun bir parçası olan ve ardından 20. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde sömürgecilikten mustarip olan bölge, şu anda Arap Baharı'nın beklenmedik sonuçları, ciddi genç işsizliği, yoğunlaşan dini hareketler, şiddet döngüleri, göçmenlerin sürekli çaresizliği, Suriye İç Savaşı ve iç karartıcı sosyo-ekonomik koşullar sebebiyle sıkıntı yaşamaktadır. Ek olarak bölgedeki gaz keşifleri, devletler ile çok uluslu petrol ve gaz şirketleri arasındaki rekabeti daha da körüklemekte ve bölgesel barışı ve iş birliğini riske atmaktadır. Bu kadar çalkantılı ve değişken bir bölgeye yönelik Hindistan dış politikası nedir ve nasıl şekillenmektedir? Hindistan'ın küresel ilişkilerde artan önemine rağmen, Hindistan-Doğu Akdeniz bölgesi ilişkileri ile ilgili araştırma sayısı azdır. Bu makale ilk olarak bölgedeki Hindistan dış politikasının temel itici güçlerini özetlemekte ve incelemektedir. Ardından, Hindistan'ın Akdeniz'deki iki önemli ortağı olan Mısır ve Yunanistan ile olan ilişkilerini değerlendirecektir. Hindistan'ın Mısır ve Yunanistan ile olan ilişkileri, hem bu ülkelerin farklı sosyolojik yapıları hem de Doğu Akdeniz bölgesindeki farklı konumları nedeniyle inceleme altına alınmaktadır. Makale, Doğu Akdeniz'deki çalkantıları yönlendiren Hindistan'ın "orta yol" geleneği, "stratejik özerklik" ilkesi ve çok kutuplu bir yaklaşımla yönlendirilen temkinli bir politika benimsediğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hindistan, Doğu Akdeniz, Hindistan dış politikası, Yunanistan, Mısır

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¹ Dr., Bağımsız Araştırmacı, defne.gonenc@graduateinstitute.ch, ORCID: 0000-0002-5084-2447 (Sorumlu Yazar)

² Doç. Dr., Nalanda Üniversitesi, Tarih Çalışmaları ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Çalışmaları, rajeev.chaturvedy@nalandauniv.edu.in, ORCID: 0000-0001-7251-5888

1. Introduction

We live in an increasingly interdependent world that is transforming rapidly and profoundly. After the Cold War, this rapidly shifting global order has also seen modified alliances and enmities in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The strong presence of the U.S. in the Middle East has been increasingly challenged by a recovering Russia and rising China (Shlykov and Koldunova, 2022). Moreover, the region has been altered by various overlapping intra and inter cleavages, including Turkey vs. Greece and Egypt, Turkish Cypriots vs. Greek Cypriots, Arabs vs. non-Arabs, Sunni vs. Shia and etc. A transformation in the region was further sparked by the Arab Spring and its unfulfilled promises; the Syrian civil war and its resulting migration waves; cycles of violence in Libya; intensifying religious movements; military coups; the establishment or continuation of authoritarian regimes; severe youth unemployment; widespread political distrust; and miserable socio-economic conditions in the aftermath of the region's neoliberal integration (Aras and Kardaş, 2021; Sika, 2020). In addition to all these, the region has been further destabilized by energy competition and sea-route delimitation rivalry between states and multinational companies. In such shifting circumstances, how has India engaged with the Eastern Mediterranean region? What has been Indian foreign policy towards such a turbulent region?

India's diplomatic behaviour is shaped by "a very rich and sophisticated tradition of statecraft and diplomatic practice" (Saran, 2017). It is known for its tempered foreign policy behaviors, based on moderation. It traditionally pursued a foreign policy strategy shaped by de-colonization and anti-imperialism principles and based on a non-alignment policy during the Cold War towards the Eastern Mediterranean before the end of the Cold War. Currently, India's principal political ties in the Eastern Mediterranean lie with Israel, Cyprus, Egypt, and Greece, and to a lesser extent with Syria. However, as the region is particularly unpredictable and rapidly transforming, India's approach is constantly evolving too. More importantly, New Delhi does not have any settled enmity-based relations with any countries in the region. India's own philosophical roots and civilizational connections, along with the key parameters discussed above, seem to shape India's relations with the region. The purpose of this article is to study the Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region. With this goal, the article outlines and discusses the drivers of the Indian foreign policy towards the region and examines its relations with two key regional partners of India, namely Egypt and Greece. Egypt and Greece are chosen both due to their divergent sociological composition (different religions, different international organization memberships, e.g., the European Union and the Arab League) and due to their varying locations in the Mediterranean, e.g., one of them being in the South and the other one being in the North Mediterranean.

The following sections of this article present a brief literature review, discuss methodology and deliberate on the drivers that shape Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean. These include, namely, the changing international order after the Cold War, growing Chinese influence in the region; the socio-economic and historical relevance of individual countries for India; India-Israeli relations; individual countries' relations with Pakistan; and changes in Indian domestic politics and political economy. Finally, the article examines two case studies – India's relations with Egypt and Greece, two key Indian partners in the Eastern Mediterranean, which remain under-explored.

Studying Indian Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean

India shares historical-civilizational links with the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. For example, it was influenced by all monotheistic religions born in the Middle East (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Also, trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea has always played a key factor in East-West connectivity. Indian commodities, such as spices, textiles, and jewels were sold in Roman markets. Europe's long-distance trade with India through the Mediterranean became quantitatively significant from the early modern period. Many factors, including imperial taxation, naval technology, and economic information etc. played a role in this trade (Romanis and Maiuro, 2011). Following its independence from British

colonial rule in 1947, India's relations with the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean were guided by the power of arguments and ideas, including the idea of civilizational connections, anti-imperialism, and decolonization principles. India followed a non-alignment policy and confronted foreign dominance and interventions. Most of the time, it remained a cautious actor, unwilling to engage in and shape the outcome of international conflicts.

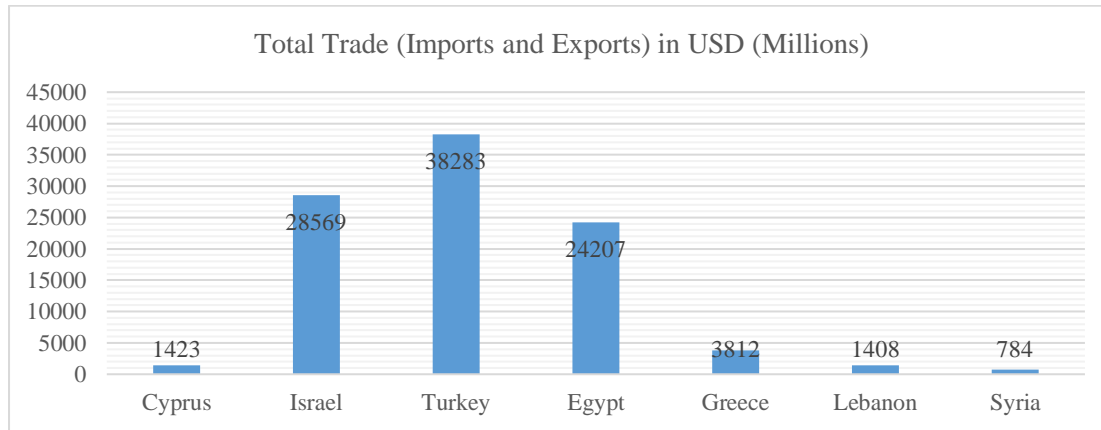
Despite these shared historical civilizational, ideological, and trading links with countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, Indian foreign policy in the region is an under-explored topic in academia. Available analyses rather examine Indian relations with either the Middle East (Pradhan, 2022; Pant, 2009; Joshi, 2015) or the European Union (Jain 2014; Kavalski, 2016). Analyses under the heading of India-Mediterranean relations are quite rare (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Possibly, this is partly because India's economic interests in the Mediterranean were limited and there were more challenges at home and in the immediate neighborhood (ibid). As can be seen at the Table I, foreign direct investments (FDI) from the Eastern Mediterranean countries, except for Cyprus, is not too high. Likewise, as can be seen at the Table II, total trade of India with individual countries in the Eastern Mediterranean in the last 5 years is not too high either. To compare, for instance, the total trade between India and US (India's top trading partner) was 451 billion \$, while with Turkey (the top trading partner in Eastern Mediterranean for the last 5 years) was 38 billion \$.

**Table I. FDI from Eastern Mediterranean Countries to India
(2000-2022 March, million USD)**

Country	Cyprus	Israel	Turkey	Egypt	Greece	Lebanon	Syria
FDI	11,367.0421	270.9120	210.4715	10.3988	9.1615	3.1414	0.0018

Source: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, 2022

Table II. Total Trade of India with Eastern Mediterranean Counties 2017-2021



Source: Tradestat, Government of India, 2022

As the world divided into two power blocks during the Cold War, India's relations and foreign policy choices were further complicated. Nevertheless, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of the ideological divide arising from previous Soviet allies in the region, the availability of energy resources, and the fact that the region is a trade transit road between Asia and Europe, the topicality of the Mediterranean region in international affairs increased. Given the scarcity of the analysis about India-Mediterranean relations, this article fulfills a significant gap in the literature.

In general, there are varying shades of opinions among scholars of Indian foreign policy about India's policy towards the region after the Cold War, following the Arab Spring and the beginning of the Modi government. There is no single opinion about the direction, reasons, and extent of changes that have

occurred. However, these three significant events are accepted as key and generally considered to be causes of changes in Indian foreign policy towards the Mediterranean region. Firstly, there is, more or less, scholarly agreement about the reorientation of Indian foreign policy after the Cold War from being non-aligned in general - but at the same time being friendly to Russia - towards becoming a more “pragmatic” player focused on economic and energy issues in a world order chiefly shaped by the U.S (Pant, 2009, 2013; Sridharan, 2017). Secondly, concerning Indian policy after the Arab Spring, some scholars have criticized India’s cautious and muted stance and argued that India should formulate a new regional response in the wake of the overthrow of autocratic leaders by democratic demands (Ahmad, 2013). Others, however, have asserted that the turmoil made India vulnerable, applauded India’s case-by-case response, and claimed that India should avoid getting involved in regional power rivalry (Gupta, 2013). Thirdly, some scholars identify a reorientation of India’s Middle East policy under the Modi government towards a more favorable relationship with Israel (Roy, 2016). However, others assert that this shift came much earlier following the end of the Cold War (Kumaraswamy, 2008). Some other scholars downplay such a shift, claiming that this change took place in parallel to Modi’s multi-engagement with other relevant actors in the Middle East, such as the Gulf countries (Blarel, 2019).

2. Methodology

The article first discusses the drivers of Indian foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The authors generated these drivers through critical argumentation and inductive reasoning. After reviewing the relevant literature, interviewing an Indian diplomat working in the region, and conducting a news analysis about the potential determinants of Indian foreign policy, the aforementioned drivers were established. Although the drivers were identified in respect of India’s Eastern Mediterranean policy and by examining relevant data for this region only, some might also apply when analyzing India’s relations with countries in other regions. Nonetheless, the authors are aware that although the drivers are not static, their precision remains open for further discussion. They can be further strengthened with more interviews and historical data.

A case study methodology has been used for the rest of the paper. This method sheds light on a larger pool of cases by examining single cases in depth (Gerring, 2007). In the paper, Indian relations with Egypt and Greece, after the independence of the Republic of India in 1947, have been analyzed. These two countries were chosen for analyzing cases with maximum differences as possible. The purpose has not been to compare them but to illustrate the Indian relations with Eastern Mediterranean countries as diverse from each other as possible. Hence, one country from the Southern shore of the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, and one from the North, Greece are selected. Moreover, Greek and Egyptian societies have different dominant religions, Greece participates in the European Union and Egypt is a member of the Arab League, Greece is a gateway to European markets while Egypt is being a to the African one. In other words, these countries have significant divergences. These differences make these case studies more relevant in studying Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region. Certainly, other regional countries could have been included in the analysis too. But given the space restriction and other limitation, these two cases are selected. For instance, Israeli relations with India are the most studied in the Eastern Mediterranean region so far. Hence, India’s engagement with Israel was not chosen as a case (Kumaraswamy, 2020). A lack of data and space limited including other cases for examination, e.g., Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon.

The embassy webpages (Indian Embassy in Egypt and Greece as well as Egyptian and Greek embassies in New Delhi) and Ministry of External Affairs’ annual reports were examined for the two case countries. The authors’ interview with an Indian career diplomat currently based in the Eastern Mediterranean region (2021) was incorporated into the analysis. Moreover, social media updates of the Indian Embassy in Egypt and Greece were followed regularly for recent updates and activities. Finally, news analysis was conducted by searching for words such as “Mediterranean”, “Greece”, and “Egypt” in three well-known Indian

newspapers, namely, The Tribune, The Hindu, and the Indian Express. Relevant news pieces were incorporated into the analyses.

3. Key drivers of Indian Foreign Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean

In a world in which the very structure of the international order is undergoing a profound transformation, India is persistently striving to expand space and options to ensure greater prosperity at home, peace at its borders, protection of Indian people, and enhancing influence abroad. For this, it aims to follow a middle path among competing interests in a conflict, for establishing and keeping good relations with rival countries in a given context at the same time. For example, India has strengthened its relationship with Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran (who are in conflict with each other). Relations with Israel have also recently improved. In other words, India is moving into “a world of convergences and issue-based arrangements” where a wider dispersal of power and more localized calculations are making multipolarity central (Jaishankar, 2020). It commonly prevents itself from military engagements and respects the strategic autonomy of the countries, like in the Syrian Civil War. Likewise, it tends to pursue a multipolar approach in conflicts, favouring global resolutions through the United Nations and frequently waiting for the formulation of a global response before adopting a stance in a conflict, like in the Arap Spring. Similarly, in a speech delivered in 2021, the Indian Foreign Secretary described the five pillars of current Indian foreign policy as follows: It is Indian in thought - in other words, as a home to one of the world’s most ancient civilizations, India pursues the tradition of “the middle path” by avoiding extreme behaviours; secondly, it has a “multipolar focus”; thirdly, it works “as an international force multiplier for the government”; fourth, India aspires to be a leading power in the sense that it aims to work as “a force for global good”; and finally, India’s foreign policy looks to the future in the search for solutions to common and emerging challenges (Ministry of External Affairs, 2021a).

Concerning the Eastern Mediterranean, after reviewing the relevant literature, certain broader trends concerning Indian foreign policy can be identified. The authors term the factors determining this policy as “drivers”. They have been established through critical debate among the authors and an interview with an Indian diplomat working in the region, as well as the use of inductive reasoning. The drivers are interdependent and not exclusive. For instance, policy changes at the end of the Cold War impact India-Israeli relations, and India’s increasing energy demands and consequential dependence on the Gulf region are inter-reliant with how Indian foreign policy in the region is affected by a rising China. Therefore, the drivers need to be analyzed conjointly.

4. Changing International Order After the Cold War

Memories of colonial rule made India particularly sensitive to the concept of autonomy and encouraged its adoption of a non-alignment policy after independence (Ganguly and Pardesi, 2009). During Cold War, India had had particularly good relations with Egypt and Cyprus, two other pioneers of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). Yet, at the end of the Cold War, Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region experienced a gradual but significant shift (Kumaraswamy, 2013, 2017). In particular, non-alignment vision shifted towards pragmatism and the search for new economic partnerships. This new vision was also reinforced by the 1991 economic liberalization reforms in the country. What was new on the foreign policy front was expanding the horizons of cooperation in the east and west and an inclination to forge partnerships with the U.S. and its allies, such as Israel and the Gulf countries. After the Cold War, from 1992, India has launched full diplomatic relations with Israel, while keeping its traditional support for Palestinians. Economic liberalization in 1991 was a factor in the establishment of economic cooperation with oil-rich Arab states in the Gulf (Kumaraswamy, 2008).

Nevertheless, despite the shift towards new partnerships, the desire to keep the non-alignment paradigm as a rhetorical goal continues to re-surface (Pant, 2015). Given the emerging multipolar world, particularly in the new millennium, some Indian intellectuals have framed non-alignment for Indian foreign policy as

“Nonalignment 2.0”, suggesting balancing foreign policy between new power centers in the world. It calls for prioritizing internal development, maintaining enough room for maneuver internally, preserving its own autonomy and being mindful that formal partnerships might be too demanding and sometimes the cause of resentments among other actors (Sridharan, 2017). This new policy formulation might help to explain India’s cautious policy in the Arab Spring and its case-by-case responses. For instance, civil war and active external support to rebels in Syria run counter to India’s policy of non-intervention and strategic autonomy. Also, traditionally, India has developed generally positive relations with Syria due to its secular policies and found Syria ideologically close to itself during the Cold War. Therefore, in general, India has distanced itself simultaneously from the regime and the rebels. Despite this, though, potentially because of the growing U.S. role in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Cold War, India in 2012, supported a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on Syria, that was vetoed by Russia and China, that called for more sanctions for the regime (Kumaraswamy, 2013).

5. Growing Chinese Influence in the Region

India’s growing economy, its aspiration to become a leading power, and its difficult relations with China further complicates its foreign policy decisions. Despite their growing trade, China-India relations remain tense, competitive, and conflictual, not only because of historical border disputes but also since these giant economies particularly compete for global energy resources, while both wants to be a part of the “rule-making” club. They both have burgeoning populations, are industrializing rapidly, and represent giant production hubs for the global economy. As China aspires to become a player in the Eastern Mediterranean, this has potential effects on how India formulates its foreign policy in the region. India, for instance, rejected China’s extensive Belt and Road Initiative, as a part of which China aims to acquire investments and build new infrastructures in the Mediterranean (Blarel and Paliwal, 2019). Moreover, India is observing how China is improving its relations with Israel. In 2017, China and Israel established the China-Israel Comprehensive Innovation Partnership. Israel has also welcomed and expressed willingness to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (Burton, 2021). This raises some concerns in India because India and Israel are partnering in defense, and China has a defense cooperation with Pakistan (Pant, 2009). Nevertheless, this driver should not be read as an exclusive factor either, since China-India competition remains sector and area dependent too. Similarly, “in some areas, we compete with China, however, in some other instances, we might even cooperate” says an Indian diplomat working in the region (Personal interview, 2021). Therefore, growing Chinese influence in the Mediterranean can be regarded not as an exclusive driver for Indian foreign policy in the region but rather as a factor that is part of other drivers in the picture.

6. Socio-economic and Historical Relevance of Individual Countries for India

Generally, India pursues a cautious and non-interventionist policy, respecting the strategic autonomy of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, it is hard to claim that India has developed a regional approach for this part of the world. Mostly, India designs its foreign policies according to the individual countries in question, their historical and economic relevance to India, and the specific event in question. Even after the Cold War, India’s cooperation with the U.S. over the Eastern Mediterranean region has been limited. For instance, India was extremely reluctant to express any opinion, “let alone demonstrative support” in the wake of the Arab Spring (Kumaraswamy, 2013). As noted above, in Syria, for example, unlike the U.S., India distanced itself both from the protestors and the regime.

Similarly, an Indian diplomat claims that “India only relies on the relations with the country in question. Their own story matters” (Personal interview, 2021). This means that historical relations and economic and energy-related interests between the countries, and particularly, the companies based in these two countries, matter. Also, since the early days of independence, the Suez Canal has played an important role in India’s trade with Europe. Likewise, various Indian state governments are implementing various

agricultural projects with Israel (Kumaraswamy, 2008). In addition, owing to the proximity of the Gulf States to this region and India's energy dependence on them, India was anxious about any potential spillover of the Arab Spring to this region. This is why in the initial days of the Arab Spring Egypt was reluctant to declare any opinion. In addition, recently after the Ukraine-Russia war, Egypt's economic relevancy increased further as India has become Egypt's new wheat supplier. Egypt remains one of the top wheat importers in the world, and amid global shortage, is now providing its wheat needs from India (Hindustan Times, 2022). Moreover, Cyprus remains among the top ten investors in India. The reason behind this is the traditionally close ties between these two countries who were both ex-British colonies. India supported the independence of Cyprus. The first President of the Republic of Cyprus, Makarios, and Jawaharlal Nehru were both among the pioneers of the NAM. It stayed as a member of the NAM until its European Union membership in 2004 when it was required to leave the NAM (Ker-Lindsay, 2010). Currently, India is one of the robust supporters of the end of division in the Island. To sum up, India has developed relations based on its energy needs, economic considerations, and historical relevancy in the Eastern Mediterranean region and it largely determines its foreign policy preferences according to these considerations, and on a case-by-case basis.

7. India-Israel Relations

Due to the prevailing political matrix of the era, non-alignment, India's close relationship with the Arab world, and Israel's close ties with America created a divide between the two countries. Though India recognized Israel in 1950, full diplomatic relations were only established between the two countries in 1992, one of the most significant shifts in Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean (Pant, 2015). Especially in the 1930s, the Israeli question became a battle in the Indian Congress. Although anti-Semitism was pretty much absent in India, it was and is home to a sizeable Muslim population. Principally, this substantial Muslim population has always been against the Palestinian policy followed by Israel (Kumaraswamy, 2020). After 1992, India has remained in support of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict and kept its traditional support for Palestine. Nevertheless, there has also been a substantial improvement in Israel-India relations. This process started with the arms trade and cooperation in especially the military-security arena. By the 2000s, Israel emerged as the second major arms supplier to India (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Moreover, India is a major export market for Israel. In addition, both countries cooperate in areas such as border management, telecoms, joint research, agriculture, horticulture, and technological partnerships. Apart from military equipment, they principally trade diamonds, agricultural products, and pharmaceuticals. Trade between Israel and India has grown faster in percentage terms than with any other country with whom India has formal relations. Recently, the relationship between Israel and India has been further intensifying under the Modi government, encompassing trade, defense, science and technology, culture and tourism, agriculture, and people to people connections. 2022 marks 30 years since the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two countries. Israel is now one of India's largest arms suppliers, and start-ups from both countries are working in information technology, clean energy, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and machine learning (Baba and Kumon, 2021).

8. Individual Country's Relations with Pakistan

In general terms, India's outreach to the Eastern Mediterranean is predicated on a policy of issue-based alignment and multilateralism. Under such conditions, political Islam, and individual countries' relations with Pakistan, do not seem to be the principal drivers for India in establishing relations with a country based in this region. Rather, economic, and other strategic factors have largely shaped India's engagement trajectory with the region.

Nevertheless, there are some lingering anxieties over certain regional groupings. For instance, the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan had a trilateral meeting to discuss the issues of Kashmir, Nagorno-Karabakh and Cyprus, reflecting their alignment on these conflicts (Siddiqui, 2021). During the Cold War as well, Pakistan and Turkey were members of the Baghdad Pact (which subsequently became the Central Treaty Organization), which was a military alliance, aligned with the U.S. Moreover, in recent

years, cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan has strengthened not just in defence, diplomacy, and economics, but also culturally under Erdoğan and Khan's leaderships (Rafiq, 2021). While, given its policy of non-interference, India does not shape its relations with Turkey - or any other Eastern Mediterranean country - based on the latter's relations with Pakistan, in India, such groupings, which are largely based on religion, create some anxieties too.

9. Changes in Indian Domestic Politics and Political Economy

Domestic politics impacts foreign policy decisions. Likewise, changes in domestic politics and alterations in political economic conditions influence foreign policy choices. When Modi became Prime Minister of India in 2014, his reputation for embracing Hindutva and Hindu nationalism led observers to expect a new foreign policy. Through the emerging "Modi doctrine", it was anticipated that his foreign policy decisions would aim to act as a counterweight to China's rise in Asia through its muscular foreign policy based largely on economic diplomacy. The emerging multipolarity in the world also set the ground for such a change. 8 years after his election, though, there are diverging opinions about whether India's foreign policy has witnessed a material change under his leadership (Hall, 2019). Foreign policy usually takes shape from a mix of systemic, domestic, and individual leadership factors (Gupta and Mullen, 2019). In support of this, after Modi's election, it is possible to recognize some changes, as well as certain continuities, in India's foreign policy choices in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Particularly after the Suez crisis, India's foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean usually revolved around its regional ally, Egypt. This was partially a response to the U.S.'s Baghdad Pact that included Pakistan (Blarel, 2019). After the Cold War, though, the Soviet Union's demise as a close ally of India led to an improvement in relations with the U.S. and its other partners. Moreover, new economic demands arising out of capitalist globalization also contributed to the new shape of relations with the Gulf countries, which started to evolve. They later became vital suppliers of hydrocarbon and a destination for blue collar Indian workers in low wage, low skilled sectors, such as construction. The Gulf region is now the primary source of energy for India (Wadhawan, 2019). The Indian diaspora of over eight million in the region sent over 50 billion dollars in remittances back home each year (Taneja, 2020).

In 2005, India adopted the "Look West" policy to increase bilateral cooperation with West Asian countries in trade, commerce, culture, energy and security (Pradhan, 2011). All these political economy engagements dictated the Singh government's relative silence during the Arab Spring in the early 2010s, with the fear that the uprisings would spill over into the Gulf region. Under Modi's "Link West" policy, engagements with the Gulf region have further intensified (Mohan, 2014). However, the broad parameters of India's engagement with the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean were already in place. Hence, rather than taking a different path, the Modi government has simply intensified these ties (Burton, 2019). From now on, the article will discuss Indian relations with two key partner countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, respectively, Egypt and Greece.

Case I: India-Egypt Relations

After its independence from Britain, as a newly independent country, India sided with countries from Asia, Latin America, and Africa that were suffering from foreign exploitation and colonization (Kumaraswamy, 2012). It championed and tried to guard its newly gained political freedom and sought to reach out to other countries that were similarly struggling to retain their political and economic autonomy. The Indian-Egyptian connection goes back to before independence. Mahatma Gandhi and Saad Zaghloul shared a common vision about the independence of their respective countries (Ministry of External Affairs, 2016). During the Cold War years, as India chose not to side with any of the power blocs, it launched NAM in 1961 in Belgrade, together with Yugoslavia, Egypt, Ghana, and Indonesia. Gamal Abdel Nasser and Jawaharlal Nehru were both champions of the nonalignment policy, emphasizing independent policy choices. Accordingly, Nasser and Nehru triggered a convergence of views between India and Egypt on

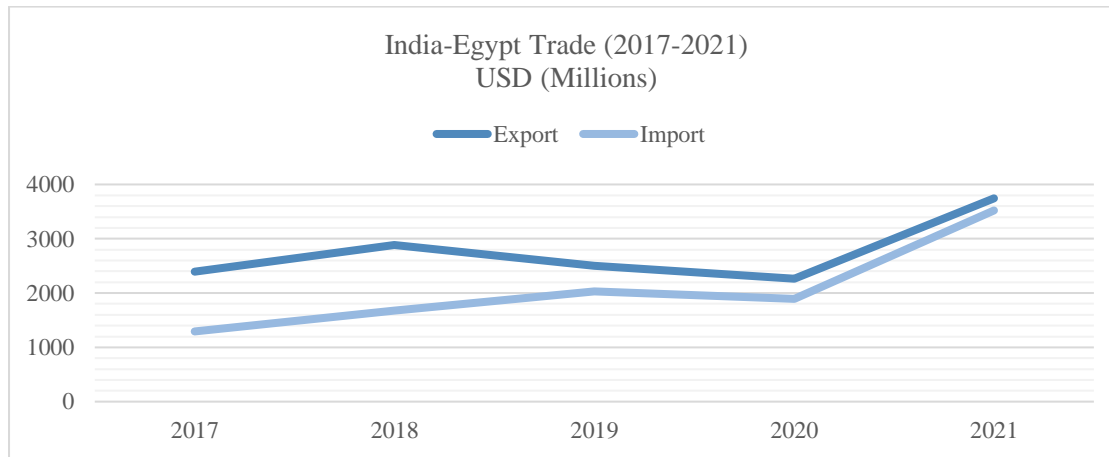
foreign policy. During the Cold War years, India's Middle East policy remained Cairo-centric and pro-Arab secularist. For instance, India attempted to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in the 1956 Suez Canal crisis that occurred when Egypt nationalized the Canal in order to use its income for building the Aswan Dam (Singh, 2018).

The relationship between India-Egypt constituted a significant example of South-South solidarity and a "legendary relationship" promoting Afro-Asian unity (Mohan, 2021). Egypt eventually became India's key partner in Africa. As such, apart from impacting each other in terms of foreign policies during this period, they even shared archaeological expertise when the Archaeological Survey of India sent an expedition to an excavation in Lower Nubia. This also contributed to knowledge and scientific expertise, free from the style of the generation of colonial knowledge in the global North (Carruthers, 2020).

After the Nehru-Nasser era, though, the previously close relationship somewhat vanished. Nasser's successors significantly departed from his policies and followed relatively pro-Western oriented ideas. Also, following the launch of the neoliberalization wave in the 1980s, a more conservative political climate dominated by religious beliefs gained prominence in the Middle East. Under these circumstances, particularly owing to its political sensitivities with regard to Pakistan, India found it increasingly difficult to find a common political platform with countries in the Middle East. As a result, oil crises, India's dependency on oil and gas from the Gulf, intra-regional rivalries (e.g., Iran-Iraq, Turkey-Greece over Cyprus etc.), sectarian competition, and the rise of political conservatism, have made India a cautious and careful actor while formulating its relations with countries in the Eastern Mediterranean (Kumaraswamy, 2012).

Concerning the Arab Spring in 2011, India was reluctant to express any opinion, particularly at the beginning. India was sympathetic towards people's demands but did not criticize regimes either. This stance was due to a desire to ensure the safety of its workers in the region and the expectation of the emergence of an international consensus over the uprisings (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Between February and March 2011, India evacuated around 3,600 workers from Egypt. After the Mubarak regime stepped down in February 2011, it was replaced by the Morsi government in 2012, avowedly related to Muslim Brotherhood. Relations between India and Egypt continued under the Morsi regime though, who visited both Pakistan and India in a short period of time (Gharekhan, 2013). In July 2013, Morsi was removed from power by an anti-Islamist coup d'état. After an interim government, Sisi took office as Egypt's new president.

Table III. India-Egypt Trade Relations in USD (Millions) between 2017-2021



Source: Tradestat, Government of India, 2022

Under the Sisi government, both India and Egypt wanted to increase the momentum of bilateral relations and carried out various ministerial-level visits. Although some authors welcome these attempts as a sign of closer ties (Egypt Today, 2018), others still point to the lack of vibrancy in the bilateral relationship

(Pradhan, 2015). In other words, there is no consensus about the revival of India-Egypt relations under the Sisi government, and the Nasser period remains as the brightest period of bilateral ties. Despite this, Egypt remains as one of the most significant trading partners from the Mediterranean region and the African continent, due to its historical ties with India. India mostly imports crude oil, organic chemicals, fertilizers, precious metals, and stones, from Egypt, and mostly exports mineral fuels, organic and inorganic chemicals, pharmaceutical products, plastic products, and foodstuff (Pradhan, 2022). Recently, Egypt has also started to import wheat from India instead of Ukraine (Hindustan Times, 2022). Concerns over energy supplies in India have brought a new role for Egypt in respect of the crude oil trade (Kumaraswamy, 2013). However, there are also efforts to cooperate for renewable energy projects (The Hindu, 2017). Egypt recently joined the International Solar Alliance, an alliance with 121 countries, which was initiated by France and India in 2015. Moreover, cultural exchange is another important aspect of bilateral relations. In Egypt, a festival called "India by the Nile" and in India, a festival called "Egypt by the Ganga" have been organized to stimulate interest for the respective countries and to promote bilateral tourism. Also, an Indian diplomat we interviewed noted that Egypt and India would like to intensify cooperation over educational activities, defense, artificial intelligence, and the pharmaceutical sector. He adds:

"In the Mediterranean, Egypt is a pharmaceutical hub. In India, also, one can receive health treatment much more cheaply compared to the Western countries. We feel that if India and Egypt cooperate more, we can together help bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries in this sector." (Personal interview, 2021).

Case II: India-Greece Relations

Interactions between Greece and India go back to antiquity. It is believed that Greeks and Indians met each other for the first time in the Persian kings' palaces in the 6th century BC. It is likely that they exchanged medical and scientific information. Greek physicians were well respected in Persian palaces, and they used Indian plants. A new era of relations between Indian and Greek people started with Alexander the Great. His exploits were famous and he also briefly visited India (Vassiliades, 2020). Dialogues between Alexander the Great and the ascetics of India are believed to be one of the first encounters between East and West. The contrast between them, and the power of Alexander the Great vis-a-vis the denunciation of all earthly values by the Indian ascetics, gave inspiration to Hellenistic writers later to express their views about religion, death, life, and renunciation (ibid). In general terms, during Roman times, India was always seen as a source of great wealth. Nevertheless, there were some who saw the spice trade as a wasteful and luxurious exercise. Sometimes, putting pepper on your food was even seen as a direct sign of "moral decline" (Stoneman, 2010). In addition, it is assumed in India that India's earliest diplomatic relations started with the Greeks and several Greek embassies were established in ancient India.³

In early modern times, Greek merchants established themselves in Bengal in the early 17th century. Later, Greeks continued to come to India in British colonists' ships. At the beginning of the 19th century, in Bengal, there were around 120 families of Greek origin. Most of them resided in Calcutta. These migrants faced adaptation problems, but they also supported their relatives planning to revolt against the Ottoman Empire with the spread of nationalism (Vassiliades, 2020). After India's independence in 1947, diplomatic ties were established in 1950. Today, while Greece is the oldest, India is the largest democratic country in the world. They share common approaches to many international issues, including United Nations reform, multilateralism and the Cyprus issue. As a key partner in the East Mediterranean for India, Greece is supportive of India's main foreign policy objectives (Embassy of India in Athens, 2022).

Commercial and economic exchanges between the countries are, however, not very significant. In particular, there is little mutual foreign direct investment in each country. Three Indian companies are

³ This information was shared with the authors by Prof. Abhay Kumar Singh, 2022, New Delhi, India.

partnering in Greece and 15 Greek companies are operating in India (Embassy of India in Athens, 2022). Still, India evaluates Greece's geopolitical location as an important hub for its growth-oriented policies, since Greece is positioned as a gateway to the European market after the Gulf, Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean Sea. In line with this, the maritime sector is also emerging as another vital area for collaboration. Greece has been an important player in global maritime history for millennia. Greece's maritime power and its location make it a very suitable economic partner for India. In addition, China's recent inroads into the Greek market, chiefly through port privatizations as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, have also encouraged India to increase economic cooperation with Greece. Trade relations between the countries are comparatively greater than direct investments. In 2020-2021, Indian exports to Greece were valued at 546.31 million dollars (0,18% of total Indian exports), while Indian imports from Greece were 143.02 million dollars (0,036 of total Indian imports) (Tradestat, Government of India, 2022). The main exports from India are - but not limited to - organic chemicals, fish, iron and steel, plastic, textiles, coffee, tea, spices, nuclear reactors, and paper. Indian imports from Greece include - but are not limited to - edible fruit and nuts, citrus fruit or melons, kiwis, building stones (mainly marble and travertine), ships, boats, and floating structures etc. (Embassy of India in Athens, 2022).

Table IV. India-Greece Trade Relations in USD (Millions) between 2017-2021



Source: Tradestat, Government of India, 2022

Concerning security and defence issues, India and Greece signed a Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation in 1998 during the visit of the Greek Defence Minister. They now cooperate on issues such as joint defence production, cyber defence, training of defence personnel, exchanges of visits of naval ships, and other traditional and non-traditional security matters. Both countries have signed air services agreements and another Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy in 2017. India was also invited to join the "Iniochos 2021", which is a multinational air force combat exercise which has taken place annually since the late 1980s (Hellenic Air Force, 2022).

Strategically, at the state relations-level, the shared threat perception from deepening Turkey-Pakistan relations and the Turkish government's support to Pakistan about the Kashmir issue are also pushing India and Greece towards each other. India has expressed support for Greece's arguments over the Eastern Mediterranean gas conflict and Cyprus, underlining that they support the resolution of such disputes under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which Turkey is not a party (Kokkinidis, 2020). In fact, recently in 2021, the Indian External Affairs Minister visited Greece to discuss these strategic cooperation issues (Ministry of External Affairs, 2021b). Despite India's support for Greece's position about gas drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean, though, Greek and Indian efforts to support each other over energy issues go beyond brown energy. Greece recently joined the International Solar Alliance whose establishment was led by India and France.

10. Conclusion

The Eastern Mediterranean region is currently enveloped by power competition from various global and regional constituents. Intensifying energy rivalry is putting stress on a framework already aggravated by

unemployment, escalating religious movements, cycles of violence, the Syrian Civil War, the Covid-19 pandemic, and miserable socio-economic conditions. Under such conditions, India has been quite cautious in developing a foreign policy for the region. It pursues a non-interventionist and consensus-seeking policy. "Middle path", "strategic autonomy", and "multipolarity" have become core elements of India's foreign policy principles for the region.

This article examined the fundamentals of Indian foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. It assessed key drivers shaping Indian foreign policy in the region; respectively, the changing international order after the Cold War, growing Chinese influence in the region, the socio-economic and historical relevance of the country in question for India, India-Israeli relations, individual country's relations with Pakistan, and changes in Indian domestic politics and political economy. Then, India's relations with two regional countries, one in the South Mediterranean, Egypt, and one in the North Mediterranean, Greece, were examined.

Before the Cold War, India pursued a foreign policy based on decolonization and anti-imperialism. It was a leading figure of the Nonalignment Movement. India's foreign policy for the Eastern Mediterranean during this period was also designed within this framework. After the Cold War, Indian foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region experienced a gradual but significant shift. In the new world order dominated by the U.S., Indian foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean changed too. It started to be formulated based on pragmatism and economic interests. The world is now moving towards a more multipolar order, yet still with a capitalistic design. Under such circumstances, India follows a cautious foreign policy based on the tradition of the "middle-path" in the region. Although the ascendance of Islam goes against its principles, India remains non-interventionist. It was indifferent, if not silent, towards the Arab Spring. It also distanced itself from both the Syrian opposition and the government. It does not have significant trade relations with the region, perhaps except some key trade in some sectors with Egypt, Israel, and Greece. In terms of investment, only Cyprus remains among the largest investors in India, due to the historical ties between India and Greece, going back to the NAM.

There is very scant work on the Indian-Eastern Mediterranean relations. Nevertheless, this paper shows that there has been a connection between India and the Eastern Mediterranean region since antiquity. Perhaps, due to domestic demands, economic discontent, and other global political priorities, India's foreign policy did not hitherto pay great attention to the region. The baggage of colonial and imperial rule, the emergence of Cold War geopolitics, a weak economy and other domestic challenges, and continuous trouble at the periphery, kept India busy. Most of Indian engagement with the region was due to the NAM during the Cold War. However, a changing international order after the end of the Cold War, a developing domestic political economy, the rise of China, and an emerging multipolar system, set the stage for India to engage more closely with the Eastern Mediterranean.

There is a need for more scholarly analysis about Indian-Eastern Mediterranean and Mediterranean region relations at large. The analysis carried out in the article is limited by its assumption of states as a unit of analysis. Contrary to mainstream international relations theories' assumptions, though, foreign policy choices are taken within a world order shaped not only by states but also by companies, various social groups, and individuals. Also, states and companies are composed of people, and foreign policy choices are taken in a specific political-economic context, which shapes these individuals' minds. In other words, the gap in the literature on Indian-Eastern Mediterranean relations needs to be filled through a much more detailed analysis than simply a state-to-state relations-based examination. This article can provide a useful preliminary background analysis but in an increasingly global and multipolar world, there is great scope for analysis connecting distant geographies in multiple ways.

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