

Vulnerability to coercive migration diplomacy

EU-Türkiye (2015-2020) case study

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Abstract

Over the past decades, migration has been used as a political weapon. In order to better understand this security issue, academic attention is needed to develop coherent policy tools. Among academia, there is a debate on the vulnerability of states to coercive migration diplomacy. Greenhill's (2010) theory of normative constraint advances eight independent risk factors that make liberal democracies more vulnerable to coercion. However, this theory ought to be supported by qualitative research to understand how these variables are linked to coercive migration diplomacy. A theory testing process tracing (TTPT) single case study is followed to accomplish such aim. The key research question in this thesis is: *how do liberal democracies succumb to coercive migration diplomacy?* It therefore focuses on refining normative constraint theory, as well as on the effect of border control. The migration crisis between the EU and Türkiye first in 2015-2016 and then in 2019-2020 is used as a case study. The results of this thesis suggest that factors including migrant camp mobilization, codified commitments to refugee protection, and pluralistic politics can interact in a sufficient way to make liberal democracies vulnerable to coercion. Furthermore, this thesis has found that an effective border control is an additional factor to consider when assessing the vulnerability of a target state to concede to the demands of a coercer. This made the first instance of migrant instrumentalization a success, albeit enhanced border control capacities on the Greek side in conjunction with other factors made Türkiye's second coercive attempt fail. Since the findings of this thesis are qualitative in nature, they can only be directly applicable to this case. However, policy lessons can be drawn from this study.

Key words: normative constraint theory, coercive migration diplomacy, EU, Greece, Türkiye, liberal democracy, 2015 Refugee Crisis.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research problem

By the end of 2022, the number of people that were forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflicts, fear of prosecution and human rights abuses more than doubled compared to the previous decade. According to estimates by the UN Refugee Agency (2022), if the number of forcibly displaced people was 42.7 million in 2012, just a decade later this number has reached a staggering 101.1 million. This figure, which has not been surpassed since WWII, perhaps signals that the world is entering into an era of growing instability (Zanfrini, 2021). Future trends for 2022 and beyond are also far from promising, especially at a time when unprecedented numbers of refugees and asylum seekers are fleeing Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and war-torn Ukraine. It is also worth mentioning population displacement as a result of climate change, which is no longer a future hypothetical but a reality. Every year since 2010, 21.5 million people on average have been forced to flee their homes due to weather-related events (UN News, 2021). Notably, climate change is a threat multiplier in most current conflicts. For instance, Syria's conflict and the Refugee Crisis that followed are often seen as a result of the Arab Spring uprisings, but "people tend to forget the five-year drought in Syria's northeast that preceded the war" (UNHCR, 2016). Indeed, climate-related grievances make conflict and displacement more likely and severe. While this scenario poses a great challenge from a humanitarian perspective, it is becoming increasingly troubling from a security one.

The conventional wisdom is that migration outflows are a non-state phenomenon, a by-product of the unintended consequences of man-made and natural crisis such as state failure, civil war and environmental catastrophes. However, there is a growing body of evidence that has identified during the broader sweep of history the instrumentalization of migration as a political weapon by "states and state-like entities with few strategic advantages to turn the tables on more powerful neighbours" (Fakhry, 2022: 8). In essence, the instrumentalization of migration is a form of coercion based on "the intentional creation, manipulation, and exploitation of migration and refugee crises" (Greenhill, 2010: 2). The purposes behind its use have often been domestic. Purging people from a territory for reasons of demographic engineering, nation-building or ethnic cleansing. Or as a form of colonization, market entry or territorial expansion. Today, migration is being instrumentalized in a strategic environment that has all the added complexities of modern interstate relations and economic interdependence.

There is, nevertheless, still a lack of understanding as to why states that employ migrant instrumentalization are successful in certain instances while they fail to coerce their targets in others. This may have to do with the fact that the literature has mainly focused on figures related to security, economy and society, arguably missing that what truly constitutes a threat is as “much a matter of perception as of objective reality” (Greenhill, 2016: 319). Perceptions can, and quite often are, exploited by coercive actors willing to capitalize on such fears. Addressing this gap in our understanding of the phenomenon is key given current and future migration trends, which will certainly allow states to include this tool of diplomatic coercion inside their foreign policy agendas. This is why, by exploring how states use migration as a foreign policy tool inside an aggressive and coercive diplomatic campaign, this thesis aims to enhance our understanding of this phenomenon.

One of the main factors to consider when designing policies aimed at countering the prospect of coercive migration diplomacy is under which circumstances it succeeds. There is a debate within the academic community on what these vulnerability factors are. There exists a plethora of studies advancing plausible competing explanations for the vulnerability of target states to migrant instrumentalization but there is one that stands out. That is, Greenhill’s (2010) foundational work. The theory she advances of normative constraint boils down to the “leverage weak actors can exercise through skilful exploitation of political heterogeneity and normative inconsistencies (the instrumental use of norms)” (Ibid: 11). Simply put, she argues that liberal democracies, whose features the EU embodies, abide by rhetorical and codified commitments that in turn constrain their behaviour in practice. Acting in a way that contravenes such principles makes their political leadership vulnerable to hypocrisy costs¹. When engaging in this norms-based political blackmail, coercers manage to convert liberal democratic virtues into international bargaining tools. Greenhill based her theory on a mix of large-N quantitative studies and four detailed qualitative case studies. Her study identifies how, why and under what conditions migrant instrumentalization can prove efficacious, advancing eight independent variables or risk factors.

However, Greenhill’s (2010) theory cannot fully explain how Türkiye successfully coerced a more powerful actor like the EU back in 2016 but then failed to do the same in 2020.

¹ Greenhill (2010: 52) defines hypocrisy costs as those “symbolic costs that can be imposed when there exists a real (or perceived) disparity between a professed commitment to liberal values and/or international norms, and demonstrated state actions that contravene such a commitment”.

This second observation shows how democratic states that abide by liberal norms may bypass their own self-imposed norms to act upon migration and asylum issues. Thus, it is here contended that a qualitative case study focusing on this more recent observation could help refine normative constraint theory. This will be done by revealing how the causal links proposed by Greenhill have influenced the vulnerability of states to succumb to coercive migration diplomacy. This thesis addresses this academic niche by testing causal mechanisms drawn from Greenhill's (2010) normative constraint theory in the context of EU- Türkiye relations in a deductive way. However, the chosen method also leaves room for serendipitous discovery, bringing undertheorized factors to light. This conundrum represents an academic puzzle worth trying to solve, as it can increase our understanding of how migrations flows are instrumentalized as tools of coercion, particularly in a time where human displacement is on the rise.

Even though this thesis is rather limited in scope, it could yield interesting contributions to our understanding of coercive migration diplomacy, and particularly to the refinement of normative constraint theory. The conclusions reached here could give decisionmakers better policy tools to prevent migration from being used as a political weapon. Hopefully, it will also contribute to our understanding of future migration crises, which would make preventative actions that prioritize human security more likely to be applied. This research will take the migration crisis between the EU and Türkiye as a case study, with the timeframe of 2015-2020. This is indeed a complex crisis that merits further investigation.

1.2 Research question

The research problem this thesis aims to address can be formulated into a question as follows:

How do liberal democracies succumb to coercive migration diplomacy?

The set of sub-questions the study will also attempt to answer are the following:

- *What is the place of Greenhill's (2010) theory in migration diplomacy literature?*
- *How can the causal links advanced by normative constraint theory be turned into causal mechanisms?*
- *How do these causal mechanisms contribute to the vulnerability of the EU to concede to Türkiye's coercive migration diplomacy?*

1.3 Outline

This thesis is structured as follows. The second chapter of this thesis reviews the existing literature on migration diplomacy and EU migration policy, placing Greenhill's (2010) foundational study within the wider context of migration diplomacy research. The third chapter is theoretical in nature and provides a detailed overview of Greenhill's (2010) theory of normative constraint and the causal links she advances. The fourth chapter goes over the research design and the methodology used to analyse the case and answer the research question. The fifth chapter offers the reader a concise overview of the EU-Türkiye case. The sixth chapter is the analysis and it is based on an exploration of some of the causal mechanisms distilled from normative constraint theory and how these factors have contributed to the vulnerability of the EU to succumb to Türkiye's coercive migration diplomacy. Finally, the concluding chapter of this thesis summarizes some of the key arguments, acknowledges some of its limitations, and discusses the policy implications as well as the avenues for future research.

2. Previous research

The literature drawing patterns and explanations about migrant instrumentalization lacks appropriate cohesion. It conceptualizes this phenomenon variously as a tool of nation-building, geopolitics, migration diplomacy and hybrid warfare. Given that the use of migrants as a weapon most often than not comprises a myriad of motivations and objectives, an appreciation for all of them is critical to understanding the broader phenomenon. However, this thesis views migrant instrumentalization not as part of migration studies, but rather as part of migration diplomacy. As previously stated, current research in this field cannot fully explain how and why coercive migration diplomacy succeeds or fails. Since present and future migration trends foretell a scenario where migration is likely going to be used as a bargaining chip in international negotiations, this thesis aims to enhance our understanding of this phenomenon. In order to do so, this thesis explores the relationship between liberal democratic principles and the policy responses given by states that become the targets of this form of coercion. Thus, the research question this thesis aims to explore is worth studying because it aims to fill a key gap in the migration diplomacy literature that would otherwise be problematic if it remained unaddressed.

2.1 Migration instrumentalization within migration diplomacy

Negotiations in the realm of foreign policy are nothing new. An array of scholars have analysed ‘tactical issue-linkage’ as a bargaining game where one actor attempts to persuade a target actor to cooperate through incentives (Haas, 1980; Hampshire, 2016; Ceccorulli, 2022). This bargaining game has been especially relevant in migration, which has increasingly gained salience in state’s bilateral and multilateral relations. Moving beyond tactical-issue linkage, where matters are not necessarily conceptually bound, Betts (2011) bridges the literature on international relations and migration. He argues that cross-issue persuasion establishes a well-defined causal connection between the issues under debate, creating substantive issue-linkages and contributing with an extra level of depth to negotiations. The migration-security nexus is an increasingly relevant debate that exemplifies substantive issue-linkages (Ibid).

The prospect of calculated negotiations over migration inspired scholars to start exploring the potential use of migration in diplomatic negotiations (Thiollett, 2011; İçduygu and Aksel, 2014). Throughout history, migrants and refugees have been employed as ‘bargaining chips’ in foreign policy negotiations, most often than not to manipulate a target (Greenhill, 2010). Yet, as Tsourapas (2017) notes, the literature has seemed to neglect the significance of this phenomenon and the need to systematically capture the processes at hand. While the literature has captured the potential use of migration for strategic ends, it has done so mainly in other disciplines and not on foreign relations. Indeed, even though there has been a growing amount of scholarship focusing on modern diplomacy, migration has yet to appear in such analyses despite its clear preponderance in practitioners’ foreign agendas. Thus, the fact that migration accounts for a significant part of actors’ foreign policy agendas makes this field of research warrant particular attention.

For the aforementioned reasons, the study of ‘migration diplomacy’ is useful both for theoretical and analytical purposes. As a concept, migration diplomacy adequately captures the way in which migration relations are based on actors’ mutual interactions (Ceccorulli, 2022). In their paper, Adamson and Tsourapas (2019: 115-116) define this concept as “states’ use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility”. They also specify that the concept is not only applicable to states’ actions but can also encompass transnational actors such as the EU. Considering how migration policies feature in diplomatic relations, one can see how the instrumentalization of cross-border mobility can attain foreign policy objectives. Here, the country’s position or role in the migratory path is of particular

relevance. The literature that has focused on the political strategies followed by those ‘transit’ states has shown how migration and geostrategy are connected. According to Frowd (2020), the multilevel and multi-layered nature of the actors involved in migration has a clear effect on security practices. This can blur the distinction between migration and cross-national crime, encouraging the development of civilian-security capacities in migration management. The concept has sparked original research and some researchers have explored the role of geography and diplomatic ties on domestic migrations plans. For instance, by focusing on EU’s neighboring states Morocco and Türkiye (Norman, 2020). Adamson and Tsourapas’ (2016) mentioning of the EU-Türkiye Statement of 2016 and subsequent provocative positions adopted by Türkiye show Ankara’s leverage on the matter and thus the relevance of the concept of migration diplomacy (see Demiryontar, 2020).

Scholars have yet to explore the most prominent characteristics and dynamics presently at play in states’ interactions over migration issues. Hence, focusing on the specific aspects of the phenomenon might be a way to move forward. Tsourapas’ (2017) distinction between cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy is particularly useful. While the former refers to how diplomatic negotiations over migration are expected to generate benefits for all actors involved, the latter represents a zero-sum game where the aim of the coercer is to hinder the strategic alternatives of the subdued. Illustrating such distinction, Tsourapas (2017) identifies how the number of refugees hosted by the states and its geostrategic position influence whether a ‘blackmailing’ or ‘backscratching’ strategy will ensue, reaffirming yet again the importance of transit states. For instance, Düvell (2017) holds that the 2015 Refugee Crisis greatly shaped the power relations between the EU and Türkiye.

However, as a subset of migration diplomacy, the use of migration for coercive purposes in negotiations has received little attention within the existing literature. Scholars have pointed to different factors. Greenhill (2010: 14) has noted the “embedded and camouflaged nature” of this phenomenon against a backdrop of forced migration for different reasons, whereas Teitelbaum (2015) has suggested that it is rather because coercive migration exists at the intersection between demography and political sciences. Another compelling reason has been the difficulty to categorize coercive migration diplomacy within the broader typology of foreign policy instruments. Indeed, Nye (2004) has argued that unlike other traditional coercive tools of hard power such as military force, the weaponization of migration lies in the grey zone of the hard/soft-power continuum. Furthermore, research has mainly

focused on the use of coercive diplomacy by democracies against non-democracies, but little attention has been given to the opposite condition (Schultz, 1999).

Within the migration diplomacy literature, Greenhill's (2010) book is the academic paper most often cited by researchers and practitioners attempting to understand the phenomenon of migrant instrumentalization. This thesis will take her paper as a reference point not only because Greenhill herself categorized cases involving EU states, but also because she looked at them through the lens of 'coercive engineered migration'. Her book took some inspiration from Loescher and Monahan's (1989) systematic study of the refugee phenomenon, where they recognized that refugee flows can be strategically instrumentalized due to their very nature. Greenhill's (2010) work is also based upon previous studies by Teitelbaum (1984) and Weiner (1992). Teitelbaum addressed migration in the realm of foreign policy but his distinction between sending and receiving states ignored the phenomenon of migrant instrumentalization. He only touched upon it both when he mentioned how certain "private foreign policies" have aimed to use refugees as political tools (Teitelbaum, 1984: 440), and by noting how mass expulsions have been frequently instrumentalized by sending states "to destabilize or embarrass foreign policy adversaries" (Ibid: 438). Weiner (1992), on the other hand, made a significant contribution to the study of the coercive use of migrants when he took the political economic perspective on migration and explored it through the lens of security studies. Most notably, he established that the instrumentalization of migration is a tool whereby "one state seeks to destabilize another, force recognition, stop a neighboring state from interfering in its internal affairs, prod a neighboring state to provide aid or credit in return for stopping the flow" (Weiner, 1992: 102-103). While it was recognized that the coercer often lacks agency over the migration flow it has instrumentalized, the literature also found that these actors have far more control than previously recognized (Weiner, 1992; Teitelbaum, 1984).

The research that was conducted in the latter half of the 1990s would mainly focus on the available policy responses of governments, especially since that period saw a remarkable increase in migration flows. Here, it is worth mentioning Jacobsen's (1996) paper, which limited the field of study to cover more specifically the policy responses of less developed countries, given their prominent role as transit and receiving destinations. His work captures the externalized pressure that host governments endure due to practical and normative forces. Building on this, he holds that the host government faces a threefold choice in its response to refugee influxes: "it can do nothing, it can respond negatively towards the refugees, or it can

respond positively” (Ibid: 658). Furthermore, he claims that this set of policy alternatives are similar both for less developed and more developed countries. Jacobsen’s (1996) threefold model shares some similarities with Mandel’s (1997) and Weiner and Münz’s (1997) typologies. Mandel (1997) establishes that when responding to mass refugee flows, governments can follow three different strategies: avoidance, confrontation or discrimination. Moreover, he also identified a general shift in the literature that went from viewing migration as an economic asset to perceiving it as a security threat (Ibid: 77).

Expanding on Jacobsen’s (1996) work, Weiner and Münz (1997) focused on the foreign policy dimension of migration. That is, how states can choose to design policy tools aimed at containing refugee influxes, accepting these influxes, or putting sanctions in place against sending states to prevent those influxes from happening in the first place. The third and last of these policy alternatives resonates with the scholarly work of that period, highlighting the normative aspect of intervention. This aspect is also emphasized by Keely (1991), who notes that states assisting other states undergoing mass refugee influxes do it to protect themselves, rather than for purely humanitarian reasons.

Hayden (1999) used the Kosovo War (1998-1999) as an ideal case study to illustrate how coercive migration diplomacy works in practice. Here, he explored how Serbian President Milošević from former Yugoslavia and the former Kosovo Liberation Army instrumentalized migration against NATO. He identified how the forced displacement of Albanian refugees was used as an “an intentional, deliberate strategy of the parties to the internal conflict and not just a consequence or unintended effect of the hostilities between ethnic Albanians and Serbs” (Ibid: 35). However, his work arguably failed to capture how the instrumentalization of cross-border flows fitted in the wider context. A more coherent and apt exploration of the coercive use of migration flows came with Greenhill’s (2008) original work. Here, she provided a comprehensive typology of the most frequent ways in which displaced populations are instrumentalized, “often for specific political and/or military ends” (Ibid: 6). Cases of migrant instrumentalization include “instances of an antagonist leveraging its capacity to control the flow of people into the target state in order to undermine the target’s standing, influence its politics and/or gain concessions from it” (Ibid: 8). Indeed, her exploration of the coercive variant within migration diplomacy is particularly relevant to this thesis. In practice, it shares similarities with what Pape (1996: 21) referred to as ‘coercion by punishment’; “the hope is that the government will concede or the population will revolt”.

Elements of this body of theory have been empirically tested and widely cited in academia, but it was not until the 2015 Refugee Crisis that the study of the instrumentalization of migration surged (Teitelbaum, 2015). Thereafter, Greenhill's (2010) authoritative study would encourage further research (see for instance Gokalp Aras, 2019; Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019). While various aspects of Adamson and Tsourapas' (2019) study resonate with Greenhill's (2010) framework, they add to the study of migrant instrumentalization by highlighting cases in which populations have been instrumentalized "as bargaining chips for weapons and military aid" (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019: 120). Similarly, while Greenhill's (2010) study mainly focuses on the threat of sending populations, Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) note that the notion of withholding population is just as significant to understand the relationship between coercive diplomacy and migration.

Of the studies that have applied Greenhill's framework, Nichols (2022) is arguably the most distinct. It uses a macro-comparative approach to explore why certain cases of instrumentalization migration prosper in obtaining political gains against the EU, while others end up failing or even backfiring. In a similar fashion to this thesis, Nichols' (2022) work also employs Greenhill's (2010) theoretical framework to analyse this phenomenon. His data set, containing all instances of migrant instrumentalization against Schengen member states from 2006 to February 2022, serves as a good reference point for case selection. However, as opposed to Nichols' (2022) work, this thesis will attempt to contribute to the existing literature by attempting to explore how liberal democratic principles constrain the policy responses given by states under coercion.

2.2 Externalization of EU border control

Discussing previous research on the EU's approach to migration is of great relevance for this thesis since the EU has been the main target under coercion by Türkiye. While member states like Greece are the primary targets in the sense that they have to bear the brunt of the migration crisis, the main target under coercion remains the EU as a whole, as it is the actor expected to make concessions.

In recent times, the distinction between the internal and external dimension of the EU's policies on migration have grown increasingly blurred. This has sparked a growing amount of scholarship that has focused on such an instance, often taking a critical stance. The literature

that has focused on the externalization approach of the EU is decades old (see Boswell, 2003; Lavenex and Kunz, 2008), but this does not imply it is obsolete. When one observes the recent cooperation agreements that the EU has struck with third states one can see why (Ceccorulli, 2022). Yet, what these lines of enquiry have seemed to ignore is the political dimension of the matter. Namely, the fact that the EU's actions do not occur in a vacuum and can be better understood when factoring in the game that actors with competing interests play with each other (Ceccorulli, 2022). Research on conditionality has captured to an extent the relational nature dominating migration. Relations between the EU&Greece and Türkiye seem to fit the case, confirming the argument of those scholars sustaining that peripheral states to the EU strategically employ migration management in international bargaining to gain concessions (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006; Demiryontar, 2021; Léonard and Kaunert, 2021). Nevertheless, when it comes to migration, it is not always easy to tell who ends up getting the upper hand (Greenhill, 2016).

The EU's approach to migration and border control has changed significantly since the Schengen Area was established in 1995 (Adamson and Tsouparas, 2019; Boswell, 2003; Üstübcü and İçduygu, 2018; Nichols, 2022). And so has Greece's approach to migration changed as a result. The two aspects that best capture the EU policy shift are greater externalization and securitization. The externalization of migration border control has its origins in the 1999 Tampere Summit, whereas the securitization element belongs to the more general shift across the West whereby migration started being framed as a security issue (Geddes and Hadj-Abdou, 2018: 152). In this context of externalization and securitization, the EU started transferring various key responsibilities for migration control to neighboring countries (Üstübcü and İçduygu, 2018; Panebianco, 2020). The deals struck under the umbrella of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership have been characterized by shifting responsibility to the Global South, rather than sharing that burden with them.

Köpping's (2020) study is especially insightful to understand the impact that the EU asylum policies had on this policy shift. His analysis focused on the development of border policing, placing it within the general debate between liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism over the Schengen *acquis*. From a neofunctionalist perspective, he further highlighted the way in which rhetorical framing has been used as a tool to place more emphasis on irregular immigrants than refugees, thus justifying the securitization of migration policy. Geddes and Hadj-Abdou (2018) carried out a survey among EU top officials, where they

observed that framing is a tool often used in the drafting policies of migration. Frames provide important lenses through which one can understand how migration has become a highly contested policy area within the EU institutional system.

Similarly, Köpping's (2020) take on the matter is shared by Scipioni (2018), who highlights how EU institutions have acted as drivers for further integration but at the same time have created a cyclical crisis. He contends that there are inherent aspects of the EU institutional system like "weak monitoring, lack of policy harmonization, low solidarity, and absence of central institutions" that have originated a policy crisis in the realm of migration (Ibid: 1358). Panebianco (2020) similarly shares that the growing politicization has contributed to internal turmoil within EU institutions.

Grasping the elements behind the EU's shift in internal security and migration border management is helpful to understand how the EU has dealt with the use of migrants as a political weapon (Tsourapas, 2017; Adamson and Tsouparas, 2019). Both the externalization and securitization aspects of EU migration policy have decidedly shaped the concept of migrant instrumentalization; especially after the 2015 Refugee Crisis. Although it is important to take into account the use of frames and politicization among elites, the concept of externalization is a more apt lens through which to understand the effect that coercive diplomacy has on the EU's vulnerability to succumb to the demands of coercers.

2.3 Summary of literature review

Research on migration diplomacy has focused primarily on the potential use of migration in diplomatic negotiations and how it has been used as bargaining leverage, highlighting the opportunities and challenges that come with this phenomenon. This body of literature has also focused on the distinction between coercive and cooperative forms of migration diplomacy, emphasizing that regardless of the strategy pursued, the migrants caught in between are often used as a means to a political end. The coercive type has received little attention within the existing literature. The scholars that have indeed explored coercive migration diplomacy have focused on the available policy responses that target states have at their disposal when addressing a migration crisis instrumentalized by a coercer. The conclusion, albeit formulated in different ways, is that states that possess the conditions of a liberal democracy often choose to accept the demands of the coercer to maintain an appropriate

international reputation. Coercive migration diplomacy, if successful, can enable weak states to fulfil their foreign policy objectives by extracting concessions from more powerful actors. Several instances that the literature has observed seem to point to the fact that the EU's externalization of border control and the vulnerability to concede to the demands of neighbouring states go hand in hand. Despite these instances, research has yet to explore the interplay between democratic norms and the vulnerability to succumb to coercive migration diplomacy in a more nuanced way. There is consequently room for this thesis to explore how the norms and principles that liberal democracies profess constraint their room of manoeuvre, thus making them more vulnerable to this form of coercion.

3. Theory

3.1 Normative Constraint Theory

This thesis understands theory as any relevant academic study on public policy and change that aims to predict a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 224). The theory of normative constraint proposed by Greenhill (2010) builds upon Merom's (1998) theory of why democracies tend to lose small wars. Both authors agree that the state's ability to respond to a crisis in a bargaining situation is constrained when domestic liberals underscore the gap between the government's actions and its rhetoric. In essence, democracies adhere to liberal values and norms that constrain their behavior. Nevertheless, the biggest difference between both lies in the fact that while Merom (1998) affords more explanatory power to the domestic discord that may already exist within the polity, Greenhill (2010) argues that external actors with a coercive diplomatic agenda are the primordial source of problems. She further identifies an antithesis in states' interactions whereby "weak actors may use norms to help compensate for their relative deficiencies when seeking to influence more powerful counterparts" (Greenhill, 2010: 7). What she hypothesizes and eventually proves is that weak actors instrumentalize migration in order to influence the conduct of norm-abiding states.

While the threat of an undesirable influx of mobilized people is what coerces, the self-imposed normative constraints of receiving states is what ultimately push them "to concede to demands they were previously determined to eschew" (Ibid: 57). The coercive potential of migration is inherently connected to the target state's obligation to abide by the rule of law and respect liberal principles. Research in other areas (Arreguín-Toft, 2005) has also found that a

powerful state is more likely to fare negatively against a highly devout, weaker adversary, due to the domestically self-imposed norms of the former. Since Türkiye is a relatively weaker actor than the EU, resorting to this unconventional asymmetric migration diplomacy tool is both rational and appealing from the former's perspective.

Based on her previous work, Greenhill's (2010) hypothesized that potential coercers are able to exploit receiving states through two different pathways. The first is through threats to overwhelm the physical or political ability of the receiving state to cope with the influx, namely 'capacity swamping'. The second one is based on a "norms-enhanced political blackmail predicated on exploitation of the heterogeneity of interests that frequently exists within polities", known as 'political agitation' (Ibid: 3). Both pathways are relevant to understanding the effect of coercive engineered migration on liberal democracies but the normative aspect of her hypothesis is the most relevant one for this thesis. This is because the latter refers to the willingness of the targets to cope with the influx, whereas the former refers to the physical ability of targets to do so. Capacity swamping is more relevant in situations affecting a developing country, as coercive attempts often comprise threats to severely tax the target's physical and/or economic coping ability if it fails to meet the coercer's demands (Jacobsen, 1996).

From a liberal perspective, states act in accordance with liberal values and principles in order to ensure a political order that contains distinct forms of integration. The EU embodies these values and promotes international cooperation since it benefits from being in a system that operates in this way. Another incentive to abide by norms is that polities that do so are less vulnerable to suffering hypocrisy costs. Yet, why is political agitation so effective against democracies? As Greenhill (2010) argues, the democratic system creates various weaknesses, including political hypocrisy, which is essentially an overstatement by political elites of their government's commitment to morality (Dovi, 2001: 10). In her rich empirical analysis, Greenhill (2010) recorded many instances throughout history when different governments that had pledged themselves to protecting those fleeing violence, later decided to adopt repressive measures against them.

Here, advanced, industrial, liberal democracies are especially vulnerable to conceding to the demands of coercers. Greenhill (2010) proposes in her theory two distinct yet interconnected reasons for this: normative and political liberalism. First, normative liberalism

refers to the codified commitments to the rule of law and the rights of refugees, which make liberal democracies more vulnerable to being punished “if they seek to behave in ways that contravene such commitments” (Ibid: 4). Although such codified norms afford protection and safeguards to those forced to leave their home countries, these same guarantees hinder the states’ ability to manage their borders. The most universally accepted instruments enshrining these norms “can be found in the 1948 Human Rights Declaration, the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees, and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees” (Ibid: 48). The principle of non-refoulement (protected in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention) arguably places the strongest constraint on state action since it states that, except in very specific cases, “no Contracting State shall expel or return (‘refouler’) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened”. Coercers are then able to exploit this norm and impose administrative and economic costs on target actors that have complex asylum processing rules in place.

On the other hand, political liberalism refers to the degree of transparency and civil society participation within a state. Liberal democracies are known to provide “access points for societal groups to influence governmental policy” (Ibid: 61). Due to pluralistic politics, democratic political battles are mainly fueled by opposition parties who have considerable incentives to publicly frame any missteps by sitting incumbents as failures that warrant a change of leadership (Schultz, 1999). As a result of the general transparency of this process, coercive challengers are able to discern both the policy responses that the government will likely employ, as well as the degree of internal polarization.

Greenhill (2010) conceptualizes in a 2x2 matrix these two variables of target vulnerability:

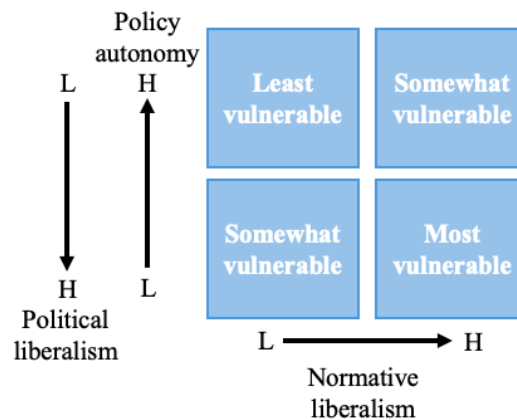


Fig. 1 – Vulnerability across regime types (H: high / L: low) (Greenhill, 2010: 64).

Although both factors are an indispensable part of the theoretical model, Greenhill (2010: 64) suggests that the prevalence of hypocrisy costs as force multipliers makes normative liberalism the most relevant source in discerning the target vulnerability *ex ante*. However, since domestic, rather than international politics, is often higher in the agenda of policymakers, we can expect the level of political liberalism to have more predictive value regarding policy responses. Regardless, as the theory notes, increasing levels of normative and political liberalism make policy autonomy decline, which in turn makes the aggregate vulnerability of states higher; something which makes liberal democracies the most vulnerable.

The actual value of hypocrisy costs in the decision making of the receiving state is still underdeveloped. Scholars have argued that these reputational costs are not only real but also influence the actions and attitudes of both government and society. Hypocrisy costs belong to what human rights network advocates refer to as accountability politics and in practice they act as force multipliers. As Keck and Sikkink (1998: 13) note, norms-violating actors can prompt domestic NGOs to mobilize advocacy networks, whose members then put pressure on their own governments or on third party-organizations. Indeed, once public statements have been made in which the government has committed itself to abiding by certain principles, different networks can employ that stance and the message it carries to expose the gap between discourse

and practice. Most often than not, the government may try to save face by closing the gap or by eliminating the gap altogether, usually by conceding to the coercer's demands (Ibid: 24).

Even if symbolic, hypocrisy costs have the capacity to influence cornered politicians to concede to demands they originally were determined to eschew. For instance, the British government, concerned about its liberal reputation before the international community, refused to return the Jewish refugees on board the ship *St. Louis* back to Germany only "after the example provided by Holland to take 200 of the displaced" (Marrus, 2002: 284). The effect of hypocrisy costs on state actions is particularly relevant when the target state has some responsibility for the migration outflow, which leaves its government open to criticism in case of refusal.

Whether elites employ normatively charged rhetoric for instrumental reasons or actually act upon the values they defend is not the most relevant here. In either case, elites lock themselves to make good on those rhetorical commitments or face the political consequences of failing to do so. Yet, the question remains as to why would a government make a rhetorical commitment that could later be used to expose the gap between said promise and the government's handling of the crisis. Greenhill (2010) answers this question by noting that leaders expect that their words will expand their options to create votes or benefit them in the run-up to an election. Leaders are not only seeking domestic approval but in an increasingly globalized digital world political figures are also concerned with their status and reputation in the international stage. However, even if rhetorical claims were not made personally by any particular politician, as Greenhill (Ibid: 56) argues, they may find themselves vulnerable to hypocrisy costs anyway "based on the actions (or historical positions) of their predecessors and, in particular, as a result of long-standing national commitments to a specific group or groups" (Ibid: 54).

Norms can "provide incentives and disincentives for different kinds of actions" for those who abide by them (Thomas, 2001: 195). Nonetheless, at the same time they also provide incentives and disincentives for those who seek to exploit them, often with the indirect assistance of well-intentioned activists and legal workers (Ibid). When norms are recognized as being significant to a part of society they have the capacity to inflict hypocrisy costs on the target, so norms do not necessarily have to be socialized to serve as political tools of coercion (Keck and Sicking, 1998). That being said, evidence suggests that the existence and imposition

of hypocrisy costs does not imply that target states will be coerced (Greenhill, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2006). For instance, mobilized and polarized interests are often enough to make leaders concede. As Greenhill (2010: 58) rightly notes, when target states have a high degree of pro-and anti-camp mobilization, the function of hypocrisy costs is that they “serve as effective force multipliers that enhance the vulnerability of certain leaders and certain targets to migration-driven coercion”.

Greenhill (2010) conceptualizes camp mobilization as a 2x2 matrix that captures variation in this variable.

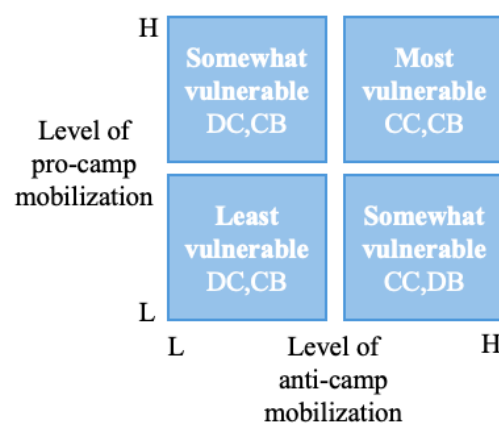


Fig. 2 – Vulnerability to coercion from camp mobilization (H: high / L: low) and (CB: concentrated benefits; CC, concentrated costs; DB, diffuse benefits; DC, diffuse costs). (Greenhill, 2010: 51).

The research puzzle this thesis is interested in exploring is how Greece, a well-established liberal democracy and thus most vulnerable according to the model, responded back in 2020 to Türkiye’s instrumentalization of migration in a way that contradicts what we could have expected from Greenhill’s (2010) theory. While her theory does provide a convincing explanation as to how Türkiye successfully coerced Greece back in 2016, it does not offer explanatory power for the second outcome. Against what was expected, Greek authorities decided to act in a way that contravened their own codified commitments to refugee protection and migration law. Hence, in order to contribute to the field of migration diplomacy it is necessary to further explore the relationship between liberal democracies and their vulnerability to coercive diplomacy by testing Greenhill’s (2010) normative constraint theory.

3.2 Causal links proposed by Greenhill's (2010) theory

Greenhill (2010) advanced in her authoritative study eight key independent variables or risk factors. These were found to be indicative of a state's risk of conceding to the demands of coercers. More precisely, the rise or decline of the independent variable connected to the value of the dependent variable (vulnerability to coercive migration). It must be noted that not all independent variables will be tested in this thesis. However, it has been deemed necessary to present and discuss all variables, so that the choice to test independent variables is legitimized, thus avoiding selection bias. The variables can be described as follows:

1. *Capacity swamping*. As previously noted, the ability of target states to cope with a given influx of migrants or refugees is likely to determine whether the challenger is successful at coercion. Nonetheless, liberal democracies are less likely to be vulnerable to this form of coercion because most of them possess solid welfare systems.
2. *Camp mobilization*. Target states are likely to be most vulnerable not when their societies and/or political leaders are united but rather when there is broad-ranging and acute disagreement about how the government should respond to an impending or current migration crisis. When the prospect of both less concentrated costs and concentrated benefits is most present, albeit by distinct segments of society, high levels of mobilization both by those pro-refugee groups and those opposed will be more likely, thus increasing the probability of coercive success.
3. *Normative liberalism*. As the adoption and codification of relevant legal safeguards increases, the degree of individual right protection via the constitution also rises. By extension, normative liberalism increases, vulnerability to hypocrisy costs similarly grows, and susceptibility to coercion simultaneously rises.
4. *Political liberalism*. The vulnerability to coercive diplomacy caused by political liberalism stems from the fact that liberal democracies embody what we understand as absolutist principles. But both existing divisions and the intrinsic conflictual nature of pluralistic political systems make these principles to be everything but absolute.
5. *Hypocrisy costs*. To the extent that reputational costs can be levelled against the target state, its susceptibility to coercion will increase. However, as previously mentioned,

hypocrisy costs act as force multipliers. What this means is that hypocrisy costs are not a necessary nor sufficient condition per se. Polarized and mobilized interests are often enough to make leaders concede to the demands of challengers. Thus, imposing hypocrisy costs on a target state is not a guarantee by itself that the coercive attempt will succeed.

Greenhill (2010) adds to her analysis three other alternative explanations that can explain whether a target, liberal or otherwise, may withstand or concede to a coercive migration diplomatic campaign.

6. *Geographic proximity*. The smaller the distance from the source of the migration flow, the lower the probability that the target state can address or cope with the group in question. Thus, the greater the credibility of the threat to actually punish the target and the higher the chances of coercive success. While geographic proximity between the source of a migration flow and the target inevitably increases the vulnerability of that target, proximity is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for coercive success.
7. *Size of the migration flow*. The larger the size of the outflow, the higher the probability of coercive success. While it is reasonable to determine the magnitude of the migration flow, obtaining valid and reliable figures on the accurate size is tough at best. Larger outflows logically place greater stress on the ability of states to assimilate the inflow, and also influence their vulnerability to both swamping and political agitation. Yet, available data shows that outcomes are not correlated with the size of the outflow in question.
8. *Prior relationship* (refers to the previous target affinity or hostility toward a particular migrant/refugee group). Existing relationships with specific migrant/refugee groups can determine the outcome of a coercive diplomatic campaign. Yet, this is case-specific, rather than systematically correlated with the pre-existing state of affairs or policies. Previous relationships are relevant in cases in which crises become important to either pro- or anti-camps (or to both). Nevertheless, neither already existing policies nor the nature of the relationship are necessary nor sufficient conditions for determining the outcomes of coercive success. That being said, if the challenger and target are already

entangled in a coercive dynamic, then any threats are likely to lose credibility and thus less likely to result in coercion.

The methodology this thesis uses, TTPT, demands the analysis of huge amounts of data. This makes the analysis of all these variables beyond the scope of this research. As many of the independent variables have different connections to the dependent variable, they may be analysed one at a time. Therefore, the thesis will choose the variables that are most feasible to explore and relevant to answering the previously formulated research problem: *how do liberal democracies succumb to coercive migration diplomacy?* To start, the interpretation of the perceived causal path of Greenhill (2010) has to be made in such a way that makes it possible to conceptualize her theory into a testable causal mechanism. Likewise, it must be feasible to test this relationship in the context of the EU-Türkiye crisis over migration. When conducting the research, it being an inherent iterative process, the most apt variables will be selected for analysis. Namely, the variables of *camp mobilization*, *normative liberalism* and *political liberalism*. The reasoning behind not analysing the causal link of *hypocrisy costs* is that according to Greenhill (2010), this variable is a theoretical construct, and it is not a necessary nor sufficient condition. Acting as force multipliers, hypocrisy costs are important to acknowledge but analysing them at a deeper level would be out of the scope of this thesis given the difficulties when trying to observe them empirically.

4. Research design

This thesis follows a neopositivist research design and thus it is important to note its foundational assumptions. The neopositivist tradition is widely established within political science and its methodology is relevant within migration diplomacy. Yet, as Jackson (2011: 60) puts it, disregarding and unquestioning the dominance of any methodology “is a precarious situation for a scholarly field, as it amounts to a tacit placing of all of one’s philosophical-ontological eggs in a single basket”. By clearly stating the foundational assumptions of this thesis, the aim is to make them visible and open to criticism. Neopositivism separates the human mind and the outside world that exists independently from it, leading us to a primordial epistemological question – how can one produce reliable knowledge if always separated from it? Although “there is nothing like absolute certainty in the whole field of our knowledge”, neopositivism answers this fundamental question by positing that knowledge about the world

can be discerned by the combination of reason (theory) and observation (empirics) (Ibid: 64). Following this assumption, this thesis agrees that the outside world can be observed and measured to an adequate degree of exactness, and that as Jackson (2011: 59) puts it, “knowledge is constructed through the successive proposing and testing of hypothetical guesses about the character of the world”.

Neopositivism as a methodology of social science inquiry is also open for criticism. The fact that human beings are nothing like deterministic robots whose behaviours are predictable makes finding accurate causal relationships in the political science field nearly impossible to attain. Hypothetically, researchers could create experimental settings that could provide for perfect control of various variables, however as Risjord (2014: 10) points out, these settings would raise serious external validity issues. Hence, researchers have to settle with making “statements about probabilistic causal relationships” (Ibid: 59). Similarly, since we live in a multivariate social reality and not a bivariate one, social science researchers often have to recur to historical data belonging to particular contexts and be limited to the amount of controlling they can do.

One of the key issues with research focusing on norms is the present epistemological divide. While encouraging diversity of theory and method, this divide also prevents cumulative research based on hypothesis testing (Shannon, 2017: 12). Case studies exploring the role of particular norms in specific contexts are abundant, but they rarely spark case study methodology that seeks to enhance “the virtues of control and variation of the values of variables of interest” (Ibid). For instance, Bjorkdahl (2002: 11) bewailed how the interpretivist research tradition has ignored the search for causes and objective truths that can track the causal effect of ideas and norms. Despite its inherent limitations, this thesis is grounded in neopositivism because it aims to facilitate generalizable theory building and contribute to norms research within migration diplomacy through testable and measurable dynamics.

4.1 Single-case study approach

Until now, qualitative or mixed methods research by Greenhill and others have demonstrated that there are certain variables that are correlated with the vulnerability of states to succumb to coercive migration diplomacy. Nevertheless, it has not been shown that these correlations should be interpreted as causal links. This is why a qualitative approach has been

selected for this thesis, as it can be used to refine our understanding of relationships offered to us by large-N quantitative research. As such, this thesis aims to uncover whether and how Greenhill's causal links have contributed to the vulnerability of the EU to concede to Türkiye's demands. In practice, this means that the research will be limited to within-case inferences rather than cross-case ones. The first can be seen as "causal inferences made, based on observed empirical material, about the presence or absence of the parts and whole of a causal mechanism in a particular case" (Beach and Pedersen, 2019: 182). Whereas cross-case inferences can be seen as deductions made about a causal effect that fits the whole population of a particular phenomenon. Since the aim of this thesis is to explore particular causal mechanisms, an in-depth single case study research design has been chosen, as it leaves ample room for within-case inferences.

Bennett (2010:21) defines a case study as a "well-defined aspect of a historical happening that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical happening itself". Similarly, Peter (1998: 141) points out to the fact that in a case-study the researcher "looks directly at the sequence of events that produced an outcome, rather than just the outcome". This study focuses on the case of Türkiye's instrumentalization of migration against the EU, process tracing the causal mechanisms between 2015 and 2020 to answer why the expected outcomes do not reveal the same results. Using a single case study will help this thesis "contribute to strengthening our theoretical understanding of causal explanations as well as deepening our knowledge of specific cases" (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 237). In order to do so, it is important to operationalize the abstract theoretical expectations into observable manifestations of a causal mechanism so as to make them verifiable through the empirical test (Ibid: 230). This will help the researcher bridge the gap between theory and method, thus making their measurement both valid and reliable.

When translated into this paper, the aspect to be analysed is the instrumentalization of migration by Türkiye against the EU, which is seen more broadly as a case of coercive diplomacy inside Ankara's foreign and security policy agenda. This case is considered to be a least likely case because the response from Greece to the refugees diverted by Türkiye challenged the theoretical expectations of how liberal democracies respond to migrant crises, therefore opening a window of opportunity for theory-testing (Ibid: 226). The reasoning behind selecting this case is that when aiming to construct empirical knowledge one should look for "evidence that is inconsistent with our ideas" (Jackson, 2010: 65). A least likely case is a hard

test for the theory because it is a case “in which the theory is least likely to hold true” (Bennet, 2010: 29). Single-case studies can notably increase or decrease our confidence in a theory or ask us to expand or contract its scope conditions. By choosing a least likely case, this thesis aims to refine the explanatory power of Greenhill’s (2010) theory of normative constraint.

While testing a causal process may confirm and explain a relationship, the fact that this can also open the researcher to make critical changes to the theory should not be downplayed. Adding new variables and testing a solid theoretical framework in various settings afford both useful tests to theories and new outlooks on the cases under observation. As such, choosing a least likely case is an adequate way to identify anomalies in the theory because of its in-depth approach. Furthermore, given geographical and linguistic limitations, selecting a sample at random could have prevented the researcher from accessing certain data. Moreover, even though the explanations derived from a case study can be questioned if they are inconsistent with the utmost level of precision that is observable, this thesis follows the conditions established by the theoretical framework to gain valid answers (Bennet, 2010: 24). Hence, when deliberately chosen, single-case studies can test and modify fixed theoretical frameworks through an appropriate research design that guarantees significant empirical leverage and constructive inferences (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 223).

4.2 Method: Theory-Testing Process-Tracing (TTPT)

This thesis follows the methodological approach of TTPT. As established by Beach and Pedersen (2019: 1), “process-tracing is a research method for tracing causal mechanisms using detailed, within-case empirical analysis of how a causal mechanism operated in real-world cases”. The justification behind selecting TTPT is that this thesis aims to test the theoretical causal mechanism inferred from Greenhill’s (2010) theory of normative constraint. As Beach and Pedersen (2019: 11) argue, this method allows the research to move beyond the study of statistical association by “opening up the black box of causality to study more directly the causal mechanisms whereby χ contributed to producing γ ”. Each part is made of an entity (η) that transmits causal energy (\rightarrow). The whole causal mechanism can be visualized as:

$$\chi[(\eta_1 \rightarrow) \times (\eta_2 \rightarrow)]\gamma$$

Here, it is worth mentioning that causal mechanisms are context specific. As Falleti and Lynch (2009) put it, context can be seen as a setting where a predetermined set of initial

conditions lead to an outcome through the activity of a causal mechanism. When translated into this paper, this refers to exploring the correlation between migrant instrumentalization (intervention) and the target state's vulnerability to make concessions (outcome) in a comprehensive and temporal way. Since TTPT puts theory and method in close proximity, TTPT is applied in order to assess whether the empirical evidence validates the hypothesis that the present causal mechanism has been existent and worked as expected. (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 225).

Moreover, selecting a case on the basis of the dependent variable is appropriate so long as the independent variables are not fixed and the causal path unknown (Lieberman, 2005). Since TTPT focuses on the casual path connecting the independent and dependent variables instead of showing co-variational relationship, selection bias becomes less of a pressing issue. Particularly because something essential to conduct an in-depth analysis is that I, as the researcher, have acceptable knowledge of the matter.

So as to assess the validity of theories, TTPT will be used to test the causal mechanisms in a deductive manner. That is, judging whether the observed mechanisms in a case connect with those predicted by the theory (Gerring, 2007; Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016). However, due to its in-depth quest for evidence, TTPT leaves room for 'serendipitous discovery' (Hall, 2003: 395). This is quite significant as theory-testing in a different context may help uncover undertheorized factors that perhaps are of relevance in a broader setting. Thus, it will be possible to 'probe and poke' in order to find alternative explanations that might help modify the scope conditions of the theory.

Without falling into a narration of sequential historical events, TTPT will help this researcher to map out the course of events that led to the observed outcome. Therefore, special attention will be given to historically formative moments, which are crucial events in which all important conditions of a specific line of development can be found. TTPT will be used to recognize where the explanatory factors in the causal mechanism are apparent, thus turning these factors into formative moments that can explain the policy response that Greece in coordination with the EU designed in order to address the 2019-2020 border crisis with Türkiye.

With the theory showing that the condition of liberal democracy has a constant significant effect on the prospects of successful coercion by the challenger and imposition of hypocrisy costs on the target (Greenhill, 2010), we can expect the same in the 2019-2020 border crisis between the EU and Türkiye. TTPT will thus help this researcher assess whether there is variation in the other causal links that could explain the observed outcome. Namely, the causal links of the degree of polarization within civil society (camp mobilization) and the levels of normative and political liberalism.

4.3 Case selection

The instrumentalization of migration by Türkiye was selected for analysis as it fits the criteria laid out for TTPT case studies. Beach and Pedersen (2019: 11) contend that, when carrying out a TTPT case study, “the researcher selects a single case where both χ [independent variable] and γ [dependent variable] are present, and the context allows the mechanisms to operate”. What makes the situation between the EU and Türkiye an interesting case is that although several agreements over migration control have been struck, coercive migration diplomacy remains a perpetual issue. This makes it interesting to research in order to explore to what degree the inferred causal mechanisms affect the prospects of success, when measuring against the fluctuating level of relationships over the past years. The research will be limited to the situation in the Greece-Türkiye border between 2015-2020.

There have been other scholars looking into the EU-Türkiye case. Greenhill (2016) has looked into this case but focusing only on analyzing the March 2016 deal signed between both parties, clearly missing how the issue has evolved thereafter. Gokalp Aras (2019) has sought to find the source of tension in the framing of the EU’s migration policy in terms of the EU neighborhood policy. However, these authors have ignored how normative constraint affects the prospects of successful coercion over time as a qualitative case study. Nichols (2022) has also studied coercive migration diplomacy through a macro-comparative approach, but qualitative studies are necessary to offer more insight into the ‘why’ and ‘how’ layers of the situation. Over the last few years the issue has deepened and broadened in ways that warrant specific academic attention. Moreover, the fact that the relationship between the EU and Greece vis-à-vis Türkiye has been well documented over time makes it a suitable case due to the availability of empirical evidence.

4.4 Evidence

In line with Gerring (2007: 173), one of the main attributes of TTPT is that “multiple types of evidence are employed for the verification of a single inference”. Thus, when realizing an in-depth TTPT study, the researcher must gather different kinds of data and offer new evidence with each piece of data (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 234). Being qualitative in nature, the researcher must also opt for quality rather than quantity when selecting the evidence to be analyzed (Gerring, 2007: 180). Furthermore, when conducting a historical reading that relies on open source material it is of utmost importance to assess the authenticity, independence, simultaneity, and tendency of the sources gathered (Esaiasson et al. 2017: 292). As such, in this thesis the sources that describe the relevant events and the statements made in relation to these are of simultaneity, as they have been created in relation to the events unfolding. The test for independence has been done by comparing the selected sources against other related sources that reported the same information. And finally, the authenticity of the material has been guaranteed by looking at reliable sources of information, thus avoiding tendencies to distort the reported information.

The theory of normative constraint, based on its explanatory variables, guides the selection of material and how it should be interpreted. Beach and Pedersen (2019: 132) note that “we select sources based on the type of evidence that is best suited to enable us to engage in a critical theory test”. Hence, there will exist a confirmation bias towards gathering the material that best accommodates to the analytical framework constructed. Yet, since this is a theory-testing study, the identified hypotheses and alternative explanations ensure that the analysis is motivated by a deductive logic that others can follow and verify (Ulriksen and Dadalauri, 2016: 234). The evidence selected aims to capture the formative historical moments that are deemed theoretically important in relation to the explanations given by the theory, and in extension to the policy response given by Greece and the EU to the migration crisis with Türkiye.

Although there is abundant evidence that can be used to measure the levels of pro- and anti-camp mobilization and political polarization inside Greece, this thesis uses process tracing to analyse relevant news media. News media sources are useful to discern the degree of political polarization within civil society during the observed period. Likewise, fragments of speeches and interviews by elites and political representatives in connection to this case are selected to determine whether there existed any rhetorical commitments to refugee protection. The

codified commitments to refugee protection will be measured by looking at whether Greece was party to the most fundamental asylum procedures and refugee protection mechanisms.

The evidence is collected from the 2015-2020 period. But special emphasis will be placed in the 2019-2020 period, as this is the time when communications reached their peak due to new activism and frenetic contact with the EU to address the situation. In order to obtain reliable evidence, information from different sources has been triangulated to counter the issues of internal validity and confirmation bias, which are intrinsic to this data collection method.

4.5 Limitations

Despite its apparent benefits, it must be acknowledged that there exist some trade-offs when using this particular research design. The first one refers to the external validity of the research, which is arguably low. Beach and Pedersen (2019: 3) contend that, when applying TTPT in a single case study “no claims can be made, about whether the mechanism was only cause of the outcome”. This is due to the fact that by itself, a single TTPT research study is not able to confirm if the causal mechanism is a necessary condition for the transmission of causal forces connecting X and Y (Ibid). Hence, as mentioned earlier, this thesis will only make (within-case) inferences about the causal mechanisms present in Türkiye’s coercive diplomacy against the EU. However, results from TTPT single case studies, when placed in a broader research design, can help the researcher make cross-case inferences (Ibid: 153). Even though the results of this study would not be enough to guarantee generalization about the use of coercive diplomacy at large, results would be generalizable in a wider research study.

Furthermore, when the case has been selected on the basis of the dependent variable, selection bias can become an issue. As noted by Bennet (2010: 39), this refers to a bias towards selecting the type of empirics that best fit the analytical framework constructed. However, in this thesis, selecting a small sample randomly could cause serious issues. Most notably, the chosen case of migrant instrumentalization could be significantly unrepresentative of the population. While small-N single case research designs are difficult to generalize, they can however help the researcher better understand the causal process in context specific circumstances. Indeed, as Popper (1959) advanced with his type of test called falsification, one observation that runs against the theory is a good enough justification for the researcher to assess its scope conditions. As mentioned previously, the question for which the theory does

not seem to provide a valid answer is why did Türkiye's campaign of coercive migration diplomacy successfully coerced the EU back in 2016, but only four years later in 2020 it failed utterly? This justifies the critical assessment of the scope conditions of the theory.

While a certain degree of subjectivity is inherent to qualitative research methods and process tracing more specifically, subjective biases can affect the internal validity of the study (Bennet, 2014: 281). These biases could affect, for example, the accuracy of empirical tests and the assessments of empirical observations. So as to decrease the prospect of subjective biases, this thesis will aim to rationalize choices made, structure the decision-making process and abstain from cherry-picking seemingly convenient observations. This should afford the study with greater internal validity than it would otherwise.

Moreover, a critique that perhaps could be raised against the chosen theoretical framework is that securitization theory could have provided a more useful theoretical lens through which to look at this research problem. Long before the 9/11 attacks galvanized border security policy, the issue of illegal migration and refugees had already become in many countries a matter of high politics. This meant a dramatic shift in the construction of national security threats and security policy. In practice, this opened the door for the use of harsher means to deal with migration-related issues. For instance, Belarusian President Lukashenko's threats in 2002 and 2004 to allow asylum seekers to cross into the EU unless his demands were met sparked in bordering EU member states a pledge to increase their spending in border control and toughening of security practices (Greenhill, 2008). The theory of securitization advanced by the Copenhagen School could have thus provided a plausible alternative theoretical lens through which to answer this thesis's research problem. However, using securitization theory would have been inconsistent with the epistemological assumptions of this thesis. This study follows a neopositivist search design, which is meant to be value-free, and securitization theory is rather concerned with the meaning we create or reinforce.

Finally, it is notably hard to overcome the hurdle of language barriers in cross-language qualitative research. Overlooking non-English knowledge relevant to this research may result in biases in the understanding of the case under study. The researcher might be unable to grasp information from certain local news media that could potentially be employed to gain further insight into a particular testable condition. However, when applicable and if deemed necessary, reliable and valid translation instruments will be employed.

5. Case

Looking at how the diplomatic game between the EU, Greece and Türkiye on migration has recently unfolded is worth exploring as a case study for the aforementioned reasons. Therefore, this section is meant to provide an overview rather than an exhausting account of these matters, which will be discussed to a greater depth in the analytical section.



Fig. 3 – Political map of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (Lesniewski, 2017).

5.1 EU-Türkiye deal over border control (2015-2016)

As a result of the Syrian conflict, Europe experienced a huge influx of refugees seeking asylum in 2015. Since 2011, a steady flow of refugees into Türkiye was already happening, but it was not until 2015 when the Refugee Crisis reached its breaking point. This is when former European Council president Donald Tusk (2015) warned that the Schengen area was “on the brink of collapse” if measures were not urgently adopted. The anticipated surge of migrants was predicted to be so significant that during that period member states like Sweden and Slovakia adopted temporary border control measures, thereby suspending the Schengen area of free movement. As a transit and neighbor country to the EU, Türkiye was particularly well-positioned to rip off the benefits from this crisis and score political points (Nichols, 2022: 42). Although Türkiye has been repeatedly framed as a transit country, in reality it is in fact a

destination for a majority of the migrants travelling there (Frowd, 2020; Ceccorulli, 2021). That being said, Türkiye has been one of the most transited pathways for irregular migrants to enter into the EU as well as a breeding ground for other transnational threats spuriously tied to migration. As previously noted, the 1999 Tampere Summit established the original framework for immigration control but the crisis opened a policy window for Türkiye to institutionalize the capacity to use migration as a bargaining tool (Gokalp Aras, 2019). Particularly because European member states lacked effective and coordinated mechanisms to manage migration crises.

Amid the EU's growing externalization of its migration policy, the EU-Türkiye Joint Action Plan (JAP) was signed back in November 2015. In practice, the JAP gave Türkiye the role of gatekeeper for 'fortress Europe' (Ibid). In return, various lesser agreements were agreed between both parties where concessions from the EU were made in the form of financial aid, resuming accession talks and visa liberalization among others. In addition to these concessions, the EU would also assume all expenses related to bringing the refugees back to Türkiye, which was named a 'safe third country' under international law (Nichols, 2022: 43). As a country with an increasingly appalling human rights record, this label gave Ankara a form of implicit European denial of ethical wrongdoing (Gokalp Aras, 2019). Thus, both the JAP and the indirect recognition that Türkiye was a safe place for refugees was a great success for Ankara, who effectively coerced the EU into making concessions that were previously unconceivable.

In parallel, showing an important level of foresight and as part of the JAP, Türkiye started constructing a modern border wall with the latest technology in surveillance and monitoring across the land border with Syria. With that in mind, given the Türkiye government's widespread repressive policies against its own population during the fall of 2016, the European Parliament voted for suspending accession talks. However, the EU's condemnation of Türkiye's illiberal measures prompted threats from Türkiye leader President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who boldly stated "if you go any further these borders will be opened" (BBC Turkey, 2016). As a result, no further measure was adopted against Türkiye for its repressive actions, as its *de facto* control over the border gave Ankara the upper hand in negotiations. So, what was the key instrument that catalyzed this shift in the EU's posture? Not bombs or tanks, but human beings. Indeed, European fears of uncontrolled migration allowed President Erdogan to employ a successful and rather unconventional tool of diplomatic coercion against the world's greatest political and economic union. Inevitably, diplomatic

relations between Brussels and Ankara worsened after this and the ensuing events in 2016 rendered the JAP deal moot.

5.2 Türkiye's 'Spring Shield' Operation (2019-2020)

Few years later, in October 2019, Türkiye commenced launching a series of offensive military operations against Kurdish forces in Syria, claiming that these forces were involved in terrorist activities. While this justification was reasonable to a certain extent, Türkiye's true goal was also to establish conditions for the repatriation of approximately 1 million refugees from Syria (Nichols, 2022). In response, the international community, particularly the US, Saudi Arabia and evidently the EU, openly criticised Türkiye's actions given its inherent but purposefully hidden anti-Kurdish nature. As the EU was discussing whether to suspend refugee financial aid, the Türkiye government and its head of state President Erdogan replied in a similar fashion to that back in 2016. They made threats against the EU to open the borders for refugees to cross into Greece. Given the coercive nature that had been present in EU-Türkiye relations in the past years, said threats were largely condemned as blackmail, especially since the EU had already sent 6 billion euros to Türkiye for refugee aid (Emmott and Irish, 2019). Even though at that point the EU was considering new measures in the form of sanctions, arms embargo, and other similar punitive measures, these never came to see the light of day. This was partly due to the EU's system of unanimous voting in matters concerning foreign policy issues. Given the close ties between the Hungarian and Türkiye government, the leader of the former, PM Viktor Orban, vetoed in the European Council any formal measures against Türkiye for its military operations (Ibid). Regardless, the relationship between the EU and Türkiye already took its toll for Ankara as sanctions due to its sovereignty disputes over Cyprus were already put in place (Nichols, 2022).

In the spring of 2020, the Türkiye government launched a new military offensive against the Kurds baptized 'Spring Shield', which had similar goals to the previous one just six months earlier. However, despite Ankara's repeated demands for EU and NATO support, these calls remained unanswered. With heightened hostilities in the Idlib province that saw Türkiye and Russian forces confronted, Türkiye's demands intensified, particularly after the killing of 34 soldiers from a Russian airstrike (Léonard and Kaunert, 2021: 743). As it happened in 2016, Türkiye threatened the EU to open the borders, but this time it actually acted upon its threats and started diverting Syrian refugees to the Greek border on the 27th of February 2020 (Nichols,

2020). To date, this has represented the most blatant attempt by Türkiye at exploiting the vulnerabilities of the EU over migration. To illustrate, Amnesty International (2015) began reporting that the refugees were actively encouraged to cross the land border to Greece by Türkiye authorities, going as far as providing means of transport, escort and guidance as to how to best overcome Greek border security controls (Léonard and Kaunert, 2021: 743).

Yet, unlike in 2016, when Greece and the EU responded in kind, Greek border authorities were given permission to use tear gas, rubber bullets and other similar measures to stop the refugees from crossing. On top of that, just a couple of days after Türkiye started its coercive diplomatic campaign, the Greek government suspended the asylum rights of refugees for one month. Throughout this 30-day window, around 2.000 refugees were denied asylum, as well as other humanitarian and legal assistance (Stavis-Gridneff, 2020). The UNHCR (2020) reported that that this situation of hostility towards asylum seekers and humanitarian workers “had become *de facto* general policy”. Despite mounting evidence, Greece and the EU refused to accept such claims and the European Council supported Greece with a further 700 million euros to be spent in border security and infrastructure (Léonard and Kaunert, 2021). Türkiye, admitting that its coercive diplomatic campaign had failed and that Greece nor the EU were deterred by the prospect of suffering hypocrisy costs, eventually organized the transport of the remaining stranded refugees back to Türkiye. Even though the Türkiye government managed to arrange a meeting with the European Commission to ask for further concessions, Türkiye clearly failed in attaining its foreign policy objectives.

6. Analysis

After presenting the initiating conditions of this case study in more detail, this chapter will delve into the causal mechanisms proposed by Greenhill’s (2010) theory of normative constraint. By analyzing how several factors can be seen as drivers for coercive success it will set the stage for the final section. First, the causal mechanism that relates to political polarization will be discussed (ie camp mobilization). Second, causal mechanisms that relate to rhetorical and codified commitments will be explored (ie political liberalism and normative liberalism). Third, this chapter will propose an additional causal mechanism (ie border control) that could help refine the scope conditions and gain theoretical rigor. It must be acknowledged

that in practice these factors are not clearly independent from one another and some are in fact intertwined.

6.1 The mobilization of pro- and anti- refugee camps

In societies characterized by unequal and conflicting interests and unfairly distributed costs and benefits (material, psychic, or both) related to migration, instances in which only one, either the pro- or anti- camp, mobilizes in the wake up to a crisis are often the exception rather than the rule (Greenhill, 2010). As a result, target states will be most vulnerable when there are broad and acute disagreements among their public and/or elites over how to best respond to a given crisis.

Being pro- or anti- refugee/migrant is context specific as it will vary depending on the target and the crisis in question. In the context of supranational actors like the EU, such heterogeneity of interests can, and often does, divide states in more (Germany) and less (Greece) accepting of refugees and migrants. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in mid-2020 expectedly found not only differing opinions within EU member states but also across them. Greeks, whose territory borders the Mediterranean, inhabit a natural arrival destination for migration and as such, are more likely to think that immigrants represent a burden on society. In contrast, people in countries like Germany are more likely to believe that immigrants are a valuable workforce that make their economy more competitive. In 2018, 74% of Greeks shared this negative view, as opposed to only 10% that thought immigration was good for the economy. With regards to refugees, seven-in-ten Greeks (69%) said in 2018 that they embraced the idea of accepting refugees fleeing war and violence. Nevertheless, 92% of Greeks overwhelmingly rejected how the EU had been dealing with the refugee matter up until that point (Connor, 2020).

Despite pro refugee-camps tending to be smaller in size than anti-camps, their members make up for this difference by being more vocal, politically savvy, and rhetorically able actors such as lawyers and activists (Greenhill, 2010: 46). Indeed, their members are tied to various domestic and international NGOs and advocacy groups, and their primary goal is to safeguard and expand human rights generally, and refugee and migrant rights more specifically. Bearing in mind that pro-refugee camp mobilization is context specific, these groups often call for comparatively limited short-term responses when dealing with a migration crisis. These

responses can include financial aid for settling migrants or refugees or far more noteworthy, even perpetual measures, such as granting asylum or citizenship (Ibid).

From March 2015 to March 2016, a huge solidarity movement developed in Greece and all across Europe. Under the motto ‘all refugees are welcome’, support for refugees was present in all European states “via demonstrations welcoming refugees in train stations, but also via acts of civil disobedience, such as transporting refugees with private cars” (Evangelinidis, 2016: 34). In Greece, the solidarity movement was led by the state government, local authorities, NGOs and volunteers. It began on the islands and spread to a vast part of the territory (Angelidis et al., 2021: 5). Civil society organizations and collectives demanded better conditions and rights for refugees, asking for moral and material support. A great number of the needs for services and materials that Greece could not offer were met by various international organizations, who rapidly sent teams to help. Volunteers from Greece and elsewhere mobilized to come to the rescue of thousands of stranded lives on the islands and the Aegean Sea (Amnesty International, 2015). Aylan Kurdi’s photograph captured this time of solidarity, as European citizens supported a more welcoming and open Europe (Smith, 2015). For instance, the nomination of the residents of the Greek island of Lesbos to the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize for their welcoming attitude and accommodation of refugees in 2015 captures this sentiment (Angelidis et al, 2021:5). Local political figures, aware that civil society organizations supported refugees, also contributed. Mayors from many Greek towns took important steps to accommodate refugees in their municipalities. For instance, debates at the municipal level and the outreach of their actions gave local communities the appropriate information about the ESTIA housing program to host asylum seekers (Ibid: 6). In this atmosphere, anti-refugee camp mobilization was seen as almost bizarre, and those groups who spearheaded it were often viewed as radical.

Although the pro-refugee camp mobilization in Greece was prominent, these voices started giving way to more anti-refugee attitudes once the inflows grew in intensity. The narrative in Europe started revolving around security, border control and the likely difficulties in integrating refugees as a result of cultural differences, emphasizing religion amid growing Islamophobia. This containment policy was crystalized with the implementation of the JAP agreement in March 2016, which meant that anyone entering EU territory from Türkiye through the sea had to stay on the Greek islands of the north-eastern Aegean until their complex asylum procedures were finalized (Ibid: 5). Due to the capacity shortfalls within these *sui*

generis detention centers that were established on the islands, informal camps started to emerge. The consequences that these camps had on the attitudes of local communities were disastrous, as refugees started being singled out as the main source of all problems (Ibid). This made anti-refugee camp mobilization grow, with extremist and racist voice gaining prominence in the public sphere. These voices claimed above all that refugees were going to place a great burden on the welfare system.

The election results in 2019 confirmed this shift that undermined solidarity for the refugees. The New Democracy (ND) party vowed to make migration policy tougher with an emphasis on retaking control of the country, blaming the previous Coalition of the Radical left (SYRIZA) and the Independent Greeks (ANEL) for their laxity and indecision. As such, civil society organizations demanding support for refugees started losing their voice. In fact, some Greek residents, including farmers and pensioners, echoed this message and took matters into their own hands by creating civilian patrols. They tried to imitate Greece's special forces and trod along rural roads on night patrols with the purpose of stopping migrants from crossing the northern land border with Türkiye (Stevis-Gridneff, 2020). Those members within civil society that once showed solidarity with the refugees turned hostile.

Furthermore, to illustrate how pro-camp mobilization lost its momentum within Greece but also across the EU, one can look at media coverage to assess the degree of polarization. This is because whose voices end up being heard is of paramount importance “to constructing a balanced and more nuanced viewpoint in a news story” (Kalfeli, 2022). This is especially relevant in Greece, where Reporters Sans Frontiers (2022), which gathers evaluations and data on violence against journalists, established that Greece belonged to the problematic category between 2015 to 2020. According to their report, the trust that Greek citizens put in their media has been repeatedly one of the lowest in Europe. This may have to do with the fact that various large private entities like Skai coexist with numerous online media outlets, contributing to a great fragmentation of the media landscape. Similarly, an overwhelming number of media outlets are owned by a few individuals with ties to highly regulated business sectors and the political elite. This makes Greek media to be highly politically polarized and biased in favour of official sources (Kalfeli, 2022). Indeed, media news were strongly influenced by the discourse of (Greek and European) elites and the decisions put forward by them between 2019 and 2020. By neglecting opinions of non-elite sources and the voice of refugees and migrants

themselves, the Greek media favoured anti-refugee camp mobilization in detriment of the pro-camp side.

6.2 The role of codified commitments to refugee protection and pluralistic politics

According to Greenhill's (2010) theory, combining the causal mechanism of normative and political liberalism into a single analysis is appropriate. This is because codified instruments that protect human rights and pluralistic politics interact in such a way that give would-be coercers the opportunity to gain strong bargaining leverage via exploiting what target states view as their liberal virtues. Thus, turning liberal democratic principles into international bargaining tools. Even though the nature and scope of normative and rhetorical commitments to migrant protection vary across states, in general terms the human rights system has placed two main constraints on state action as it relates to policy legitimacy: the principle of non-discrimination based on race and the right to seek asylum. Both of these principles have become part of customary international law and as such, states including Greece are bound to abide by them (Martin, 1989: 553).

As previously mentioned, a big solidarity movement developed at the beginning of the 2015 Refugee Crisis. Most European governments adapted their political rhetoric to this new reality, promising to create the appropriate conditions for the reception and integration of the refugees. German Chancellor Merkel's phrase of *Wir Schaffen das* ('yes, we can'), which was borrowed from former US President Obama, illustrates how Germany tried to lead by example with its open-door policy. Greece followed by adopting a humanitarian rhetoric and discourse, seeing refugee flows as a moral obligation that could not go unignored. This was done under two premises: "minimizing the human casualties and allowing refugees to exit the country" (Evangelinidis, 2016: 35). However, this atmosphere of solidarity did not last for very long as the growing intensity of the refugee inflows led to a deep shift in attitudes.

The process that led to the signing of the JAP agreement illustrates how Türkiye exploited the pro-refugee political and normative rhetoric that dominated Europe between 2015 and 2016. EU leaders across the continent found themselves vulnerable to hypocrisy costs, and Ankara was well aware of it. As Wilczek (2016) pointed out, "Europe desperately need[ed] Türkiye to serve as a migrant waiting room on its borders.... And make no mistake, Türkiye [was] well aware of its upper hand in these negotiations". In fact, leaked minutes from an EU-

Türkiye bilateral meeting show how Erdogan stated “we can open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime... So how will you deal with refugees if you don’t get a deal? Kill the refugees?” (Reuters, 2016). These overwhelming conditions meant that EU concessions were bound to be made; demands that were previously seen as outright blackmail.

Despite the fact that the EU as a supranational entity deems human rights protection as an integral part of its *raison d’etre*, as the crisis grew in intensity divisions also started to sow inside individual member states. The pro-refugee rhetoric started losing support in the political arena as the crisis progressed, making the discourse of anti-refugee supporters advocating for a tougher stance on refugees gain more salience (Greenhill, 2016: 324). As mentioned earlier, this shift was captured in Greece by the election of the new government, whose PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis (2019) stressed that the problem Greece faced was “migration rather than refugees”. Framing migration as a security issue arguably helped the government make itself less vulnerable to hypocrisy costs. Likewise, such framing was legitimized by the general discontent with how the previous left-wing Greek government and the EU handled the crisis at the beginning.

As previously mentioned, Ankara commenced an unprecedented campaign of coercive migration diplomacy against the EU for a second time in 2020. Numerous refugees were encouraged to cross into Greek territory using violence against the police, border patrols and military personnel. The German Federal Intelligence Service confirmed that Türkiye state forces were involved in these unlawful acts, and they even prevented refugees from returning to Türkiye territory (Bekić, 2022: 156). Athens also blamed Ankara of waging a disinformation campaign after the Türkiye Interior Minister Soylu started tweeting updates on the number of refugees who managed to cross into Greece, stating that a total number of 142.175 had made it (Gürsel, 2020). Greek PM Mitsotakis stated that “[Türkiye President Erdogan] is attempting to turn tens of thousands of migrants into illegal invaders to further his own interests, illegally crossing our borders”, to which Chancellor Merkel replied that “no one leaves their home country lightly” (Angelidis et al., 2021: 15). This exchange of words illustrated the growing tensions that started to sour between EU member states on how to best address the migration crisis.

Furthermore, as previously stated, there were numerous complaints that Greek authorities used excessive force against those refugees that did manage to cross, as well as the

introduction of some extraordinary measures (Ibid: 7). Most notably, Athens introduced on the 2nd of March an emergency legislative decree, thereby suspending the right to seek asylum in Greece for a period of 30 days. This breached Article 33 of the 1951 Convention (principle of non-refoulement) and thus, constituted a serious violation of international law and respect for human rights. The UNHRC (2020) vehemently criticised this measure. Nevertheless, the European Commission offered no comment on the lawfulness of the Greek authorities' decision, arguing that "[the] commission is not a court and does not have the authority to have a definitive legal opinion" (Nielsen, 2020). In the end, Türkiye's coercive migration diplomacy failed to attain its objectives.

But why did Türkiye's second coercive attempt fail? According to the evidence gathered, the reason for this outcome can be seen as twofold. First, the Greek ND party enjoyed wide domestic support for its tough stance in the handling of the migration crisis. For example, on the 8th of March a poll showed that 90% of the people were in favour of closing the border, and a further 81% supported the restrictive migration policy put into force by Mitsotakis' government (Keep Talking Greece, 2020). Within the government, the ex-PM Samaras called for the adoption of even tougher measures against what he termed "illegal intruders" (Stamouli, 2019). Most notably, Tsipras, the leader of the opposition party SYRIZA, stated that Greece was confronting a "geopolitical threat" from a country that was "using refugees as a political tool". He further said that Türkiye was "threatening [to open the borders] for a long time", and that the incumbent government "was right in closing the border" (Ekathimerini, 2020). This general consensus over how to deal with the migration crisis at the domestic level runs contrary to the dynamics that one would have normally expected from pluralistic politics in liberal democracies like Greece. This level of union between the ruling elite and society effectively made Greece less vulnerable to conceding to the demands of Türkiye.

This last point connects to the second reason why Türkiye's coercive migration diplomacy did not impose hypocrisy costs on Greece. That is, the unwavering support coming from EU institutions and member states. On the 3rd of March, an EU delegation headed by top officials visited the Greek border town of Kastanies and made some notable comments in their speeches about the crisis. Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, expressed that "we will hold the line and our unity will prevail...I thank Greece for being our European *aspida* (shield)". She also blamed Türkiye for its use of refugees as a "form of hybrid warfare" (Office of the Prime Minister of Greece, 2020). Charles Michel, the President of the

European Council, stated in similar terms that “the Greek borders are the European borders [...] we consider that the border’s protection is essential” (Ibid). Also, the PM of Croatia, Andrej Plenković, whose country was holding the rotation Presidency of the Council at the time, agreed and thanked the Greek PM for “for having altered the policy of Greece when it comes to protecting its borders and not to allow illegal migration on its territory”. He further stated that Greece was the “guarantor of stability for the entire European continent” (Ibid). These three speeches were characterized by a strong rhetoric of solidarity with Greece, clearly highlighting border protection and illegal migration.

6.3 Additional causal link: effective control over border security

As previously noted in section 4.2, TTPT leaves room for ‘serendipitous discovery’. This means that in its in-depth quest for evidence, TTPT helps the researcher uncover undertheorized factors that might help refine the scope conditions of the theory. After analyzing the evidence gathered, this section will argue that ‘effective control over border security’ is a causal mechanism that can help explain why Türkiye’s instrumentalization of migration in 2020 failed to coerce the EU into making new concessions. The hypothesis for this causal mechanism is formulated as follows: if the target state has effective control over its own border security, the target state will be less vulnerable to coercion, and thus the coercive migration diplomacy attempt will be more likely to fail. The next paragraphs will argue why this is an appropriate additional causal link that could help refine Greenhill’s (2010) theory of normative constraint for the EU-Türkiye observation. News media sources as well as other relevant secondary data have been used to explore this additional causal link.

The fact that Türkiye’s coercive migration diplomacy wielded positive results for Ankara in the 2015-2016 border crisis can be seen more broadly as a direct consequence of the externalization policies promoted by the EU and its member states. Indeed, by allowing and forcing neighboring states to control its borders, the EU has left itself more vulnerable to coercion. While offering incentives like development assistance funds and visa agreements in return for this control was once seen as a safe and adequate strategy, in practice this has hindered the EU’s ability to impose conditions in negotiations (Garcés, 2021). After the signing of the JAP agreement in 2015, Türkiye started the construction of a security wall along its land border with Syria in 2016 to meet EU demands over border management. These demands included preventing terrorist attacks coming from Syria, border smuggling and unlawful

crossings, and controlling refugee flows more generally (Gokalp Aras, 2019: 191). The wall was built with the latest technology in monitoring and surveillance, funded in great part by the EU itself. Since its construction, the wall allowed *de facto* control over the Schengen-border and gave Ankara the ability to open and close the border at will. With a great level of foresight, Türkiye gained the upper hand in negotiations, which aided its coercive migration diplomacy against the EU. Given Greece's lack of effective control over its own border security, the EU as a whole was vulnerable to coercion. Thus, Türkiye's coercive migration diplomacy succeeded as it managed to capitalize on the EU's weak external border security, which led to EU officials conceding to Türkiye's demands.

Even though border control is a competence shared between the EU and member states, the scope of mandates given to security and border management agencies like FRONTEX, Europol and Eurojust have been increasingly expanding over the last years (Radjenovic, 2019: 3). Indeed, European authorities have progressively updated and acquired technological means, including partnerships with the military sector, to support border management at the EU's external borders (Léonard and Kaunert, 2021: 730). For instance, Eurosur was created to provide a “European Situational Picture and a Common Pre-Frontier Intelligence Picture respectively [...] to tackle irregular migration and cross-border crime” (Ibid).

When Ankara decided to instrumentalize migration in an unprecedented way against the EU back in February 2020, a major qualitative change had already taken place at the Greek border. For while previously border control had mainly been from Türkiye, the substantial expansion of Greece's border capabilities, security practices, and the improvement of its crisis response systems had rendered the border “relatively impermeable to Türkiye exploitation” (Nichols, 2020). In fact, on the same day that Türkiye commenced its coercive migration diplomacy campaign and one day after the first Covid-19 case was detected, the PM Mitsotakis (2020) announced that “we are upgrading our border control to the highest level for maximum deterrence”.

This qualitative change in Greece's border policy was backed to a substantial degree by the Commission's renewed commitment to give “all the necessary operational support to the Greek authorities” (Office of the Prime Minister of Greece, 2020). Von der Leyen stated that together with the operational support by Frontex in the form of patrol vessels, aircraft, vehicles and border personnel, the Commission was also going to award “financial assistance

of 700 million euros to Greece [...] for migration management generally” (Ibid). Coupled with the domestic and EU’s approval of the actions taken by Greek authorities to manage the migration crisis at its border, the improvement of border management capabilities translated into effective border control, which helped the EU not to give into Türkiye’s demands.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to refine normative constraint theory using a qualitative case study, thus gaining insights into how causal links provided by Greenhill (2010) have influenced the vulnerability of liberal democracies to coercive migration diplomacy. The central research question revolved around the conditions that make target states, particularly liberal democracies, more likely to be coerced by a challenger instrumentalizing a migration flow. After providing a theoretical framework where Greenhill’s (2010) theory of normative constraint was set against the wider literature on migration diplomacy, this thesis presented its research design. An overview of the case followed. Hereafter, in the analytical section, factors from normative constraint theory related to the vulnerability of target states to succumb to coercive migration diplomacy were discussed. Namely, the mobilization of pro- and anti-refugee camps, codified commitments to refugee protection and pluralistic politics, and an additional causal link referred to as ‘effective control over border security’.

In the greatly polarized environment that characterized the period between 2015 and 2016, it can be argued that the highly mobilized and polarized interests of both pro- and anti-refugee camps left the EU and Greek leadership between a rock and a hard place when attempting to respond to Erdogan’s threats to open the borders. This is because, as Greenhill’s (2010) notes, target states cannot satisfy the demands of one particular camp without alienating the other. Strong domestic and supranational incentives to avoid hypocrisy costs can explain why the EU conceded to Türkiye’s demands, especially because doing so made the potential migration crisis that Erdogan threatened to unfold disappear. Indeed, the existence of codified and rhetorical commitments to refugee protection, as well as the political conundrums that Türkiye was able to exploit, constrained the EU’s room for policy maneuver. A further causal link that can explain Türkiye’s coercive success is border control. The signing of the JAP, which afforded Türkiye *de facto* control over the Schengen border area, gave Ankara bargaining leverage over negotiations with the EU. As part of its privileged status as Europe’s

gatekeeper, Türkiye's threats to allow migrants to cross into the EU forced member states to concede to Ankara's demands.

However, during the second coercive attempt in 2019-2020 the anti-refugee camps had a more prominent role. The official anti-refugee rhetoric resonated within civil society. Hence, in this case in which mainly anti-refugee camps were mobilized, Greece and the EU were less vulnerable to coercion because restrictive measures to tackle the migration crisis enjoyed wider support and were as such easier to implement. The often complex dynamics of pluralistic politics played a lesser role in Greece's internal debate given the strong domestic support for strict migration policies all across the political spectrum. This wide-ranging consensus allowed the Greek government to bypass its own normative constraints and introduce extraordinary measures such as the suspension of the right to asylum. This is linked to the argument that norms matter for policy responses. Nevertheless, not all norms but only those liberal and democratic norms that enjoy the support of a large segment of society and are codified in the internal regulations of the state. This argument challenges the conventional wisdom on policy responses in liberal democracies, where the degree of normative and political liberalism are the identified causes of political vulnerability.

Furthermore, Athens enjoyed the unconditional political, financial and operational support of the EU. This external support can explain why Greece was able to gain effective control over its own border security, leaving less room for Türkiye to successfully play on the vulnerabilities of the EU's border management capabilities. Over the five-year time span, some key formative moments that can shed light on this outcome include an enhanced control exercised by Greece over its own border security, a worsening relationship between the EU and Türkiye, and greater external support to Greece in the form of material and human means. As such, for this particular observation, it is posited that coercive migration diplomacy is less likely to be successful when there is strong internal cohesion both at the civil society and political levels, as well as external support from allies, in this case the EU and its institutions. Bearing in mind that Greenhill (2010) formulated her theory pre-2015 Refugee Crisis, this thesis argues that 'effective control over border security' is an independent variable that could help refine the causal mechanism of Greenhill's (2010) theory of normative constraint for this particular observation. Recognizing that correlation does not imply causation, the identified causal link between border control and the vulnerability of target states to concede to the demands deserves further academic attention.

Evidently, the qualitative nature of this thesis means that it has low external validity. Even though intrinsically, conclusions can be drawn, it is not possible to generalize and apply the findings of this thesis directly to other cases. For this purpose, large-N studies are more appropriate. Nonetheless, qualitative studies can be a useful complement as they can help the researcher gain more understanding of the how and why layers of a particular issue. Results drawn from this thesis can, to a certain extent, be used to make cross-case inferences. Moreover, this research has taken a very fixed angle by focusing on Greenhill's (2010) normative constraint theory. Of course, this theory is not all-inclusive. This means that while theories can guide research, they tend to give one-dimensional insights. As such, other relevant factors have not been touched upon to the extent that they might have deserved. For instance, the effect of climate change or the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the vulnerability of states to coercive migration diplomacy could be interesting avenues for future research. Additionally, although the research has attempted to align itself with the neopositivist tradition and be as value-free as possible, it is impossible for the researcher to not have preconceptions when looking at a particular issue. Thus, this thesis should be looked at in the wider spectrum of research. By addressing a conundrum of contemporary relevance this thesis makes a significant theoretical contribution to the study of migration diplomacy, and more generally to the field of crisis management and security.

A final reflection to be made is that it remains questionable whether erecting physical barriers such as walls or fences and enhancing surveillance practices, which have become common practice in various parts of the EU's external borders, can work without the close cooperation of third states. And even if cooperative in nature, border closure attempts should still be scrutinized and viewed in the wider picture. As Üstübici and İçduygu, (2018) put it, "by their very nature, borders and border crossings constitute unresolved issues of governance both within and between states". Thus, this researcher recommends the EU to keep working on prioritizing responsibility sharing rather than responsibility shifting, as well as addressing the root causes of the flows instead of their consequences in the context of global migration governance.

Democracy is inherently a multifaceted phenomenon (Schultz, 2001: 127). Athens' security driven approach vis-à-vis Brussels in the handling of the border crisis with Türkiye show how liberal democracies can also act like autocratic regimes and adopt illiberal practices. States of emergency often bring the suspension of fundamental rights, the justification of the

use of force and the censoring of dissident voices. This is what occurred in Greece, as authorities acted in a way that violated both domestic and international laws. Rather than considering this ideal standard, or attempting to categorize states in relation to it, we should see democracy as a continuous concept rather than a binary one. The erosion of the rule of law and the human rights system in western democracies should not be taken lightly. Since the 2015 Refugee Crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, fears of another crisis have made liberal democracies become 'hostages' of third states while internally the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms has become something more acceptable.

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