UNDERSTANDING DIVERGENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND SECURITY PRACTICE IN PIVOTAL MIDDLE POWERS

THE CASES OF AUSTRALIA, TURKEY AND MEXICO

Wayne McLean

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

March 2017

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby declare and confirm that this thesis is entirely the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated, and has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a higher degree or qualification at this or any other university or institute.

Wayne McLean
March 2017

Published work: Developmental versions of the framework presented here have been published as:


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Abstract

Why do public discourses within middle powers often contrast with their foreign and security policy practice? In this thesis, I argue these differences occur because the content of certain debates can harm the national interest. As a result, security and foreign policy elites seek to reorder discourses in order to ameliorate security threats. I make this argument using a framework based on neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism posits that structural forces guide international politics over the long-term, but that domestic forces can restrain or accelerate security responses in the short-term. I use this approach to frame a typology that demonstrates how elites promote or demote specific discourses, depending on the issue at hand.

I analyse cases that are not typically grouped together as middle powers: Australia, Turkey and Mexico. I argue these ‘pivotal’ middle powers are useful cases because they sit at the centre of important security competitions and are reliant on both low threat perceptions and highly pragmatic foreign and security policy. This account fills a gap in the current middle power literature, which suggests that the foreign and security policies of middle powers have their genesis in ideational factors.

Within each case I demonstrate how elites respond in three different ways, depending on the security narrative at hand. These are: (1) deflection, where contentious issues are removed from domestic debates because they threaten the ability of elites to make pragmatic foreign and security policy and security decisions; (2) dilution, where rogue and populist voice gain traction, resulting in their messages being taken on by the centre in order ameliorate problematic narratives; and (3) inflation, where benign issues are promoted as these provide ‘safe’ areas of political competition without the risk of interfering in core security concerns.

This contribution finds these pivotal middle powers, over the long-term, behave as expected under a pragmatic, realist reading. But, in the shorter term I find that domestic debates concerned with foreign and security policy are often volatile, meaning elites seek to control them so they do not interfere with higher order foreign and security policy.
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<tr>
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<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>ADF</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
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<td>AEC</td>
<td>Australian Electoral Commission</td>
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<td>AFP</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
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<td>AGD</td>
<td>Attorney-General’s Department</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>AIIB</td>
<td>Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank</td>
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<td>ANDEV</td>
<td>Australians for Northern Development and Economic Vision</td>
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<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty</td>
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<td>ARF</td>
<td>Asian Regional Forum</td>
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<td>ASIO</td>
<td>Australian Security Intelligence Organisation</td>
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<td>ASIS</td>
<td>Australian Secret Intelligence Service</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>AUD</td>
<td>Australian Dollars</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSEC</td>
<td>Black Sea Economic Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRIC</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, and China</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<td>CENTO</td>
<td>Central Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union</td>
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<td>CHAFTA</td>
<td>China-Australia Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>CHOGRM</td>
<td>Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting</td>
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<td>CHP</td>
<td>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDE</td>
<td>Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIVETS</td>
<td>Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa</td>
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<td>CPJ</td>
<td>Committee to Protect Journalists</td>
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<td>CSTO</td>
<td>Collective Security Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defence Policy</td>
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<td>CTSS</td>
<td>Council of Turkic Speaking States</td>
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<td>DIFF</td>
<td>Development Import Finance Facility</td>
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<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defence (Australia)</td>
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<td>DFAT</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNS</td>
<td>Domain Name Server</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<td>ECHR</td>
<td>European Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<td>ECO</td>
<td>Economic Cooperation Organisation</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUFOR</td>
<td>European Union Force</td>
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<td>EZLN</td>
<td>Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)</td>
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<td>FEA</td>
<td>Five Eyes Agreement</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<td>FDN</td>
<td>Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front)</td>
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<td>FIRB</td>
<td>Foreign Investment Review Board</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>FPDA</td>
<td>Five Powers Defence Arrangement</td>
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<td>FPE</td>
<td>Foreign Policy Executive</td>
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<td>FSA</td>
<td>Free Syrian Army</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GFC</td>
<td>Global Financial Crisis</td>
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<td>G20</td>
<td>Group of 20</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HDP</td>
<td>Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party)</td>
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<td>HİSAR</td>
<td>İrtifa Hava Savunma Füze Sistemi</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
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<td>ICBM</td>
<td>Intercontinental ballistic missile</td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Criminal Court</td>
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<td>IISS</td>
<td>International Institute for Strategic Studies</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State in Syria</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>International Political Economy</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<td>JAEP</td>
<td>Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement</td>
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<td>JOE</td>
<td>Joint Operating Environment</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>KRG</td>
<td>Kurdish Regional Government</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBN</td>
<td>National Broadband Network</td>
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<td>NPT</td>
<td>Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty</td>
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<td>MHP</td>
<td>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (National Action Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı (National Intelligence Organisation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIKTA</td>
<td>Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINT</td>
<td>Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGK</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<td>ODI</td>
<td>Outbound direct investment</td>
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<td>ONA</td>
<td>Office of National Assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pemex</td>
<td>Petróleos Mexicanos (Mexican Petroleums)</td>
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<td>PAN</td>
<td>Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party)</td>
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<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
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<td>PKK</td>
<td>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers’ Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Political Parties Act</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing power parity</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRD</td>
<td>Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution)</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>PMSC</td>
<td>Private Military and Security Companies</td>
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<td>PSI</td>
<td>Proliferation Security Initiative</td>
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<td>PYD</td>
<td>Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Kurdish Democratic Union Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air force</td>
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<td>RMAF</td>
<td>Royal Malaysian Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
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<td>ROK</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
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<td>RSC</td>
<td>Regional Security Complex</td>
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<td>RSCT</td>
<td>Regional Security Complex Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>R2P</td>
<td>Responsibility to Protect</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organization</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
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<td>SRS</td>
<td>Security Referral Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAKM</td>
<td>Organization of the Eurasian Law Enforcement Agencies with Military Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIA</td>
<td>Turkish Aircraft Industries</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-LORAMID</td>
<td>Turkish Long Range Air and Missile Defence System</td>
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<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>United Kingdom Independence Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollars</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPN</td>
<td>Virtual Private Networks</td>
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<td>WEU</td>
<td>Western European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMD</td>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Puzzle

Why do public discourses focused on foreign and security policy in middle powers often deviate from their actual policy practice? For instance, why do domestic discourses towards security within Australia emphasise the threat of immigration, even though the rise of China privately occupies a more central concern of foreign and security policy elites? In this thesis I employ cases studies to argue these differences occur because the amplification of particular security discourses can harm the national interest. Furthermore, the ways elites respond to debates with security implications can be grouped into three types of broad responses. They can either: (1) deflect them, through acts such as bipartisanship; (2) dilute them, by taking on problematic discourses and reframing them in benign ways; or (3) inflate relatively minor security issues. These responses provide a pragmatic way of allowing public participation within security and foreign policy debates that have less acute strategic implications.

A generalised approach such as this, which explores the intersection between domestic and international politics and uses multiple levels of analysis, is not new. In fact many other authors have explored the so-called ‘via-media’: the bridge where pragmatic security policy and domestic sentiment meet.¹ But many of these accounts

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focus on either the broadest level of analysis and emphasise the role of great powers; or alternatively examine narrow examples of institutional bargaining (such as Robert Putnam’s account of the fourth G7 summit in 1978). As a result, this thesis takes a wider perspective, and differentiates itself from existing accounts. It does so by its focus on ‘pivotal’ middle powers, the framing of the analysis through the lens of neoclassical realism, and the use of a typological approach across the cases.

To answer this puzzle I analyse three cases that are not typically grouped together as middle powers: Australia, Turkey and Mexico. I argue these ‘pivotal’ middle powers are useful because they sit at the centre of important security competitions, and are reliant on both low-threat perceptions and highly pragmatic foreign and security policy. Australia is the archetypical middle power according to much of the existing literature. It frequently frames its foreign and security policy in the language of internationalism, with an emphasis on institutionalism. This makes it an important first case. But at the same time I find the rush to frame Australia’s foreign and security policy in activist terms does not always align with the private concerns of foreign and security policy makers. While there is a public perception of Australia’s foreign and security policy as values driven, the assessment within this thesis finds that Australia’s foreign and security policy is highly conservative, defensive and bipartisan. More importantly, I argue that many visible parts of Australia’s foreign and security policy in popular domestic debates, such as coverage on immigration, are relatively minor when viewed in pragmatic security terms.

In the next case, I argue that Turkey is also a middle power because it shares a set of conditions and capabilities similar to Australia. In both economic and military terms—Turkey and Australia are near parity. Like Australia, Turkey sits in the middle of several continuing and emerging security competitions. It also uses ideational rhetoric to advance its interests in the liberal-democratic space, but also increasingly to Middle Eastern and Central Asia audiences, leading to a variety of

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2 Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics.”

paradoxes when comparing their domestic discourses to external security threats. In this instance, I find Turkey a useful, but infrequently invoked comparison that can help us to understand the way middle powers behave, and how states in pivotal positions reorder certain ideational messages to enhance their security position.

The final case is Mexico, which has increasingly featured in the middle power literature because of its emerging economic and material capabilities. Mexico provides a useful comparison with the other cases because it is a G20 member, and its material capabilities are comparable to Australia and Turkey. Yet its geographical position provides an important contrast. Not only does its proximity to the US intensify the required management of its security discourses, but it also sits in the middle of cultural and ideological contests informed by historical Latin American and European heritages. As a result, I highlight Mexico’s cautious attempts at (and frequent retreats from) ideational diplomacy. I also reveal how contentious discourses about sensitive issues, such as communism and Cuba, have been handled in ways that mitigate provocation of the US. One important finding is that unlike many of its Southern neighbours, Mexico’s tempered and centrally managed approach to leftist politics has acted to protect it from overt US interventionism.

**Framing the Research**

This thesis structures its argument on a framework using neoclassical realist theory. Neoclassical realism’s main goal is to provide a link between systemic and domestic levels of international politics. By moving beyond structural realism’s atomistic stance on state behaviour, neoclassical realism attempts to reveal how foreign and security policy actors and their statecraft align their decision-making with the realities of their material capacity. This research program has been a focus of work by scholars including William Wohlforth and Randall Schweller, and has primarily been used to understand counter-intuitive great power behaviour, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the scope of Hitler’s agency during the lead up to the

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Second World War, and the extent to which the unbalanced tripolar system facilitated his rise.6

Other authors, such as Norrin Ripsman, have used neoclassical realist assessments to generate typologies of behaviours, allowing for an understanding of how domestic actors manage different types of discursive contests with security implications.7 In this thesis I take the typological approach used by Ripsman and apply it to pivotal middle powers. This facilitates a framework that demonstrates how elites manage security concerns by either promoting or demoting certain rhetoric and actors, depending on the issue at hand. The result is a typology that places responses to domestic discourses, that have the potential to harm the national interest, into broad and manageable analytical categories.

Using this existing research and framework as my starting point, I find that foreign and security policy elites seek to manipulate discourses in ways that allow ‘appropriate’ changes in security posture, thereby gaining ‘permission’ from domestic audiences.5 In this context ‘appropriate’ means the state will behave as expected under a realist reading of international politics. Likewise, ‘permission’ refers to the ability of elites within a state to convince domestic audiences that a certain foreign policy or security action is justified. Together, this approach may give the analyst a useful toolbox to explore the link between domestic ideational factors, and to assess how these constrain, or alternatively permit, foreign and security policy elites to meet the challenges of the external security environment.

In this wider scholarly context, a neoclassical realist approach can address four key challenges within current research on middle powers that relies on international relations theory. First, it can assist in the tendency of ideational literature to conflate niche variables as causal in foreign policy and security decision-making. Second, it can help reinterpret and reinvigorate material assessments that have relied heavily on relatively crude metrics such as GDP and military capabilities. Third, it can help to identify a link between the international security environment and domestic politics

(the ‘via-media’). Fourth, it can reuse and reapply existing research from both the realist and constructivist paradigms.

While the ‘via media’ is central to this analysis, neoclassical realism differs from most constructivist accounts by asserting that material factors enjoy primacy. This position claims there is a downward causal relationship with high-level elements of the system, which shape events and actions within the lower part of the system. This is widely accepted as a cornerstone of structural realism and the associated paradigms in international relations.\(^9\) Epistemologically, this invokes a positivist model, which (unlike constructivism, for example) assumes that objective claims can be made about the behaviour of states.\(^10\)

Having established this theoretical platform as the most appropriate to address the research question, my specific contribution to neoclassical realist theory is the use of a typology that addresses responses within middle powers. I call these types deflection, dilution and inflation. In brief, deflection removes contentious political issues from the agenda, where the respective issue can intervene too strongly in foreign and security policy decision-making. In this situation, populism may require leaders to take measures that harm the national interest, because not doing so can harm political legitimacy. A central feature of deflection is domestic bipartisanship, where foreign and security policy elites recognise the security implications of introducing certain topics into the domestic discourse. This is visible in states such as Australia, where issues concerned with the US alliance or China are rarely used as political currency by the major parties. In fact, this is a common phenomenon within international politics across a range of state actors, typified by Arthur Vandenberg’s assentation that partisan politics ‘stops at the water’s edge’.\(^11\)

The second type is dilution. This is when harmful and problematic populist ideas are removed from the fringes of the political debate. These are issues that cannot be easily deflected as they resonate with a small, but important, domestic sphere. For example, the rise of right-wing populists such as Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders in


the Netherlands\textsuperscript{12} and Marine Le Pen in France have required centrist parties in these countries to adopt positions on immigration outside of the centre.\textsuperscript{13} In these cases, elites have responded by recapturing parts of the discursive content of radical actors, at which point their most problematic foreign and security policies can be realigned with the national interest.

Finally, I identify \textit{inflation}. This is where foreign and security policy elites inflate certain domestic ideas with the goal of obfuscating practical matters with pertinence to national security. Generally, this involves a form of scapegoating or exaggerating a threat, such as the dangers of immigration, or overstressing the existential threat of terrorism. This is a form of political deception that has the effect of drawing the domestic population towards issues that resonate emotionally, but that have a minimal effect on issues critical to the national interest.

Applying this typology of domestic responses to ‘pivotal’ middle powers is important because the link between public discourses and foreign and security policy is potentially more pronounced in a middle power setting. For example, a large state such as China will often be vocal about populist issues, such as WTO accession to domestic audiences, yet remain pragmatic in negotiations, as there are fewer repercussions for poor domestic discourses given their material strength.\textsuperscript{14} Likewise, in issues such as the South China Sea dispute, Beijing can sometimes be appearing simply to appease a domestic audience. Yet, it \textit{can} do so because it has a level of political capital to undertake brinksmanship, something which is not available to middle powers.\textsuperscript{15}

This contrasts with smaller mid-sized states, in which the reverse is often true. The experience of Iraq is instructive. For instance, many scholars attribute the removal of Saddam Hussein and subsequent issues in Iraq are attributable to a poor domestic


understanding in the US about the intricacies of the 9/11 attacks.\textsuperscript{16} In this instance, the narrative within the US that Saddam Hussein was a ‘villain’ enabled Washington to launch foreign and security policy actions with little resistance, and more than 70 percent of Americans (initially) supported the military action.\textsuperscript{17} This occurred despite the fact there were no links between the Baathist regime and the 9/11 attacks. The lesson from Iraq was that rogue discourses and poor ideational messages create existential threats to weaker states and open opportunities for great powers to act offensively. This example also demonstrates why poor messaging is important within the middle power arena, and to states such as Australia, Turkey and Mexico, which sit in the middle of important security regions, and who ultimately have little scope to act independently in foreign policy and security terms. This means that middle powers, such as Australia, are largely compliant with broader systemic forces as dictated by realist accounts of international politics, such as alliance formation and balancing against threats. As a result, domestic narratives become an important security tool to mitigate external threats.

The evidence presented in the following chapters finds many examples of middle powers acting in ways that ameliorate this type of poor messaging. In the Australian chapter I find the most obvious example is its treatment of China. China was once the focus of a great deal of Australia’s domestic concerns at the time when it arguably did not present a security threat, during the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast, China rarely ranks near the top of domestic concerns linked to domestic foreign and security policy. While issues such as Chinese investment in mining and property frequently arise, they rarely resonate in the way other issues, such as immigration do. I explain this by arguing that when issues that do have the ability to impact Australian security—such as Sinophobia—are exploited by political entrepreneurs, their discourses are taken on by the centre and retooled. This occurs by transferring the narrative content of issues that are problematic, to ones that are ultimately benign. In the Australian case, this has occurred by repurposing a tradition of xenophobia away from Asia and towards immigrants from far away regions such as the Middle East, who present fewer existential threats to the Australian state.

\textsuperscript{16} For an excellent overview of the way that public discourse was linked the events of 9/11 and Iraq in the absence of evidence, see Amy Gershkoff and Shana Kushner, “Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration’s Rhetoric,” \textit{Perspectives on Politics} 3, no. 03 (2005): 525–537.\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Turkey has followed a similar pattern, although its geopolitical environment is increasingly complex and their security posture is highly volatile. Turkey’s domestic discourse has consistently emphasised a strong security backbone due to the traditional role of the military in its political affairs, but similar, generalised responses are visible. In the Turkish chapter a sweep of its modern history reveals a tendency for elites to promote threats that are detached from the core concerns of the state. Consequently, within this chapter, I show how changes to the external security environment often coincide with new sets of domestic concerns linked to security. Over the past fifteen years, this has been highly visible within the so-called ‘neo-Ottoman’ security policy that emerged as a response to the unclear post-Cold War environment, and where Ankara has been less central to Washington’s regional objectives. Correspondingly, domestic rhetorical shifts have occurred. Here, elites have enacted a series of radical security and foreign policy changes that were marketed to the domestic audience by mixing and reordering a variety of real and invented threats. The result as of 2017 is that Ankara now prefers to promote vague, opaque and malleable threats such as Israel, the US, Gülenism and ‘western’ tools including communications technologies. In the Turkish case, the creation of a long menu of ‘ills’ means it can quickly refocus domestic discontent, allowing it to act strategically and pragmatically as required.

The third case, Mexico, shares similar geographical and material conditions with Australia and Turkey, but its internal security situation is problematic, to the extent that Mexico has been sometimes referred to as a ‘failed state’ by US military planners. Nonetheless, Mexican elites have demonstrated the ability to navigate many problematic discourses, such as radical leftist politics and communist sentiment, which could invite intervention from the US should they be perceived as too great a threat. Consequently, in this case I find that Mexico has created false, yet convenient, dichotomies using loosely defined anti-American and anti-capitalist sentiment. This means the Mexican case fits well within the typology, and reveals a strong link between its non-interventionist and isolationist foreign and security policy and its proximity to the US.

In a comparative context, I argue these cases provide explanatory power and a level of prescriptive richness currently missing when addressing middle powers and their place in the international system. This widens the analytical toolkit for future researchers and provides a defensible interpretation of how middle powers act, in which ideational factors are primarily a way to mitigate the emergence of security issues, rather than acting as determinants of behaviour themselves.

Hence, this framework, the typology, and the cases, based on the neoclassical realist approach, are designed to answer the primary research question:

How can we explain and reconcile the differences between foreign and security policy responses to security challenges and public discourse concerning those challenges in pivotal middle powers?

Put simply, I answer the question using the following logic: in international politics middle powers act according to systemic pressures, but the ability to actualise foreign and security policy requires domestic discourses to be broadly aligned with the external objectives. Doing so often requires elites to reorder the content of certain debates about foreign and security policy to match these objectives.

The thesis makes its case over six chapters. Following this introduction, I undertake a literature review that probes the existing research for suitable and conceptual insights. In doing so I build the neoclassical realist framework designed to answer the research question. This sets up the central research question, addresses the methodology and identifies the sources used to make claims. Three case studies follow: Turkey, Australia and Mexico. Chapter Six concludes the thesis and links the findings to the wider research program in international relations theory.
CHAPTER 2: A FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND SECURITY DISCOURSES IN PIVOTAL MIDDLE POWERS

A substantial amount of literature exists on middle powers and their foreign and security policies. Nonetheless, problematic gaps remain, especially when exploring the difference between public discourses and foreign and security policy responses in such nations. Throughout this chapter I survey the literature, identify these gaps, and provide alternative ways of understanding why public positions are often at variance with official ones. I then establish a framework, based on neoclassical realism, that justifies the methods and theoretical approach this thesis takes to its analysis of middle powers.

The chapter then selects and justifies the cases of Australia, Turkey and Mexico. Australia has been chosen because it is a focus of the middle power literature. Yet on closer examination it acts largely as expected under a material reading based on power. Indeed, there is significant evidence that political actors prioritise certain debates about foreign and security policy to enhance Australia’s general security position. Likewise, Turkey is the focus of a body ideational literature that explains its behaviour via cultural positions, yet there is evidence to suggest that Turkish security responses are largely pragmatic, in contrast to domestic rhetoric. Finally,

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Mexico has been chosen, not only for its pivotal role between the US and South and Central America, but also for the fact that it maintains a domestic discourse that is antagonistic towards the US. Yet paradoxes emerge because in the security sphere Mexico has rarely challenged the US in any meaningful way for nearly ninety years. The chapter ends by setting up a typology to describe the different ways foreign and security policy elites manage the issues that entering domestic debates.

**Understanding Middle Powers**

Usage of the term ‘middle power’ is often vague, and tends to be loosely presented in varying contexts to describe states of many differing sizes.² For example, are France, Britain, Germany and Japan great powers or middle powers? If they are great powers, then what are the PRC and US? At the other end of the scale, are smaller states with varying degrees of wealth and power, such as Malaysia and Switzerland, middle powers? And, since a body of international relations literature assumes that states act in an offensive manner to maximise security, are most states not near the top of the hierarchy simply *less-than* great powers?³

Unfortunately, the literature provides few clues to these questions. For example, Tobias Harris and Graeme Dobell have asked whether Japan is a middle power⁴ while Jonathon Ping has argued that Taiwan and Singapore are middle powers.⁵ Eduard Jordaan attempted to define between ‘traditional’ and ‘emerging’ middle powers, claiming Australia, Norway and Canada as the former, while Argentina, Malaysia and South Africa are the latter.⁶ In fact, countries as varied as New

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⁵ Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft*, 104.

⁶ Jordaan, “The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers.”
Zealand\textsuperscript{7}, Qatar\textsuperscript{8} and Thailand\textsuperscript{9} have all met the definition of ‘middle power’ depending on the typology employed.

\textit{Material Approaches}

Other preferences and interpretations of the place and role of middle powers emerge when viewed through different paradigmatic positions within international relations scholarship. For instance, realist approaches, in general, question whether other-than-great powers are useful actors for analysis. Kenneth Waltz was blunt on this, making the claim that it would be ‘ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based around Malaysia or Costa Rica’\textsuperscript{10}. For Stephen Fruhling, the use of ‘middle power’ to describe a country such as Australia is ‘unhelpful’ because it understates Australia’s place in the regional order, and overstates Australia’s material capabilities.\textsuperscript{11} To Adam Chapnick the concept of middle power is ‘rarely defined, and limited explanations are never specific’.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly, Denis Stairs argues that middle powers are not necessarily a good way to divide different types of powers with the concept of ‘middle’ almost impossible to conceptualise outside of material considerations. This is because they ‘behave in all sort of different ways, and the roles that have often been associated with them are in fact performed by all sorts of countries’.\textsuperscript{13}

In short, realist approaches are sceptical about middle power because they stress the role of material capabilities. Power, as famously described by Robert Dahl, is where ‘A has power over B to the extent he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’.\textsuperscript{14} Dahl’s formula has no ‘middle’. Power is dyadic with a director and a recipient. Of course, this type of interpretation is not new. Thucydides famously outlined the same principle two thousand years ago, describing the fate of weaker powers by claiming ‘the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they

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\textsuperscript{8} Andrew Fenton Cooper and Bessma Momani, “Qatar and Expanded Contours of Small State Diplomacy,” \textit{The International Spectator} 46, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 113–128.

\textsuperscript{9} Ping, \textit{Middle Power Statecraft}, 104.

\textsuperscript{10} Kenneth N. Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics} (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010), 72.


must’. This means that most rational assessments of middle power become exercises in relativity against the material positions of other great powers.

Despite occupying this awkward space, the middle power concept has attracted quiet, but constant attention from realist scholars. For instance, as early as the sixteenth century Giovanni Botero theorised that:

‘Middle-sized states are the most lasting, since they are exposed neither to violence by their weakness nor to envy by their greatness, and their wealth and power being moderate, passions are less violent, ambition finds less support and licence less provocation than in large states’.

This type of assessment is assisted by Martin Wight’s analysis of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. During this time diplomats sought to grade powers in a way that recognised the ‘graduations of influence and differences of interest’. To do so, delegates from smaller states at the Congress were grouped into six curiae, meaning a single delegate would represent several smaller states. This, in turn, created a relatively stable regional system that resulted in members avoiding direct conflict until the Crimean War in 1853. As a result, middle power diplomacy became a seemingly useful way of manipulating the balance of power. This style of analysis led Wight to claim that a middle power is:

‘a power with such military strength, resources and strategic position that in peacetime the great powers bid for its support, and in wartime, while it has no hope of winning a war against a great power, it can hope to inflict costs on a great power out of proportion to what the great power can hope to gain by attacking it’.

Wight’s commentary was written in the context of the emerging post-war order, where authors pondered what the role of middle powers should be in the emerging institutional architecture. In this political climate, countries such as Australia were, for a period, viewed as important actors in talks at Dumbarton Oaks around the formation of the UN. At the same time, there were concerns about whether certain emerging middle powers, such as Brazil, could sit at the centre of their own

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17 Ibid., 64.
18 Ibid., 65.
problematic security regions, thereby destabilising the post-World War II order. This wariness stemmed from Brazil’s behaviour in the UN’s precursor, the League of Nations, where it withdrew in 1926 in protest at Germany’s admission—thereby weakening the League’s ‘global’ credibility and facilitating its decline.\(^{19}\)

These suspicions about middle power led authors, such as G.P. de T. Glazebrook, to focus on two central issues about their role in the UN. The first was how one could define middle powers if the UN system did not give them special status. The second was how to prevent bloc voting, or middle powers simply becoming proxy votes for other great powers, considering most were strongly aligned with them.\(^{20}\)

Consequently, Glazebrook argued there should be a role for middle powers, but was concerned that middle powers in the UN were primarily motivated by ‘their opposition to great power control’ and would therefore complicate and hurt the credibility of any new organisation through tactics like bloc voting.\(^{21}\)

Similar scholarship on questions about the role of smaller powers continued into the 1960s, when an influential work by David Vital explored the role of states including Czechoslovakia, Israel and Finland. For him, these were examples of strategically isolated smaller powers playing influential roles beyond their material weight. His conclusion was that middle powers were largely reactive. Moreover, while they had little sway in larger power dynamics, they sought to exploit a ‘grey area’ of international politics.\(^{22}\) They did so by avoiding full commitment to great powers, given total subordination removed their ability to coerce concessions or quickly realign their interests.\(^{23}\)

Annette Baker Fox covered similar theoretical ground, using five cases we might today associate with middle powers: Turkey, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Spain. She made the following claims about their role:

> ‘[Their] success depended on convincing the power pressing the small state that its continued neutrality was advantageous to the great power too. The small state’s leaders had to make clear, that the belligerents’ major


\(^{21}\)Ibid., 308.


\(^{23}\)Ibid., 9–10.
requirements could be satisfied without the use of force or that the use of force would be too expensive in terms of the benefits sought and the larger dividends available if applied elsewhere’.  

Baker Fox’s notion of middle powers advertising their usefulness within great power games was later applied in a more specific sense when addressing the cases of Australia, Mexico, Canada, and Brazil in her book *The Politics of Attraction*. Her conclusion was that defence collaboration was a defining element of Australia and Canada’s middle power-dom. In contrast, lesser-developed ‘middle powers’, such as Mexico and Brazil, had leveraged their own domestic stability when engaging with states such as the US. For example, this had meant the US has been hesitant to involve itself deeply in Mexico’s domestic politics. Therefore, the US quietly supported the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and its ‘revolutionary’ stance, despite it being counter to the core values the US outwardly projected from roughly 1938 onwards.

Baker Fox’s conclusion was that ‘the cases are thus consistent with a body of work which posits a discontinuity between welfare issues and those involving high politics’. For example, while the Canada and US had ‘essentially identical interests’ on defence issues, divergence did occur. However, this most often happened in matters that were domestically sensitive, such as resource sharing and environmental issues, driven by Canada’s close proximity to America.

Of the work on middle powers grounded in material analyses, Carsten Holbraad’s *Middle Powers in International Politics* is perhaps the most influential. A key reason for this is his use of a conceptual framework rather than an overly historicist approach. Indeed, he is critical of the historicist view, stating that middle powers did simply not exist in the way we perceive them during them now. This was because the older structure of international politics, based on units including empires

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26 Ibid., 269.

27 Ibid., 273.

28 Ibid., 269.

29 Ibid., 280–283.

30 Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics*.

31 Ibid., 41.
and city-states, encompassed many more variables than the current norms of statehood.32

More importantly, Holbraad argued that there is no consistent behaviour to describe middle powers globally. Instead, it is contingent on the structure of the security environment. For example, he described a unifocal system analogous to empire or hegemony, within which middle powers engage in rivalry among themselves, rather than balancing behaviour, to improve their position in the middle power hierarchy. In contrast, middle powers in dualist systems, where two great powers exist, have a greater role as important allies or ‘objects of that [great power] rivalry’.33 Another important output of his work was that middle powers do not balance against strong states. Rather, they display a preference for the use diplomatic and peacekeeping tools. Moreover, while these attempts can be framed through an institutional lens, middle powers, in the end, generally adhere to international laws, because lawlessness is not in their interests.

Despite these important contributions, the shift towards structural realism in the 1970 and 1980s, itself pushed by the context of literature preoccupied by the bipolar competition between the US and the Soviet Union, resulted middle power study being pushed to the fringe of materially based assessments. Of these, structural realism34 was the most influential, driven by Kenneth Waltz’s seminal Theory of International Politics, which developed the concept of Defensive Realism. This asserted in its simplest form that states preferred the maintenance of the status quo in international politics.35 Waltz’s structural realism meant that the most influential work in this area, including that by Robert Jervis, Barry Posen, Jack Snyder, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, largely disregarded the role of smaller powers in favour of a focus on great power dynamics.36 Nonetheless, a few structural realist approaches hinted at a larger role for smaller powers. This included Walt’s Origins of Alliances, which reworked balance of

32 Ibid., 42–43.
33 Ibid., 156.
34 The terms neorealism and structural realism are often used interchangeably in the literature. I use structural realism for the sake of clarity.
35 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 2.
power logic, arguing that states balance against perceived threats rather than simply material considerations, thereby allowing middle powers to transcend traditional metrics of power.\textsuperscript{37} Consequently, scholarship on other-than-great powers benefited, as Walt’s thesis helped to explain how and why weaker states, such as those in the Middle East, would cluster around great powers. For Walt, alliance formation by great and smaller states was important when understanding the international dynamics of power. Under this reading, smaller states prefer to balance against larger powers because ‘joining the more vulnerable side increases the new member’s influence, because the weaker side has greater need for assistance’.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite these advances, realist positions were challenged by the events of 1989 and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union. Critics such as Richard Ned Lebow were quick to point out that structural realists failed to anticipate domestic factors during the end of the Cold War and therefore that their theory lacked any useful explanatory power.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, elsewhere, John Mearsheimer was quick to defend the structural position in his \textit{Back to the Future} articles (Part I and II), where he argued for a pessimistic European future. This is important from a middle power perspective because his logic suggested that smaller states would be compelled to pursue nuclear programs to defend themselves against vulnerabilities stemming from the absence of strong great power alliances.\textsuperscript{40} Controversially, he recommended that limited nuclear proliferation should be allowed, specifically within the new Germany, to avoid the ‘bullying’ of new post-Soviet states.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Institutional and Ideational Approaches}

The hawkish prescriptions put forward by structural realists like Mearsheimer were not likely to attract much neither political, nor domestic support, especially within the new liberal democratic discourse informed by democratic peace theory and the \textit{End of History} thesis.\textsuperscript{42} Consequently, a trend emerged where scholars within middle powers gave preference to institutional approaches. In the post-Cold War world of

\textsuperscript{37} Walt, \textit{The Origins of Alliances}, 3–43.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 54–55.
peace dividends, scholarship based on comparative advantage, niche diplomacy and international engagement gained a great deal of popularity. These became (and indeed persist) as common ways to understand the role of middle powers within the international political system.

Similarly, the institutional approaches of the 1980s and 1990s analysed how middle powers mixed material conditions with alternative, non-military paths to express influence with a focus on developed states such as Canada and Australia. Consequently, this ability to incorporate mid-ranged powers resulted in Keohane’s work becoming increasingly influential in middle power scholarship. For instance, a highly cited 1990 article by Richard Higgott and Andrew Cooper is framed using Keohane’s question of what happens ‘after hegemony’, and claimed that ‘changing configuration of power in the global political economy in general has diminished the ability of the major actors’. In this instance ‘ability’ referred to the capability for great powers to dominate the international environment under a deeply linked neoliberal environment.

Higgott and Cooper looked at the strength of the agricultural export grouping of the Cairns Group, and argued that while a hegemon is necessary for the creation of organisations and agreements such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), ‘issue orientated’ coalitions (such as the Cairns Group, which sought to liberalise the international agricultural trade), were playing an increasingly important role in underpinning the global political economy while also aiding in international stability. From this perspective, middle power actors such as Australia had the ability to exploit and leverage such positions and act beyond their simple material capabilities. Indeed, they could begin to leverage these ideational factors to improve their security positions in the international system.

Higgott, Cooper and Kim Richard Nossal consolidated these arguments in Relocating Middle Powers, claiming that middle powers possess four distinct characteristics. First, middle powers were driven by their position in the international hierarchy, which is measurable by common indicators such as

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44 Higgott and Cooper, “Middle Power Leadership and Coalition Building: Australia, the Cairns Group, and the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations,” 634.
45 Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers*. 

population, economic might and military capability. Second, geography lends substantial weight in a regional context as Australia does. Third, ideology plays a role, with second tier states such as India attempting to wield influence via groupings such as the non-aligned movement. Finally, they identified a normative approach by middle powers, with states such as Australia and Canada believing in a diplomatic and ideational approach to the system, where they could act without force, by instead promoting ideas to their advantage.

Importantly, they attempted to formulate a conceptual framework, claiming evidence of three distinct types of types of middle power behaviour. One of these was as a catalyst. This is where a middle power ‘triggers an initiative’ and attempts to take an international lead on an issue.46 When applied to recent history, Kevin Rudd’s Emission Trading Scheme is an example of Australia acting as a ‘catalysing’ state in the lead-up to the Copenhagen Climate conference. The next type of behaviour was by behaving as a facilitator. This involves acting as conduits and coalitions to enable systemic change in the absence of harder forms of power. The third was the role of middle powers as a manager, by engaging in institution building and norm creation.

The generalised institutional approach articulated by Higgott, Cooper and Nossal was strengthened by Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant’s Australia’s Foreign Relations, which presented a pragmatic view written by policy practitioners. It placed the national interest in diplomacy linked to institutional engagement, again highlighting Australia’s membership of the Cairns Group alongside its active promotion of regimes such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and regional leadership on peacekeeping in areas such as Cambodia. This converged with economic leadership in areas such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC).47 The overall message was that ‘good international citizenship’ was strongly linked to pursuit of the national interest.

The rush by Australian scholars to use the middle power concept was followed by academics focussing on Canada.48 For example, Alan Hendrikson highlighted the

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46 Ibid., 24.
47 Evans and Grant, Australia’s Foreign Relations, 325–326.
role of peacekeeping in Canada’s foreign and security policy. To him, activities such as peacekeeping gave Canada the opportunity to express a different type of power detached from military and traditional diplomacy, where it could ideologically and ideationally challenge great powers with few recriminations.\textsuperscript{49} Other assessments, such as one from Laurence Baxter and Jo-Ann Bishop, highlighted the Ottawa treaty to ban landmines and how these ‘politically courageous effort[s]’ demonstrated a new type of public diplomacy intended to make the role of ‘facilitator’ central to international political negotiations.\textsuperscript{50}

John Ravenhill later compared Canada’s and Australia’s foreign policies, finding that there was an ‘emphasis on diplomatic capabilities and the capacity to provide intellectual leadership’ within middle powers.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, Andrew Fenton Cooper used agricultural trade as a way to find congruence across Australian and Canadian foreign diplomacy, finding that both have similar goals, but different techniques in achieving them.\textsuperscript{52} Australia’s diplomacy was bolder, which he claimed stemmed from its ‘historical sense of grievance’, while Canada’s was nuanced and constrained by its relationship with the US.\textsuperscript{53}

Nelson Michaud and Louis Belanger also took a comparative approach, exploring how Canada has embarked on the ‘Australianisation’ of its foreign policy, with the implication that use of middle power activism is a fruitful exercise.\textsuperscript{54} If fact, rather than the increasingly crowded multilateral space, they claimed Canada had moved towards ‘plurilateralism’ and emphasised ‘heroic’ foreign policy, where rhetoric and public diplomacy provided better returns for interests that ‘routine’ middle power actions.\textsuperscript{55}

While informative in many ways, there are some problems with the outputs generated by these types of middle power assessments. For example, David A. Cooper has highlighted the issue of case selection. To him, Canadian and Australian

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{49} Henrikson, “Niche Diplomacy: Norway and Canada.”
\textsuperscript{51} Ravenhill, “Cycles of Middle Power Activism,” 325.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 379–380.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 107.
\end{footnotesize}
approaches to middle powers ‘lend[s] a troubling parochial bias to scope of the literature’.\(^{56}\) Ultimately, this arguably creates a narrow set of tropes about how middle powers use multilateral institutions and likeminded states to pursue interests.\(^{57}\) Adam Chapnick has been even more critical, stating that

‘Canada will continue to promote itself as a middle power, but the concept of middlepowerhood, upon which it depends for moral and political affirmation, is mere rhetoric - words carefully manipulated to promote Canada as more powerful than it is’.\(^{58}\)

**Critical Approaches**

Chapnick’s criticisms are clearly aimed at the third wave of middle power research stemming from the constructivist paradigm most closely associated with Alexander Wendt.\(^{59}\) Though it shares links with the English School, Wendt started from a position more familiar to US scholars—structuralism—and explicitly attempted to link systemic behaviour to the construction of national ideas. This attempt at a ‘via media’ argued that anarchy in the international system did not entail the simple positivist unitary model presented by Waltz and others. Instead, the ‘ontologies of social life’ acted in such a way that anarchy was ‘what the state made of it’.\(^{60}\) In short, Wendt reused a sociological argument, originally articulated by Berger and Luckman, who wrote that everyday life was contextualised and continually revolutionised by a pattern involving the create of ideas, the verbalizing of ideas, and the enacting of these ideas.\(^{61}\)

What Wendt did was to move these concepts away from smaller social groups and apply these to the state unit, finding that states were anthropomorphic in nature, and that the prescription and descriptions from the sociological level were applicable at the international level too. More specifically, he argued that ideas played a central role in the end of the Soviet Union. The payoff for middle power scholarship was that earlier literature seemed to make sense in the context of ‘weaker’ states when

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\(^{57}\) Cooper, “Challenging Contemporary Notions of Middle Power Influence.”

\(^{58}\) Chapnick, “The Canadian Middle Power Myth,” 206.

\(^{59}\) This emerged with Alexander Wendt’s thesis to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union in *Anarchy is What States Makes of It and Social Theory of International Politics*.

\(^{60}\) Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 76.

viewed as norm makers or entrepreneurs. Using this lens, middle powers could transcend their material limits and therefore could potentially have the agency to change political dynamics at the international level.62

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink provided a practical way to articulate this type of causality in ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change, National Interests in International Society’.63 For them, norms followed a particular lifecycle. First, a norm emerged as a response to a need or a perceived wrong, eventually reaching a ‘tipping point’.64 Second, norms ‘cascaded’ and became a necessity for states to achieve international legitimacy, regardless of domestic pressures. The result was that norms became a ‘socialising agent’. Finally, norms were ‘internalised’, and thus forming an integrated part of the social environment, and performed without question.

This approach has influenced many middle power scholars. For example, drawing on Finnemore and Sikkink’s norm socialisation concept, Key Young-Son found ‘two middle power norms of dependency and activism constitute and reproduce Japan and South Korea as bona fide middle powers’.65 Similarly, Benjamin Zyla has identified the norm of ‘external responsibility’ as one that has emerging thanks to norm socialization within Canada. Its claim was that Canada is not free riding on these norms for merely relative gains, but rather that there are normative ‘predispositions’ and expectations within Canada’s domestic politics. Hence, he was critical that the ‘rationalist scholarship on NATO burden-sharing ignore[d] the conscientious and independent thinking that can underlie state action’.66 This is important because the Canadian commitment to burden-sharing in international policies issues such as Afghanistan was ‘beyond its relative ability when compared to other middle and even major powers’.67

64 Ibid., 902.
67 Ibid., 294.
Australian scholars have also embraced the normative approach, especially about the idea that Australia was ‘relocating itself’ towards Asia. So, for example, Andrew Carr has argued that normative variables have shaped the foreign policy behaviour of Australian governments since 1966.\(^{68}\) Christian Reus-Smit has used a similar approach to argue Australian foreign policy is often misplaced, because it has not recalibrated to a new set of international norms embedded in global politics.\(^{69}\)

Another stream of research in this area is also important to middle power scholarship. This is where actors are perceived as more powerful in security terms than their material capabilities suggest. For example, how and why can weaker material and non-state actors Al-Qaeda and ISIS exploit great powers? Here, Marc Lynch has argued that Al-Qaeda has used ‘strategic social construction’ to create a set of norms that help maximise its influence beyond its material abilities.\(^{70}\) For him, these norms are reinforced by the repetition of certain moral, cultural and ideational arguments that sit diametrically in opposition to traditional western values.\(^{71}\) The implication is that smaller actors in international politics could punch above their systemic weight by exploiting norms in a period dictated by a US liberal order.

Similar ideationally-grounded research also emerged on weaker, but still influential states like North Korea. For instance, Sung-bae Kim has argued that the foreign policies of both North and South Korea are deeply invested in norm creation, with the South using historical narratives about occupation by external forces to shape debates on unification. Consequently, while the two are technically at war, a narrative has been constructed to place this blame at external actors, therefore softening the path to eventual reunification. North Korea uses a similar, but more aggressive form of norm creation, with narratives about its nuclear weapons program pitched as the way to rectify the history of external aggression.\(^{72}\)

From this position, it is easy to see the attraction of constructivist approaches. In the absence of clear mid-level theories to describe middle powers, constructivism’s wide

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\(^{71}\) Ibid.

ontology allows many varied issues to enter the analysis. This is also its weakness though, since it creates an increasingly wide scope encompassing many uncontainable variables. One consequence is that constructivist approaches have become a tool of overtly activist-driven literature. Here, the narrative scope allows the conflation of populist issues such as environmental failure\textsuperscript{73} and the role of anti-whaling regimes\textsuperscript{74} alongside great power politics.

Furthermore, the constructivist literature lends itself to self-congratulatory rhetoric from middle power scholars on issues like R2P (Responsibility to Protect). Here, the explicit use of norm creation, with the goal of normalising humanitarian intervention in problematic states, was the justification behind UN resolution 1973: the legal basis for military action by the international community to protect the civilian population in Libya. Its invocation led to some particularly bold claims from Ronald Behringer. For him the use of R2P vindicated Finnemore and Sikkink’s work, and successfully tested the third stage of norm dynamics, where they become a socialising agent. For Behringer, these ‘incredible achievements [of R2P] would never have been achieved without the leadership of middle power states’\textsuperscript{75}

Yet the problem is that on close examination many of these claims have alternative explanations and the internalisation of norms has not occurred as prophesied. For example, as Jean Baptiste notes, R2P’s role in the Libyan intervention was largely the result of an \textit{ad hoc} consensus among powerful states, which viewed it as expedient given the political climate of the time.\textsuperscript{76} This is easily demonstrated by support for the Libyan intervention, but the neglect of numerous conflicts including those in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ukraine, and most notably Syria—where state interests have been prioritised over any socialising via global norms. More problematically, there is evidence that intervention norms have been used cynically, most notably by Russia in Georgia and by the US in Iraq.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} Lorraine Elliott et al., \textit{Australian Foreign Policy Futures: Making Middle-Power Leadership Work?}, Keynotes 8 (Dept. of International Relations, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, 2008).

\textsuperscript{74} An overview of the environmental constructivism and its effect on the IR discourse is found in Charlotte Epstein, \textit{The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse} (The MIT Press, 2008).


Another problem with the interpretation of middle powers in this paradigm is that the fluidity of normative discourses means they can easily be repurposed by critical approaches. This means that methodological frameworks are borrowed, and then minor issues conflated to be at the centre of important international political debates. For instance, Nikola Hynek invoked a Foucauldian concept of governmentality to explore Canada’s contribution to humanitarian based arms control. The function of a middle power in a setting such as Canada involves ‘socialising other participating actors into accepting norms, methods and procedures linked to this governmentality of advanced liberalism’. The claim was that there are significant changes between governments and non-governmental actors in the way agenda setting and issues framing are handled. Furthermore, for him, there is evidence that non-state actors and ‘self-constructed’ middle powers, such as Norway and Canada, work in a mutually constituted way to set agendas.

Consequently, the push towards critical approaches to address middle powers can sometimes be unhelpful as it dramatically broadens the scope for middle power scholars and inflates the agency of smaller states. Perhaps more importantly, many of the middle power achievements focussed on by critical scholars can be explained by realist positions with sharper analytical clarity. For example, the Ottawa Treaty to ban landmines is sometimes heralded as a high point of Canadian middle power engagement, built upon the construction of norms and values based diplomacy, yet the simple fact remains that key actors, including Russia, the US, and the PRC are not signatories.

Similarly, other areas championed by ideational middle powers, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Responsibility to Protect (R2P), have tepid support from great powers. In the instance of R2P, Canada and Australia helped draft the Rome Statutes via the so-called ‘Like-Minded Group’. However, while these examples of good international citizenship are popular within activist middle powers,
their popularity is contested, especially in Africa, where they are sometimes interpreted as a form of neo-colonialism. Hence, for Mahmood Mamdani the ‘ICC is rapidly turning into a Western court to try African crimes against humanity’. Elsewhere, Ray Bush, Giuliano Martiniello and Claire Mercer have claimed R2P is ‘Imperialist intervention [that] uses the language of humanitarianism’. From another position, the argument can be made that many of the most successful and important conventions on weapons are driven not by middle powers, but by the great powers. These include the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which both Russia and the US were initial signatories. Similarly, the Chemical Weapons Convention was concluded after lobbying by then Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who claimed that the convention was an ‘outstanding example of the kind of role Australia could play’. Yet an alternative reading is that it was the interests of great powers, including Britain, PRC, France, Russia and the United States that consolidated the convention. Put simply, the proliferation of cheap chemical weapons by weak actors threatened to decrease the relative power of larger states. Another problem with this view of middle powers is that states such as Iran are commonly framed as ‘rogue’, even though they meet many of the ideational and behavioural aspects ascribed to middle powers. Therefore, for Anoush Ehteshami, Iran is a middle power that has an ‘unorthodox way of approaching international agendas’. While its actions often appear crude and offensive to Western (and many non-Western) audiences, activities such as the Tehran holocaust conference in 2006 can be interpreted as an attempt to capture and control a historically erroneous, yet popular regional narrative. Regardless, Tehran’s motive was to promote ‘alternative’ histories that tapped into anti-Western sentiment can be understood as a form of relatively successful middle power activism. A 2008 survey found 40 percent of

85 Carr, Winning the Peace.
Israeli Arabs are holocaust deniers and another 2014 survey found that 52 percent of those surveyed within the Middle East and North African region claimed that the Holocaust was exaggerated, while 10 percent believed it to be a fabrication. Hence, state level denial of the holocaust by Iran (and Syria) becomes framed as ‘revealing’ the ‘real’ historical narrative around Palestine, and this type of activity resonates with a wider anti-Semitic sentiment within the region, with the hope of increasing political influence.

Iran has also exploited anti-Western actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah for gains in niche areas in ways that share similarities with the normative approaches of other middle powers. For instance, though Hamas and Hezbollah are listed as terrorist groups by most Western states, Iran has framed its support for these groups primarily through humanitarian language. Elsewhere, Hamas is known in the West for its use of political violence, but this often obscures its social programs via Dawah institutions, which offer services including hospitals and schools. Support for Hamas, with a focus on non-violent institutions, functions as a strong form of political advertising for Iran amongst wider Middle Eastern audiences. Such actions have led to a positive opinion of Iranian political action throughout Palestine and certain parts of the Middle East. Indeed, according to Pew polling in 2013, 51 percent of people in Palestine, 40 percent of Tunisians, and 30 percent of Lebanese were in favour of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.

What this suggests is that self-referential frameworks of Australian and Canadian scholars that emphasise a normative liberal view of middle power are missing many valuable cases that exhibit similar phenomena, but do not fit a preconceived notion of ‘good’. Indeed, David Cooper makes the claim that:

‘a body of speculation, mostly dating from the late and post-Cold War period and now widely regarded as somewhat dubious, that middle powers may also

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90 A comprehensive account of Hamas’ charity functions is found in Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
share distinctive normative characteristics, notably as virtuous “good international citizens” who put the good of the international community above their own interests”.93

Overall, this contributes to a climate where middle power research seems less relevant in an international environment increasingly dictated by the rise of the PRC, a revisionist Russia, a radical and reactionary US administration, and emerging actors such as ISIS who proactively abuse norms though the use of horrific violence in order to increase their pertinence to great powers. In the end, this supports Cooper’s assertion that ‘middle power theory arguably is at an impasse’ and that middle power ‘theory-building progress is being stunted by a dearth of empirical testing’.94

Realism Revisited: Pivotal and Passive Middle Powers

Given this ambiguity, this next section argues that the analysis of pivotal middle powers is the more useful approach in the current political environment, as it is here where certain actors ‘in the middle’ of international relations have the greatest deal of information to extract. Thus, since the end of the Cold War it is often states like North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Israel, Pakistan and Iraq rather than great and former powers such as Russia, Japan or Germany who shape the international system. Yet few of these states—except for Israel and perhaps a future Iran—are commonly viewed as ‘middle’ through simple power metrics such as GDP. Indeed, geographical positions seem the key for middle powers to exert disproportionate international influence.

For example, comparisons between Canada and Saudi Arabia have little congruence despite them both being G20 members. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has a greater GDP than Norway, and almost double that of South Africa, yet few authors have analysed Saudi Arabia in a middle power context.95 Part of this is because of its political system, where Saudi Arabia’s autocratic government notionally negates the role of ideational factors intervening in its foreign policy decision-making.

94 Cooper, “Challenging Contemporary Notions of Middle Power Influence.”
Instead, the overall tendency within middle powers analysis is for states to be pitched as ‘active’, with their ideational outputs serving as ways to maximise their positions in the absence of hard power. However, as noted above, the central problem here is that states such as Norway, Australia, Canada and Sweden ultimately have little influence in global affairs, despite their attempts. Furthermore, many perceived middle power ‘successes’, such as Canada’s involvement in South Africa’s ending of apartheid, Norway’s role in hosting neutral Middle Eastern conferences and Australia’s activism towards APEC, nuclear disarmament and R2P norms are not necessarily unique to these countries, or a result of some form of middle power exceptionalism.

Indeed, explanations that are more prosaic are available for many middle power successes. In the instance of the South African Apartheid, US sanctions applied in 1986 reduced Pretoria’s exports by a third. This move arguably had more influence than Canada and then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s championing of the anti-Apartheid cause to Commonwealth countries, a position given agency in some of the middle power literature. Similarly, a contrarian interpretation of Australia’s role in nuclear non-proliferation is that it has amounted to very little. This alternative reading suggests that actions by the US, notably the Nunn-Lugar agreement, where payments were made to many of the states of the Soviet Union in return for their decommissioning of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons stockpiles, have had a greater impact than middle power activism typified by meetings such as the 1996 Canberra Commission on Nuclear Weapons.

**Alternative Frameworks**

A central question, therefore, is how to explain the role of these ‘pivotal’ middle powers and understand how they navigate the international environment. As demonstrated above, the dominant approaches within international relations research capture only certain elements of state behaviour well. And as stated at the outset, realism describes material and pragmatic security considerations in detail, but fails to incorporate the role of rhetoric and narrative. In contrast, critical approaches have

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been favoured in states that act contrary to what material factors suggest, such as states in the Middle East and Africa, who have substantial latent capabilities, but have failed to convert them into hard and soft power.

Despite the emphasis of the middle power literature on ideas, realist approaches have attempted to assess the same types of states, with a different lexicon. Notably, Robert Chase, Emily Hill and Paul Kennedy have argued for an enhanced role for so-called ‘pivotal’ states in international analysis, with the logic that understanding the role of important—but not great—powers would allow the US to better address the hierarchy of security threats and foreign policy responses.\(^98\) In their 1996 analysis they identified Algeria as a state of concern, with weight beyond its material capabilities given it was a critical pivot to Mediterranean Sea lanes, oil and gas markets, and that it represented an important pivot between the forces of radical and moderate Islam.\(^99\) Its importance was further underlined by the fact that disruption in Algeria would affect three key US allies: Italy, Spain and France. Their conclusion was that Algeria plays a much larger role in US affairs and possesses a greater interest to the US than a brief analysis would suggest.

This could apply to Pakistan and India too. In fact, Chase et al’s analysis from 1996 has some predictive power, given they warned that radicalism fomented during the Kashmir conflict could spread and become a cause célèbre for radical Islamists.\(^100\) From their position, although Pakistan lies at the bottom of many traditional metrics of power, when combined with a nuclear capacity and its proximity to the PRC and India, it becomes a more important ‘middle’ player in international politics (compared to, say, Denmark or Norway). Moreover, as of 2017, Pakistan is of great concern to the foreign and security policy of the great powers, including the PRC, US, Russia and the EU, given its role at the centre of several important international political competitions that include nuclear proliferation, counter-terrorism, extremism, and energy security. In this light, Chase et al’s claim that assessing the reactions of ‘pivotal states strategy might help bridge the conceptual and political divide in the national debate between “old” and “new” security issues’ appears

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99 Ibid., 46.
100 Ibid., 48.
highly justified. Turkish scholar Mehmet Ozkan agrees with this overall sentiment, asserting that ‘pivotal middle powers [...] ability to link between the regional and international issues’ and are ‘aware of the fact that a regional issue could easily have repercussions at the international level and vice versa’.

This approach, therefore, introduces important elements that are frequently absent from ideational readings—namely that geography remains a critical variable in assessing the role that states play in international affairs. Indeed, the notion of the geography of pivotal states invokes Mackinder’s early twentieth century writing in the ‘Geographical Pivot of History’, which claimed that the control and influence of states weak in material capabilities was at the centre of great power politics. Under this stark reading, the state that ‘rules the World-island commands the World’. In this instance, the post-Soviet states were at the centre of the heartland, but the emergence and decline of the Soviet Union largely discredited Mackinder’s work.

From this perspective, a revival of Mackinder is warranted. As Robert Kaplan argued, geography is still the driving force behind international politics and we should ‘revise Mackinder for our time’, noting the emergence of the Pakistani port of Gwadar, a small fishing town that now commands the interest of India, the PRC, the US, the Middle East and Europe by virtual of its pivotal position. He termed such areas ‘shatter zones’ that ‘threaten to implode, explode, or maintain a fragile equilibrium’.

Therefore, viewing middle powers as a space and spectrum of various intermediate overlapping actors is more useful. This includes states that shape the international environment, and that are in the ‘middle’ in power terms. They include cases such as Iran, Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia. This importance is arguably visible in the informal and formal groupings emerging, including the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India,

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101 Ibid., 36.
105 Ibid.
and China)\textsuperscript{106} and MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey and Australia)\textsuperscript{107}, MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey)\textsuperscript{108}, CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa)\textsuperscript{109} and the ‘Next Eleven’ (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam).\textsuperscript{110} Very few of the states within these groupings are what might be classified as ‘traditional’ middle powers. Furthermore, few existing approaches seem well equipped to address how these states approach and manage their security positions.

This supports Cooper’s claims about the vagueness of ‘middlepowerdom’.\textsuperscript{111} Australia and Canada occupy the bulk of the middle power literature, yet a number of emerging entities are shaping international politics and do not share the aspirational middle power view of Canberra and Ottawa. Many of the states are classed as problematic from a liberal democratic position, but from a strict security position, many of them are performing relatively well and have considerable latent capabilities.

A key challenge, then, is to develop a framework that covers a range of states across many ideational and political systems. Such a framework also needs to incorporate the role of rhetoric in security making, given that a key reason that states (such as Iran, Nigeria, Egypt and Pakistan) are dismissed as poor comparative cases is because they lack the liberal democratic narrative that underpins a great deal of the middle power literature. Yet they are pivotal states in important geographical positions, with substantial resources, populations and military capabilities.


\textsuperscript{107} “MIKTA – Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,” accessed February 8, 2016, http://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/mikta/Pages/mikta.aspx.


\textsuperscript{111} Cooper, “Somewhere between Great and Small,” 25.
The next section assesses two newer frameworks with the potential to interrogate the research question and the role of pivotal middle powers: regional security complex theory (RSCT) and neoclassical realism. Each shows promise and flexibility when attempting to explore the link between the international security environment and the actualisation of security and foreign policy domestically.

**Securitization and Regional Security Complex Theory**

Of the more recent analytical frameworks, RSCT and securitization show promise in helping understanding states that are not great powers, but that feature prominently in international affairs. The use of regional security complexes (RSCs) via sub-regional analysis is a way to assess the role of smaller states with challenging positions. For instance, Suleyman Elik has used the RSC concept to link and frame the security dynamics affecting both Iran and Turkey.\(^{112}\) Andre Barrinha has also used RSCT to explain how Turkey absorbs myriad security pressures that flow between the Middle East and the West.\(^{113}\) Maria Lazar has similarly analysed the post-Soviet RSC to explore whether Ukraine was the catalyst of regional tensions, or rather a consequence of wider regional security dynamics.\(^{114}\) And Rajesh Rajagopalan took a similar approach when assessing Pakistan, using RSCT to explore why Islamabad’s impact on international affairs appeared so much greater that its material conditions suggested.\(^{115}\)

An essential part of RSCT’s attraction is that it positions itself as a paradigmatic bridge between neorealist and constructivist viewpoints by incorporating critical security logic into a more rigorous framework. Led by Barry Buzan, RSCT and the ‘Copenhagen school’ was a reaction to the perceived decline of the English School approach because of its insistence on heavy historicism over practical outputs.\(^{116}\)

While RSCT has not gained much traction at the great power level, it has found an important role in exploring niche states or emerging regions. So, for example, while Central Asia, the Middle East and South East Asia have failed to have their security


dynamics better understood by structural theory, RSCT and the securitization discourse have notionally allowed for insight into non-European and US perspectives.117

The formative ideas of RSCT were outlined in Buzan’s *People, States and Fear.*118 Buzan questioned the tendency for international relations scholars to look at the international system in terms of two simple levels: the state and the global. Instead, RSCT argues that a more sophisticated way to observe international politics is at a regional level. For instance, a few patterns are visible regionally, but not at the global level. North Asia is instructive here. The power dynamics between players such as Japan, the two Koreas, Taiwan and the PRC are not well captured by global level structural analyses. When viewed at this level, different types of regional systems emerge, including ‘centred’ and ‘standard’ types.119 In the example of Asia, Buzan argued there exists a standard, balanced, bipolar style of system between the PRC and Japan (with the US being the external security guarantor for Japan).120

A key tool of RSCT is ‘sectors’: an epistemological device allowing for analysis of the ‘referent object’ (or the security level the analyst has chosen) through one or more of five domains (typically military, political, economic, societal and environmental).121 This approach is designed to delimit and create separate analytical categories. For instance, scholars concerned primarily with issues like culture and memory can use the ‘societal’ sector. Indeed, its proponents claim that the ‘organising concept in the societal sector is identity’.122 Traditional approaches to security, meanwhile, can use the military, political and economic sectors. Together, they are designed to create a typology that avoids the unconsidered use of variables across a diverse range of security subjects.

A related and arguably more important tool within RSCT is the notion of *securitization.* This is similar to the Berger and Luckman formulation that lies at the

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120 Ibid., 59.


122 Ibid., 199.
root of constructivist research agendas. Here, an idea is actualised, verbalised and consequently become a realised as an objective truth.\textsuperscript{123} A simple example, and one often applied to both immediate social interaction and international politics, concerns road rules. Driving on a certain side of the road, stop signs, and give way signs, contributes to shared expectations among road users. Hence, if an issue, symbol or activity is believed to be true, it will lead to its acceptance as a rule. Consequently, when acted on as truth, it ultimately becomes empirical fact. Securitization takes this approach but limits its construction of ideas to threats, which in turn demand ‘security’.

A central feature of the securitization discourse is its interpretation of certain instances of elite rhetoric as ‘speech acts’. Here, previously benign issues experience rapid and intense politicization, drawing them into the security discourse. Of note was Matt McDonald’s use of securitization to explain the prominence of asylum seeking in Australia’s domestic debates.\textsuperscript{124} McDonald claimed leaders act as norm entrepreneurs who exploit the issue of asylum seeking for political gain. Leaders do so by engaging in discursive shifts where specific terms such as ‘unauthorised’ become normalised within debates. This created a climate where any attempt to discuss asylum-seeking policy is automatically linked to threat and fear, rather than the welfare of those seeking refuge.\textsuperscript{125}

Another prominent example of rapid securitisation has been the discourse on terrorism, where leaders (especially within liberal democracies) have been constrained by traditional legal frameworks, and have needed to invoke emergency measures to counter perceived extraordinary threats. For example, in response to the 9/11 attacks in the US, the UK parliament passed major legislative changes based on constructed threats stemming from violence that happened abroad. The Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001 received Royal Assent barely three months later, despite subsequently being found in contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights.\textsuperscript{126} Similarly, the US Congress passed the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and

\textsuperscript{123} See Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 293.
Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act) only six weeks after the attacks, despite widespread concerns about provisions, including data retention, surveillance and the issue of warrants.127

Other notable speech acts that securitised the issues concerning terrorism included George W. Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’ speech during the 2002 State of the Union, in which he linked the threat of WMDs to terrorism, despite little empirical evidence.128

This had the function of securitising a wide range of actors, thereby ‘permitting’ military action to further US interests, even though the 9/11 attacks had few direct links to the states mentioned in Bush’s speech. In each of these cases, securitisation can, on the surface, help understand how and why domestic audiences take notice of certain issues concerning security, while ignoring others.

But despite these seeming advantages, several problems with the approach persist. Most notably, RSCT tends to overcomplicate simple assessments. First, it relies on the concept of regional security complexes. The complexes are explained by Buzan and Wæver in Regions and Powers, where ‘The central idea […] is that, since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters: security complexes’.129 But difficult cases such as Turkey remain outliers, being classed by RSCT as an ‘insulator’ rather than part of any larger security complex. This means that while Turkey’s behaviour—pulling and pushing between Europe and the Middle East—can be easily understood in the tradition realist language of hedging and balancing, RSCT substitutes this for a more complex assessment. For RSCT an insulator ‘defines a location occupied by one or more units where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back’.130

Second, and more problematic, is the tendency of sectoral analysis to exaggerate certain issues. The Copenhagen School’s emphasis on ‘speech acts’, which catalyse the securitisation process, are particularly problematic. For instance, Claudia Aradua

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127 An overview of these issues, from a legal perspective, can be found in John W. Whitehead and Steven H. Aden, “Forfeiting Enduring Freedom for Homeland Security: A Constitutional Analysis of the USA Patriot Act and the Justice Department’s Anti-Terrorism Initiatives,” American University International Law Review 51, no. 6 (2002): 1081.
129 Buzan and Wæver, Regions and Powers, 4.
130 Ibid., 41.
has used ‘pity’, ‘emotion’ and ‘passion’ as securitizable objects in the context of human trafficking and EU policy. Similarly, Bülent Aras and Rabia Polat have applied the securitization discourse in order to explain why Turkey had softened its security stance towards Iran and Syria over the past decade. They argued that policy makers desecuritise numerous issues, including those that intervene with foreign policy, such as the Kurdish question, and the role of political Islam. To them this has created a ‘policymaking process […] now emancipated from ideational barriers’. In this sense, the rigidity of the framework can unintentionally amplify ambiguous variables and assign them equal weight to higher-level strategic concerns.

Therefore, while the framework is organizationally sound, RSCT is problematic for this thesis. Firstly, at a methodological level, it has poor control over variables, resulting in what Bill McSweeney termed an ‘objectivist theory with relativist consequences’. Secondly, the emphasis on ‘speech acts’ where elite rhetoric alone is equated with action is open to selection bias. This is especially so in states like Turkey, where cultural and historical narratives are frequently invoked as explanations for its foreign policy choices.

**Neoclassical Realism**

It is here that neoclassical realism fares better conceptually. This is because it presents clearer causal inference between capacities and constraints. Under this reading, material pressures are the main feature of international politics, and they shape and constrain the foreign and security policy choices available to elites. Reordering the context of public foreign policy discourse is therefore a critical tool in responding appropriately to material pressures. The benefit of this, compared to other approaches such as securitization, is that the Waltzian notion of the ‘black box’ acts as an isolating container for myriad variables. This means that structural level analysis can draw on the well-formed research of scholars such as Waltz, Walt and

133 Ibid., 511.
Mearsheimer, while seeking answers inside the ‘box’, using logic informed by both qualitative and quantitative assessments operating at multiple levels of analysis, and from a variety of research streams.\textsuperscript{136}

Despite these benefits, neoclassical realism, in its current state, remains a broad and unrefined research program. Its main value thus far has been in assessing the role of elites in great power politics, such as during the collapse of the Soviet Union, where both clear international and domestic dynamics were at work.\textsuperscript{137} It is less successful, though, when generating taxonomies to describe elite responses in smaller states when security dynamics are in flux. In other words, while it describes how and why elites act, it fails to provide broad descriptions of the way elites manage internal narratives if their systemic positions are relatively weak to start with.

At the same time, neoclassical realism shares many of the same goals of RSCT: it attempts to reconcile international structural logic while also accessing explanations for behaviour within states when assessing security. Hence, Gideon Rose claimed that ‘neoclassical realists occupy a middle ground between pure structural theorists and constructivists’.\textsuperscript{138} Indeed, the broad claim of neoclassical realism is that structural and material capabilities dictate the long-term security posture of the state, but these need to be filtered through several domestic variables before they are actualised. Thus, a number of domestic level variables, including domestic political culture, leadership and identities can shape short-term decision-making, but not dictate long-term foreign policy responses. From this perspective, neoclassical realism competes with RSCT as an attempt to understand states as differentiated units within a systemic context.

Gideon Rose first described the emerging research program as neoclassical realism in a 1998 \textit{World Politics} article.\textsuperscript{139} The key claim was that the interface between the state behaviour and foreign policy—or as Rose termed it, ‘the transmission belt’—was not something that occurs without friction. He stated that ‘foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of

\textsuperscript{136}Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}; Walt, \textit{The Origins of Alliances}; Mearsheimer, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics}.


\textsuperscript{138}Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” \textit{World Politics} 51, no. 1 (October 1, 1998): 152.

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., 146.
relative power that matter’. The failure to correlate these concerns was because ‘over the short to medium term countries foreign policies may not necessarily track objective material power trends closely or continuously’.

This leads to the core claim of neoclassical realism. States will generally act in accordance with structural realists’ expectations of power over the longer term, but their responses are contingent on elites and patterns of domestic politics within the state. This is because ‘leaders and elites do not always have complete freedom to extract and direct national resources as they might wish’. Thus, neoclassical realism is an attempt to reconcile the neorealist tradition of scholars such as Waltz, Walt, Mearsheimer and Jack Snyder, with those who have emphasised innenpolitik and domestic foreign policy analysis, such as Richard Rosecrance, Joe Hagan and Andrew Moravscik.

Overall, Rose defined neoclassical realism as the following:

‘It explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further, however that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy in indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical’.

Rose identified four texts as representative of this new area: Randall Schweller’s *Deadly Imbalances*, Thomas J. Christensen’s *Useful Adversaries*, Fareed Zakaria’s *From Wealth to Power* and *The Elusive Balance* by William Wohlforth. As summarised in *Deadly Imbalances*, Schweller challenged the claim that the rise of Adolf Hitler was a ‘necessary and sufficient condition for the

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140 Ibid., 147.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., 148.
144 Ibid., 146.
145 Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest*.
146 Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*.
148 Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War*. 
[...Second World...] War’. 149 At the same time he also rejected ‘geographic determinism’ that posited the inevitability of conflict because of ‘structural imbalances’. 150 Instead, he presented a middle ground, where structure is a ‘permissive cause of action’. 151 His core claim was that structural conditions ‘let’ rather than ‘make’ things happen. 152 Zakaria and Christensen both extended this notion of permission, viewing states as often reticent to make change. For them, ‘shocks’ allow unresolved structural conditions to be corrected.

For Zakaria, elites have used strategies to control ‘state power’ at a domestic level in order to achieve their international level goals successfully. He calls this ‘state-centred realism’. 153 In doing so, he argues domestic variables ‘can be introduced into a systemic theory ‘without undermining the theory’s basic premise’. 154 In short, he claimed that ‘capabilities shape intentions’ rather than strictly determine them. 155 Indeed, this addresses some of the problems of defensive realism, which has largely ignored outliers in state behaviour, and passed them off as ‘lessons’ that play out over the long-term. 156

Even from a critical position that accepts the socialisation of states, neoclassical realism is useful because it clearly constrains those variables within a material framework. While Thomas Christensen is sometimes ‘claimed’ by constructivist scholars, works such as Useful Adversaries firmly sit within a neoclassical realist position because they can explore how leaders use and shape low level issues to enable longer-term strategic and security goals.

Christensen’s work demonstrates this in US policy towards the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during 1947 to 1950 and the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis. 157 In the first instance, the Truman administration was facing internal resistance to American military commitments, which were likely to increase, given the reduction of British power in the aftermath of Second World War, with the US needing to commit to containment of the Soviet Union on both the European and Asian fronts. Christensen claimed that Truman turned to ideology (or fear of it) to justify US security

149 Schweller, Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest, 4.
150 Ibid., 6.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Zakaria, From Wealth to Power, 9.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 18.
156 Ibid., 31.
157 Christensen, Useful Adversaries.
considerations to a domestic audience.\textsuperscript{158} In his second key argument, Christensen claimed that the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958 was a way for Chinese authorities to justify the internal rebalancing of resources to enable the Great Leap Forward\textsuperscript{159}. In sum, this meant that the domestic inflation of a ‘crisis’ created the rationale for Chinese elites to modernise.

The overall approach of using two levels of analysis—the international versus domestic—is not in itself new. James Rosenau famously explored the phenomenon of ‘linkage politics’ in 1969, arguing that systemic pressures guide the international system, while internal politics respond to the pressures in their own unique ways.\textsuperscript{160} In a similar manner, Andrew Moravcsik’s notion of liberal intergovernmentalism laid out the benefits of two-level bargaining in the context of the EU. By setting ‘credible’ common policies, he argued that elites were ‘strengthening domestic agenda-setting power’.\textsuperscript{161}

Perhaps the most well-known example of scholarship exploring the domestic-international nexus is Robert Putnam’s notion of ‘two-level games’.\textsuperscript{162} This essay explored how during the 1970s oil crisis policy makers and diplomats at the Bonn Summit Conference balanced a number of diverse and pressing domestic and international concerns simultaneously. His thesis was that states were far from unitary actors, with elites such as Carter constrained in their international actions by a number of domestic political limitations. According to Putnam, ‘unlike state-centric theories, the two-level approach recognises the inevitability of domestic conflict about what the “national interest” requires’.\textsuperscript{163} Thus, domestic level politics affected bargaining at the international level, while domestic opposition to international level agreements could alter outcomes. Finally, the quality of the negotiator (or ‘elite’) could influence outcomes.

This understanding is helpful for immediate domestic contests, and explains US resistance to certain treaties, such as those focussed on climate change and weapons control, but it fails to explain longer term of state responses to security challenges.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 32–76.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 194–241.
\textsuperscript{162} Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics.”
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 460.
At the same time, neoclassical realism’s grounding in structural logic is complementary given that it allows for a broader sweep of historical events, thereby permitting analysis of wider patterns of interplay between the domestic and international.

This is evident in neoclassical realism’s roots, which were employed to assess the end of the Cold War. It allowed researchers to analyse the decline of the Soviet Union over a longer time frame and contextualise the rapid changes that occurred at the end of the 1980s. From this position, empirical data concerning the economic and political conditions of the Soviet Union demonstrated that changes to the domestic discourse were a way to respond to the realities of the poor fiscal environment, rather than a sudden embrace of liberal narratives.

William Wohlforth and Stephen Brooks articulated these links between the domestic and international levels in the Soviet case. In the USSR, decision makers were often opposed to reform, but the material realities of the situation ‘undercut the ability of Gorbachev’s critics to come up with a compelling general foreign policy alternative’.

Their conclusion was that:

‘scholars who focus on ideas need to consider more carefully whether the origins and impact of the intellectual shifts they highlight are endogenous to a changing material environment’.166

This logic is equally important, if not more so, to middle powers given that idea entrepreneurs (both local and abroad) can have a great impact on states with weak or declining material positions. For instance, some interpretations of the 2013 Ukraine crisis view it as driven by rhetoric from abroad, and specifically fears from Russia about NATO expansion. Under this reading, Russian actions were a way to counter NATO expansionism, rather than behaviour solely engendered in Ukraine itself.

Another example is the Falklands War between the UK and Argentina, where the Argentinian leadership used aggressive rhetoric on foreign policy to consolidate

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165 Ibid., 50.
166 Ibid., 51.
domestic power. The result was pursuit of a fruitless war against a nuclear adversary that resulted in a European Community (EC) embargo on arms exports, while also initiating a debt crisis and economic stagnation, weakening Argentina’s overall security position.\textsuperscript{168}

From this position, there is great potential in exploring a framework that can explain how middle powers respond and balance their domestic and international concerns. And yet despite these apparent benefits, critics such as Legro and Moravcsik have claimed the neoclassical realist approach has suffered from ‘theoretical indeterminacy’ and that it has relied on ad hoc interpretations of domestic variables.\textsuperscript{169} However, Brian Rathbun has countered these criticisms by noting that neoclassical realism needs to be understood in ‘directional terms’ when assessing the international-domestic nexus, with external material factors paramount.\textsuperscript{170} This contrasts with the bidirectional models that both liberals and constructivists use, in which the two levels of politics are perceived to be mutually constitutive.

This differentiation helps gives the neoclassical realist framework analytical clarity. And in a middle power setting, neoclassical realism allows for explanations regarding responses that are typically described by neoliberal scholars. For example, in \textit{A Rose by Any Other Name} Rathbun has further challenged the criticism of neoclassical realism from John Vasquez, Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik,\textsuperscript{171} who claimed that neoclassical realism is effectively liberal because it ‘utilises variations in state-society relations as key explanatory factors’.\textsuperscript{172} Instead, Rathbun suggested that neoclassical realism presented a clear alternative to ideational frameworks. This is because ideational frameworks were inherently activist and therefore flawed when used in a prescriptive manner.

Rathbun’s most important claim, though, was that ‘if leaders veer too much into constructivism they are punished by the system’.\textsuperscript{173} This underpins much of the neoclassical logic, where systemic pressures will ultimately prevail when played out


\textsuperscript{170} Brian Rathbun, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism,” \textit{Security Studies} 17, no. 2 (2008): 312.


\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
over the long-term as policy mistakes are corrected, and elites are forced to align their domestic positions with the material realities. In the simplest sense, state overexpansion and over-commitment because of poor rhetoric will result in systemic punishment. This echoes Waltz’s claim that states ‘are likely to be rewarded for behavior that is responsive to structural pressures and punished for behavior that is not’.174

**Building a Neoclassical Realist Framework to Understand Pivotal Middle Powers**

How, then, can we build a framework that best explains the role of middle powers and their important role in the international environment without resorting to the problems of falling back on great power-centric assessments, or alternatively, assessments that overstate domestic variables? One way is to test a range of middle powers that do not neatly fit within the liberal democratic category. This means incorporating a range of states that have different variables, including geography, economics, military power, which can be then used to contextualise ideational factors.

I argue the neoclassical approach can answer these questions, and is the most instructive for assessing middle powers. This is especially so for those that practise middle power diplomacy, or ‘niche’ diplomacy heavily influenced by ideas and ‘good international citizenship’. An orthodox position is that few downsides exist from the global policy that middle powers such as Australia pursue: this includes broad activist issues such as whaling, climate change, and nuclear disarmament. In contrast, when elites act too assertively, and on topics too close to the core of their security concerns, problems can arise. The PRC is instructive here, where leaders often order and dictate the ideas that are fed down to the domestic audience. In this case, it does so via a narrative that paints Western democracies as hostile forces, and associated concepts such as democracy and freedom as instruments designed to facilitate chaos.175 However, sometimes this use of ideas can become problematic. This was demonstrated when Beijing’s leaders used hawkish rhetoric towards Taipei in the run-up to the 1996 Taiwanese election. What was initially a simple attempt at coercive diplomacy was amplified by a ‘hyper-sovereignty’ norm, leading to the

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PRC threatening the use of force, then then forced into a humiliating retreat after the US flexed its military might.\textsuperscript{176}

In fact, the PRC’s behaviour fits neatly in a theoretical framework articulated by Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu under the idea of ‘rightful resistance’. Here, emerging actors ‘accept’ a hegemon only through specific domains, such as military and economic ones, and instead challenge these hegemons via a narrow range of international areas to achieve safe relative gains.\textsuperscript{177} The conclusion is that emerging actors will place a greater emphasis on ideas, both positive and negative. In the PRC’s case, this allowed a heightened level of conflict to emerge around empirically small issues such as the Senkaku Islands and issues such as the publication of Japanese textbooks that whitewashed the extent of Second World War atrocities by Japanese soldiers in Manchuria. In turn, these led to greater levels of threat perception, which in turn put pressure on Chinese leaders to create responses in order to legitimise their political authority.

Other authors, such as Jennifer Sterling-Folker have explained similar phenomena in the context of relations between Beijing and Taipei. For her, neoclassical realism unravels paradoxes within neoliberal perspectives about cross-strait tensions between Taipei and Beijing (where antagonisms have continued despite increasing economic entwinement since the 1990s).\textsuperscript{178} She has claimed that democratisation in Taiwan has opened the domestic political environment to ideational factors. Political entrepreneurs, in turn, sought to use the construction of a Taiwanese identity and its place in the hierarchy of Taiwanese politics as a bargaining point concerning cross-strait relations.

This type of analytical output means the neoclassical realist framework provides an excellent starting point from which to answer several questions. It can capture broad power shifts, as Wohlfirth and Brooks demonstrated in the case of the Soviet Union’s dissolution. It can capture how the PRC uses alternative channels, such as contests focused on weaker states, to challenge US hegemony as outlined by Schweller and Pu. Furthermore, the contributions highlighted above by Rathbun and


\textsuperscript{178} Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Neoclassical Realism and Identity: Peril Despite Profit Across the Taiwan Straits,” in \textit{Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy}, ed. S. E Lobell, N. M Ripsman, and J. W Taliaferro (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.
Sterling-Folker demonstrated how material constraints can control the position and hierarchy of certain ideas within domestic debates.

Nonetheless, neoclassical realism still lacks a rich typology to describe these internal factors and compare them across cases. John Mearsheimer did attempt a loosely defined extension of the neoclassical realist framework in Why Leaders Lie, by identifying seven kinds of lies leaders use to generate public support to address underlying security dynamics. These are interstate lies, fear mongering, strategic cover-ups, nationalist mythmaking, social imperialism and ignoble cover-ups.179 For instance, he categorised the Gulf of Tonkin incident as fear mongering, whereby a falsified attack on US forces was used by President Lyndon Johnston to justify military action in Vietnam. These laid the foundation for the full commitment of US forces to the region. Other examples of fear mongering included Donald Rumsfeld’s ‘evidence’ that Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were close allies, in an attempt to justify US actions in the second Gulf War.180 In contrast, nationalist mythmaking is ‘essential for building and maintaining a viable nation-state’ and ‘lies’ work well here because ‘common people have a hunger for […] national[…] myths’.181 Nevertheless, and unfortunately, many of Mearsheimer’s assessments are crude and short. More pertinently, many of the types Mearsheimer identifies are US-centric, and contingent on a state that can act in a proactive security manner, as opposed to the reactive way many middle powers behave.

A more nuanced approach can be found in the work of Norrin Ripsman. In The Politics of Deception: Forging Peace Treaties in the Face of Domestic Opposition, he extended neoclassical realism using a typology in order to demonstrate how elites can smooth obstacles to making foreign policy through deceitful tactics. Ripsman presented a triad of elite strategies: hiding, misleading and blaming. These act to manipulate and diffuse domestic opposition to contentious issues such as peace treaties.182 For instance, in one example, populist domestic sentiment in the United Kingdom (UK) after the First World War demanded vengeance via heavy reparations from Germany. At the same time, Prime Minister David Lloyd George was privately concerned excessive demands ‘might drive Germany to

180 Ibid., 50.
181 Ibid., 76.
As a result, a number of strategies were used to separate public discourse and wider security driven concerns. Notably, Lloyd George lobbied for the inclusion of terms in the Versailles Treaty, such as ‘war guilt’, that formally attributed war costs to Germany in a way that satisfied domestic voices. At the same time, a complete reparation figure was not finalised until 1921, when the reparations debate has subsided in domestic debates. In the end, Ripsman claimed ‘Lloyd George’s strategy was to make purely cosmetic public concessions’.

The three types presented by Ripsman are more managed and controlled than Mearsheimer’s framework. Furthermore, his description of Britain at a conflict averse period better describes the defensive model of security that middle powers often pursue. Overall, this suggests the use of a typology, when combined with neoclassical realist logic, offers to shed light on the research question. Given the advantages of neoclassical realism identified above, it has great potential in understanding the differences between foreign policy responses to security issues and public discourses in a middle power setting. Nonetheless, the theory requires retooling to suit a middle power analysis. As a result, the following section builds an operational version of neoclassical realism for use in a middle power setting, using a typology of elite strategies.

**Deflection**

The framework and subsequent typology presented in this next section attempts break down and capture the broad processes at play when elites rearrange domestic discourses in order to respond to external challenges. The first response to external pressures occurs when elites engage in the deflection of issues critical to national security away from the domestic discourse. The more intense the threat, the riskier it becomes to introduce the topic into the public discourse, lest it become the focus of populism. In this situation, bipartisanship and non-politicisation on national security issues are common.

This response is visible across a range of states. For example, German foreign policy towards Russia has enjoyed quiet bipartisan support since 1991. This is typified by the fact that as of 2017, German Frank-Walter Steinmeier from the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) is acting as foreign minister, while Chancellor Angela

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183 Ibid., 204.
184 Ibid., 214.
Merkel is a member of the Centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU). One explanation is that Germany’s semi-consociationalism relies on bipartisanship. But as Alexander Rahr points out, the comprehensive degree of cooperation between Germany and Russia on security issues—despite their problematic history—is surprising.\textsuperscript{185} Elsewhere, as Tuomas Forsberg notes, this tradition is strongly linked to pragmatic factors, such as energy considerations, while there is a hesitancy to politicise potential Russian threats, even in the aftermath of the Ukrainian Crisis. In that example, Merkel has condemned Russian actions as against international law, yet maintained that the security relationship between the two states had not changed.\textsuperscript{186}

Elsewhere, autocratic powers such as Iran and North Korea can deflect message much easier than democracies by virtue of their ability to engage in censorship. Hence, messages in Iran relating to the economy and sanctions are kept away from domestic audiences, resulting in paradoxical domestic positions, where most Iranian’s perceive their economy as average to good, despite living standards declining.\textsuperscript{187} A 2011 survey on this topic also found that ‘opposition to U.S. interests and the pursuit of a nuclear civilian and (possibly) nuclear weapon capability were supported by a significant portion of the Iranian population’,\textsuperscript{188} meaning:

‘[the] extent of popular support for Iranian government policies revealed by respondents may be due to the Islamic Republic’s consistent efforts to sway public opinion through its control of most forms of media’.\textsuperscript{189}

Similar responses are found in North Korea, which will rarely challenge the PRC in its internal messages because this presents an immediate security threat. Thus while the formal press agency of North Korea, the Korean Central News Agency constantly refers to the US as hostile, there are no critical comments of Beijing.\textsuperscript{190} This is in contrast to the PRC, which will rebuke North Korea on issues such as

\textsuperscript{186} Tuomas Forsberg, “From Ostpolitik to ‘frostpolitik’? Merkel, Putin and German Foreign Policy towards Russia,” \textit{International Affairs} 92, no. 1 (2016): 29.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., xii.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Many examples are found on the Korean Central News Agency website, available at http://www.kcna.kp
nuclear weapons when it is in its interest to do so.\textsuperscript{191} The corollary of deflection is that on defence and security policy, a number of states variously described as middle powers, across different types of political systems are hesitant to invoke issues sensitive to security in domestic debates.

\textit{Dilution}

A second potential response to problematic discourse with security implications is \textit{dilution}. Here, established entities move rogue actors and political entrepreneurs towards the centre of policy debates to moderate their contributions to the domestic foreign policy discourse. This type of response is arguably visible in Israel, where Avigdor Lieberman, a right-wing populist, entered the Knesset in 2006 after his party received 9 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{192} In this instance, his message was moderated by a move to the centre after an electoral alliance between the centrist Kadima and right wing Yisrael Beiteinu. In the case of Israel, intense sets of external pressures require the broad security consensus of a number of actors. As such, elites engage ‘rogue’ messengers, such as Lieberman, to segregate their public discourse from their ‘private’ understanding of security. Indeed, a \textit{Washington Post} article claimed Washington has ignored Lieberman’s rhetoric and acknowledges its domestic role, while at a pragmatic level US secretaries of state deal almost exclusively with Israeli Prime Minister rather than the foreign minister.\textsuperscript{193}

In fact, the rationale for dilution is well described in the existing literature. For example, George Kennan warned that public opinion was not always useful, claiming that:

\begin{quote}
‘what purports to be public opinion in most countries that consider themselves to have popular governments is often not really the consensus of the feelings of the mass of the people at all but rather the expression of the interests of special highly vocal minorities—politicians, commentators, and publicity—seekers of all sorts’.\textsuperscript{194}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{194} George F. Kennan, \textit{American Diplomacy 1900-1950} (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1951).
In a similar manner, Hans Morgenthau stressed ‘the Government is the leader of public opinion, not its slave’. And in this respect an excellent summary of Morgenthau’s wider sentiment has been presented by Lowell Gustafson, who stated that ‘Morgenthau wants diplomats to have protective buffers from the howling mobs who love heroes, not horse trading’.196

**Inflation**

A third elite response occurs when elites publicly focus on benign threats with the goal of obfuscating higher order threats. We can call this *inflation*. One common technique here is scapegoating. Inflammatory rhetoric is used against certain actors unlikely, or alternatively too weak, to react to hyperbolic language. As a result, elite responses tend to focus on weak and abstract threats such as immigrants, ethnic groups and other stereotypical vagaries. Elites then link them to state security, even though they are relatively minor in the hierarchy of state threats.

A way of describing inflation is a subtler version of Jack Levy’s scapegoat hypothesis and ‘diversionary theory of wars’, where elites divert domestic audiences to certain contentious issues to mobilise support for warfare.197 This, in turn, draws on Lewis A. Coser’s work drawing on the ‘in-group/out-group’ hypotheses, where larger groups self-identify with sociological groups.198 Levy paraphrases Coser’s central idea as follows:

‘The cohesion of the in-group will be increased only if there already exists some minimal level of internal cohesion and only if it is generally perceived that the external threat menaces the group as a whole and not just some part of it’.199

Inflation also has the benefit of incorporating analysis about the critical revival of authors such as Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss who explored the centrality of political antagonisms to political life.200 For example, Jef Huysmans and Alessandra Buonfino interpreted debates by political elites in Britain as linking immigration to

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199 Levy, “Domestic Politics and War.”
terrorism in order to enable the practical security measures needed to address the new post 9/11 security environment. From their position, the ‘politics of exception’ was a way to allow security considerations to escape the inconsistencies of liberty in democratic political systems.\textsuperscript{201} In this respect, the Schmittian concept of the friend/enemy distinction becomes useful, and thus \textit{inflation} is a way of framing the how leaders exploit this sentiment in the wider context of structural constraints.\textsuperscript{202} Hence, inflation acts to rally domestic groups around a single, yet benign security issue. Inflation of ‘soft’ issues is preferred because pivotal middle powers lack the resources and materials to engage in the sabre-rattling often witnessed between great powers. Overall, this means inflation is comparable to the manipulation of the ‘in-group/out-group’ phenomena to remove the focus from other more important security issues.

\textit{Case Choices and Defence}

With the limitations of the ‘middle power’ concept described above and the typology laid out, the cases must now be chosen. Moreover, as the previous section suggests, the examples should incorporate a range of variables including geography, economic and military, which can help contextualise ideational actors and their actions. In doing so, a number of candidates emerge.

Take, for example, South Korea. It is a ‘middle power’ by most metrics. It is an awkward geographical pivot between Chinese and US influence that strongly affects its alliances, and is the focus of many scholarly articles focusing on middle power.\textsuperscript{203} It also uses what David Kang termed ‘emotional diplomacy’ to achieve goals grounded in realist logic.\textsuperscript{204} It also has considerable military power. However, at the same time, the North Korea question introduces too many complexities to make it a useful case at present. North Korea is a unique case in international politics because

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of its autarkic nature and its frozen conflict with South Korea introduces an excessive number of uncontrollable variables.

Other candidates might include Brazil, which has the material capabilities to be a middle, or even potentially a great power in the future. Its recent behaviour, such as an attempt to broker the Iran nuclear deal (along with Turkey) indicates a desire for a more assertive role in international affairs. But overall, Brazil’s position is complicated by numerous factors. For instance, geographical factors are less intense or advantageous when compared to other regions such as Africa and the Middle East, and neither the PRC, nor the US is deeply invested in courting Brazil. Nonetheless, Brazil’s position as the strongest nation in South America means this is better analysed within the regional scope, and therefore beyond the remit of this thesis.

Elsewhere Kenya is an emerging pivot with increasing PRC and US interests in the region focused on Nairobi. Yet its security dynamics are fluid and its alliances are in flux thanks to the emergence of the PRC as a key security player. Consequently, the literature and empirics are less readily available and theoretical analysis less developed. South Africa, too, is a focus of middle power literature, but as with Brazil, it is often focussed on regional hegemony and immediate security, rather than the way it engages with great powers.

A potentially more appropriate set of case candidates exist when exploring a specific type of pivotal middle power. This is where a state sits between two larger blocs as described in Chase et al’s analysis earlier in this chapter. This provides a critical geopolitical variable, and states that sit in the middle of security competitions provide a neat way to test both the material and ideational components against their respective security outlooks.

**Australia**

Australia, provides an excellent set of conditions to test variables including geography, economics and ideas. It has been the subject of a great deal of literature exploring both its pivotal and the middle power position, although very little of this has tried to bridge the international-domestic divide. More importantly, it has dealt with many paradoxical domestic stances, where international activism ranks highly in internal debates, yet its security position is ultimately driven by an emerging security architecture of East Asia. At a structural level Australia sits neatly between the PRC and US spheres of influence, and manages these countervailing dynamics well. At the same time, there is the risk that certain domestic debates can threaten important relations with states such as the PRC and Indonesia. More interestingly, Australia shares a number of security conditions with countries that are not liberal democracies, such as Turkey. For example, both have had long and stable relations with the US and enjoyed security and stability despite their problematic systemic positions. This makes Australia an excellent candidate for the first case.

Consequently, analysis of Australia should reveal a correlation between the shift in Australia’s strategic priorities (such as that from Britain, to the US, and most recently to China) and the internal discourses that accompany it. A brief survey of its strategic history supports this. Australia’s xenophobic approach to the wider Asian region throughout the early twentieth century was replaced by a moderated approach whereby China has become a focus of Australia’s security elites. In turn, vague sentiment about asylum seekers from weaker states, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, is now the focus of internal security debates, despite a lack of empirical evidence that these people do indeed present any type of core existential threat.

**Turkey**

Another prominent candidate is Turkey, which sits geographically between Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Consequently, it can be used to test the links between geography, security and ideas. Turkey’s recent attempts to revise its international position have been thoroughly analysed in the academic literature. More importantly, Turkey has confronted several issues that have crossed the international–domestic nexus, and that are poorly explained by the current literature on Turkish foreign
policy. This includes the role of political Islam and democratisation, which attract and threaten security debates at both the domestic and international levels. So, while the literature on Turkey is rich, it is often heavily focussed on historical factors, and in doing so fails to explain many paradoxical challenges. One example is Turkish public opinion, which reveals many inconsistencies. In this instance, NATO and the US provide the backbone for security, but the US is increasingly the target of negative domestic ideas. According to the 2014 Pew Global attitudes survey, 73 percent of Turks polled had an unfavourable opinion of the US, while only one in ten saw the US in a favourable light. NATO also suffers from this poor perception, with seven in ten Turks possessing negative opinions of the organization.

In a similar way, a 2015 survey by Kadir Has University found 42.6 percent of Turks viewed Israel as the biggest threat to Turkey, whereas only 22.1 percent viewed Syria in the same light. This is puzzling as Turkey’s domestic concerns are largely disconnected from its foreign policy practice. At a pragmatic level Turkish foreign policy seeks to counter the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq, Russian revisionism to the North, and the emergence of security competition focused on resources in Central Asia. Yet these immediate security concerns are often accompanied by prudent action, despite a façade of reckless rhetoric. Overall this generates a picture where the content of domestic narratives is inconsistent with the material pressures dictating Turkey’s strategic environment. These factors combine to make Turkey an excellent case choice. This links with the fact it already has been the focus of both a great deal of middle and ‘pivotal’ scholarship.

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209 For example, Tarik Oğuzlu argues there is a “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy.” For Ian Lesser there is a “third wave” of Turkish foreign policy, typified by regional activism and brinksmanship in the Middle East. In contrast, Cornell claims different world-view of international politics drive Turkish foreign policy. Tarik Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?,” Turkish Studies 9, no. 1 (2008): 3–20; Ian Lesser, “Turkey’s Third Wave—And the Coming Quest for Strategic Reassurance,” German Marshall Fund for the United States 26 (2011); Svante E. Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?,” Middle East Quarterly Winter 2012 (2012): 13–24.


211 Ibid.


To capture these complexities and numerous variables around Turkish security, critical approaches have increased in popularity. This is notable within scholarship from ‘non-traditional’ middle powers, such as Turkey, because critical security approaches help explain their awkward position in international politics. For instance, a survey by Pinar Bilgin found fifty-three peer-reviewed articles by Turkish scholars used the critically grounded securitization framework over the past decade. Furthermore, of those articles that were ‘theory-informed’, the majority came from the critical school, suggesting a preference for cultural and historical discourses rather than those dealing with ‘hard’ security dynamics.

This contrasts with the security-driven work by US scholars on Turkey, including the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis, in which Samuel Huntington stated that Turkey’s reorientation east was driven by ‘the desire to counter Iran and Saudi Arabia from expanding their influence and promoting Islamic fundamentalism in the region’. In a similar way Zbigniew Brzezinski’s The Grand Chessboard described Turkey only briefly in a crude sweep of Eurasian power dynamics. Of course, more nuanced work is available, such as F. Stephen Larrabee’s Troubled Partnership - U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change, alongside in-depth policy driven approaches by Steven A. Cook from the US Council on Foreign Relations. Nevertheless, overall, this suggests that the literature on states such as Turkey is firmly from either hard or critical security positions, with few attempts at conciliatory positions.

Consequently, the contrasting positions of the literature make Turkey an interesting case to compare and contrast with Australia. Turkey, like Australia, has navigated a complex security environment relatively well, and has acted in line with what materially driven analysis would expect: it both has allied and free-ridden on the US security presence, with the goal of balancing against a variety of threats, including

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214 Bilgin, “The Politics of Studying Securitization?”
215 Ibid., 406.
Soviet Union, Russia, and most recently the Middle East. At the same time, domestic narratives generally complement these security positions. So, at the beginning of the Turkish Republic, Kemalism was a useful tool for the reordering of discourses within Turkey, and its statist, nationalist cornerstone made sense in the context of the Cold War environment. Correspondingly, the post-Cold War period, and the associated changes in the regional security architecture seem to correlate with a shift in domestic sentiment, to one more closely aligned with political Islam. This against makes sense, as neglect of these Islamic voices makes it the target of myriad ideational entrepreneurs that have emerged in the post 9/11 environment. These factors, together, make Turkey a potentially instructive case.

Mexico

Mexico is also a candidate for pivotal middle power analysis, albeit one that initially seems counterintuitive. Most notably, its geographical proximity to the US differentiates it substantially from Turkey and Australia. One point of differentiation is that the geographical pivot is less defined in material terms than the first two cases and opportunities for balancing against the US or aligned with states to the South or abroad are limited. Brazil, Argentina and Colombia are the only regional states with any substantial material capabilities and neither has shown an interest in forming a balancing coalition beyond broad economic groupings such as the Latin American Integration Association. Another point of differentiation is that Mexico has an extremely weak military and spent less than one-fifth of what Australia did on defence in 2015, despite having almost six times the population. Furthermore, it is an interesting case because it has not contested US power in any real form or shape since the Mexican revolution in the early twentieth century. This combines with the fact that Mexico sits between two large cultural blocs. This means that if ideational factors enjoy a pivotal role in regional security dynamics, these should reveal themselves, given Mexico’s predominantly Hispanic population and linguistic commonalities are much more strongly linked to Latin America than to the North.

This makes Mexico a highly informative case from a security perspective, especially in relation to its peculiar internal dynamics. These include the fact that Mexican

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instability presents the US with arguably its greatest local existential security threat. This is a result of the emergence of drug cartels, which have created a climate of lawlessness on the US border. For example, during the period 2007-2014, there were 164,000 victims of homicide versus 103,000 in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.\textsuperscript{221} Further puzzles emerge as Mexico possesses a political system that (on the surface) supports many of the leftist ideals espoused by other regimes in the region, such as Cuba, yet ranks low in US public concerns. This therefore suggests that Mexican elites are adept at controlling internal rhetoric in a way that has prevented it from becoming an existential threat to the US.

Again, in the Mexican case, these processes are poorly explored in the literature, where it is the subject of sharp divisions between theoretical approaches when describing its role in international politics. For instance, according to a survey of the literature by Mariano E. Bertucci, the majority of academic scholarship on US-Latin American relations was written from an International Political Economy (IPE) perspective (38 percent), with a further 17 percent assessing ‘intermestic’ issues (those involving both domestic and international analysis), while only 14 percent were security driven.\textsuperscript{222} The insular nature of Mexican scholarship was underscored by the fact that only 0.5 percent of articles surveyed by Bertucci dealt with issues surrounding Mexico and the structure of the international system, and all works were written by Latin Americans rather than US scholars.\textsuperscript{223} Indeed, this problem is found across Latin America. As Arlene B. Tickner has noted, Latin American approaches to IR have paralleled the thought and processes found in the US, and ‘in non-core settings such as Latin America, offers relatively little of the kinds of alternative knowledge that critical scholarship so eagerly seeks’.\textsuperscript{224} This narrow approach to the theoretical scholarship is concerning because Mexico’s role in international security is severely undervalued. For example, Mexico is a middle power by most metrics, being a member of the G20 and MIKTA, as well as sitting at a pivotal point between North and South America. Zbigniew Brzezinski


\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 127.

even claimed in the late 1990s that Mexico would be the next Iran given its unresolved political tensions with the US, combined with its unstable revolutionary history.\textsuperscript{225} Brzezinski’s claims may not have eventuated, but Mexico remains a problem for the US in security terms, especially when viewed in the context of drug violence. Take, for example, the focus on US and Iraq in both popular and academic discourse, even though the Mexican drug war, being partly played out on the US border, was arguably as violent as unrest in Iraq. In 2013, Ciudad Juarez was a more violent city than Baghdad, where 70,000 ‘additional homicides’ have occurred because of conflicts related to the drug war since 2007.\textsuperscript{226} Yet Mexico ranks low in domestic US perceptions compared to other perceived threats. In the 2009 Pew Research report of public perception, taken at the height of the Mexican Drug War, Islamic extremism, Iran’s nuclear program and the Taliban represented ‘major threats to the well-being of the United States’.\textsuperscript{227} In contrast, Mexico did not rate a mention in the top ten foreign policy issues.\textsuperscript{228}

In this respect, the use of Mexico as a case should reveal how security elites have managed the high politics of the US relationship pragmatically, while redirecting anti-US sentiment domestically in ways to avoid an existential impact on US-Mexican relations. It should also explain how a domestic environment that is ripe for exploitation by political entrepreneurs, as has happened in other regional states, including Cuba and Venezuela, has been avoided in Mexico.

\textit{Cases Compared}

This combination of Australia, Mexico and Turkey should provide useful outputs about how middle powers balance domestic discourses with external security priorities based on geographical and material factors. They are instructive because all possess domestic discourses that can be problematic for security, and that superficially can clash with their most important security partners. Other notable constants include the fact each bandwagons with the US. Australia and Turkey do so in a formal sense through the ANZUS treaty and NATO respectively, while Mexico

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
has a more informal relationship with the US in military terms, reinforced by close proximity.

At this point, sceptics may ask why this thesis should not simply analyse the relationships of these states with the US. This is answered by returning to the concept of pivotal middle power. While all three bandwagon with the US, all three simultaneously hedge against the US. Australia engages with the PRC and uses that relationship to remain pertinent to the US. Turkey has a similar history, hedging with the Soviet Union, and more recently the PRC and the Middle East. Mexico relies on the US security umbrella by virtue of the Monroe Doctrine, even though no formal alliance exists, but still tests the relationship via engagement with a number of Latin American institutions encompassing problematic actors such as Cuba and Venezuela.

Other important similarities exist too. All are G20 members. They all sit between two contrasting cultural regions. They are all relatively stable market economies. All were named as so-called ‘torn’ countries under the Clash of Civilisation thesis.229 More importantly, all three have relatively good relations with their neighbours, despite being in potentially dangerous ‘neighbourhoods’. More recently, all three have become members of MIKTA, which states that members ‘play pivotal strategic roles in [their] regions’ and ‘share important fundamental values, including a commitment to democracy and human rights, and shared support of free trade and open economies’.230 This is an interesting development because, according to Australian policy documents on MIKTA, the ‘depiction of Mexico and Turkey in the literature as middle powers is predicated on a bridging or liminal role’ where as the role of MIKTA (according to Cooper) goes ‘hand in hand with a connotation over where they are situated geographically in the world’.231 Hence, an analysis grounded in material factors should result in a number of consistencies across cases despite differing political systems, if the central thesis holds.

As a result, this mix of similarities and concordant geopolitical and security concerns makes them useful, with their domestic policy providing rich detail on how they behave when faced with similar structural constraints. Australia has a modern and

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230 “MIKTA – Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.”
231 Cooper, “MIKTA and the Global Projection of Middle Powers.”
refined Westminster system of government. Turkey has a somewhat successful semi-authoritarian system where a form of militant secularism was enforced by Kemalist ideologues and has recently converted to a hybrid authoritarian system under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Mexico too has a unique presidential system that has both democratic and authoritarian elements. Consequently, while foreign policy elites seem to act in a unitary manner across cases when responding to threats, we can compare and contrast how these necessary changes are managed when introduced into domestic debates. Thus, in respect to the middle power definition presented above, all three cases are well suited to test the thesis and generate outputs about the way pivotal middle powers manage problematic domestic discourse that clash with the realities of their security positions.

At this point, the general expectations of the research are that these three states remain relatively stable because they have in fact managed to successfully control the hierarchy of domestic issues focussed on security. For example, Australia has a long history of bipartisanship towards the US alliance, despite evidence to suggest that political entrepreneurs could exploit this narrative for domestic gains. Such moves would harm Australia’s national security given the importance of the alliance and therefore debates about such issues are largely quiet. Likewise, in Turkey, where the security situation is much more intense, certain debates, such as those about the regional role of Iran, and until recently political Islam, remain highly controlled. For Mexico, anti-Americanism is a core theme within Mexican society, yet Mexican elites rarely engage in populist rhetoric on the centrality of the role the US plays in Mexico’s broader security.

Hence this thesis expects to find evidence of elites rearranging debates in line with the national interest and the security dynamics. We should also expect that when the broad security dynamics change, elites will respond by demoting or alternately promoting certain discourses that are less harmful.

Research Design

The research design for this thesis relies on a comparison across cases. In each case I use a consistent structure with a brief introduction, a description and assessment of the key threats and actors in that state, and an examination of the domestic
environment that probes for potential antagonisms with security implications between the domestic and international environments.

The use of qualitative case studies, as this thesis employs, has been central to the study of international relations. While the comparative method can be traced back to John Stuart Mill, authors such as Stein Rokkan, Giovanni Satori and Harold Lasswell pushed forward the study of comparative politics in an attempt to clarify the usefulness of ‘small-N’ studies. Arend Lijphart later expanded on this research to champion the use of qualitative case studies, claiming that while problematic in the context of testable models used by the hard sciences, they were an excellent strategy and instrument to approach politics when using a modified scientific method. Harry Eckstein extended this by showing how case studies had heuristic value that could be then used to generate hypotheses. Indeed, Jack Levy encapsulated these ideas into his concept of a ‘theory-guided case study’ which states that cases studies are ‘explicitly structured by a well-developed conceptual framework that focuses attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglects others’. These all inform the research design in this thesis. In this respect, this thesis can also be described as a ‘hypothesis generating study’, which according to Levy, can be ‘particularly useful in explaining cases that do not fit an existing theory, in order to explain why the case violates theoretical predictions and to refine or replace an existing hypothesis or perhaps specify its scope conditions’. In fact, this methodological approach has been used by many influential international relations works including Perception and Misperception, Theory of International Politics and Regions and Powers. Finally, cases and comparisons as used in this thesis also play an important role in the middle power literature. For instance, Middle Powers and the Rise of China is an edited volume using eight case studies, while

236 Ibid.
237 Ibid., 3.
239 Gilley and O’Neil, Middle Powers and the Rise of China.
Niche Diplomacy also explores eight middle power cases.\(^{240}\) Elsewhere, Annette Baker Fox’s middle power work made extensive use of case studies in including Turkey, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Spain.\(^{241}\)

Within the cases, I use process tracing to make casual links. Theory-based process tracing as outlined by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, allows the identification of causal chains between independent variables\(^{242}\) and according to David Collier, process tracing is ‘an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence—often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena’.\(^{243}\) Andrew Bennett’s work on process tracing is also useful, in particular his method of establishing causation by using a series of theoretical tests including ‘straw in the wind’ and the ‘hoop’.\(^{244}\) The hoop test provides a ‘necessary but not sufficient criterion for accepting the explanation’ and the hypothesis must ‘“jump through the hoop” just to remain under consideration’.\(^{245}\) ‘Straw in the wind’ is a subtler test. According to Bennett, ‘passing affirms relevance of hypothesis’, while failing ‘suggests hypothesis may not be relevant, but does not eliminate it’.\(^{246}\) In short, analyses that can incorporate both tests should be viewed as rigid theory.

In a practical setting Bennett applied these tests to analyses of Soviet contraction in the late 1980 and assessed three theoretical approaches. The first was Wohlfarth and Brooks’ interpretation, which argued material considerations drove Soviet decline (essentially a realist position). The second was a purely domestic account by Jack Snyder. In this instance changes in the Soviet economy were the key driver of substantial political change.\(^{247}\) The third explored constructivist positions, whereby the Soviet Union was socialised by a series of international events, including the experiences of Afghanistan and the role of public opposition in Eastern Europe,

\(^{240}\) Cooper, Niche Diplomacy.


\(^{242}\) See Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Case studies and theory development in the social sciences (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005).


\(^{245}\) Ibid.

\(^{246}\) Ibid.

meaning Soviet elites had ‘learned’ that the use of force was a poor choice and would only accelerate decline.

According to Bennett, Brooks and Wohlfforth’s neoclassical realist interpretation passed the ‘straw in the wind’ easily as it provided an understanding of the timing of Soviet decline. Most importantly, it passed the ‘hoop’ test by presenting evidence that ‘Soviet leaders linked the two in their public and private statements’. In contrast, theories grounded in domestic factors alone were the worst predictor. These often failed the hoop test as they as while their descriptions were rich, they were prone to problems in case selection, preventing a useful context for the events. Theories grounded in ideational positions alone provided rich descriptions and passed the hoop test, but ultimately failed to link economic factors with the discourse that emerged from Moscow. Overall, Bennett argued that this demonstrates that multiple valid explanations are available, and that process tracing therefore is a critical tool to strengthen arguments using causal inference, despite unavoidable fallibilities when used in social sciences.

While process tracing is used to probe for evidence, I employ a wider research design around cases constructed using ‘controlled comparison’. This is based on Steven Van Evera’s ‘congruence method type 2’ where multiple within-case comparisons are applied, allowing the comparison of independent and dependent variables across many issues within a case. In the research presented here, the same values (inflation, deflection and dilution) are probed for across each case once the initial circumstantial factors are established.

Finally, for this thesis, the independent variable is foreign and security policy, the dependent variable is domestic discourse, and the intervening variable is systemic pressures stemming from great power politics. Thus, when the independent variable changes, because of the intervening variable, the dependent variable responds. Many of the variables are easily described in objective terms. For instance, readily available metrics including Gross Domestic Product (GDP), military spending and alliances provide excellent evidence to describe changes in material capabilities.

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250 An abundance of empirical data exists to measure economic and military factors including information provided by organizations such as SIPRI, the World Bank and the EU. These numbers are rarely contested and
Theory Generation and Typologies

Given this thesis seeks to generate empirical findings, it is important to produce rigorous and testable theory. I use Van Evera’s conditions of ‘good theory’ in order to generate useful outputs with the goal of expanding the neoclassical framework.\footnote{Van Evera, \textit{Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science}, 17.}

According to Van Evera, a good theory has seven qualities. These are:

1. Explanatory power
2. Parsimony
3. Satisfaction
4. Clear framing
5. The theory is falsifiable
6. Explains important phenomena
7. Prescriptive richness

To address point one, this thesis will have explanatory power by explaining the internal behaviour of elites across middle powers. This is a key task given that middle powers are not well theorised within existing frameworks. Point two can sometimes be contentious within international relations. This is because research demands a certain amount of reductionism in order to arrive at a parsimonious framework. Nonetheless, this thesis attempts to build a more parsimonious framework around middle powers than currently exists by narrowing down variables and making them explicit as demonstrated above. Point three is somewhat more abstract, but any success at parsimony should create satisfaction. That is, this dissertation should provide a satisfying understanding of why there is divergence between public discourse and foreign policy practice in middle powers.

Point four—clear framing—is easier to achieve. The broad outline is expanded on in this chapter, but the use of clear and consistent case studies, in both the external and internal environment allows the reader a neutral position to view these links between cases. This thesis also meets the fifth point: being falsifiable. An empirical test can disprove the theory if the data is available and the same framework can disprove the hypothesis of middle power behaviour being put forward.

\footnote{as a result there is little debate here. These issues have been covered in Jeffrey Hart, “Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations,” \textit{International Organization} 30, no. 2 (1976): 289–305; David A. Baldwin, “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies,” \textit{World Politics} 31, no. 2 (1979): 161–194.}
If proven, this framework identifies and explains important phenomena, thereby addressing point six. Given that middle powers can be subject to fetishisation in the normative literature, this helps provide an understanding of the reasons how and why ideas are promoted or deflected in elite discourse, and in doing so provides an alternative way of viewing how these states engage in international politics.

Finally, point seven—prescriptive richness—is met. To Van Evera, this richness is achieved by ‘identifying antecedent condition required for its operation’.252 This gives policy planners ways to avoid and avert the mistakes and problems visible in the thesis. But, regardless of outcome, outputs of such a framework can still be useful for policy planners in dividing the hyperbolic world of media, public opinion and critical literature with that driven by a security driven perspective, providing this richness.

To assist in the generation of theory, this thesis uses a typology. This provides several organisational benefits and is a common analytical tool within the social sciences. Typological approaches are a feature of many influential security based articles, including neoclassical realist approaches used by Jeffrey Taliaferro253 and Schweller.254 For example, Schweller placed states into nine zoological categories including ‘wolves’, ‘owls’ and ‘snakes’ to describe their behaviour.255 Elsewhere, Stephen Krasner used typologies in his highly cited book, Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy in order to generate four categories of sovereignty: international legal, domestic, interdependent, and Westphalian.256 According to David Collier, Jody LaPorte and Jason Seawright, conceptual typologies when used with categorical variables are a ‘valuable analytic tools in political and social science’ and that despite some criticisms, they ‘contribute to quantitative research in diverse ways’.257 Following in this tradition, this thesis uses a conceptual typology where each type explains a part of state behaviour.

Definitions and Roles: Elites

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252 Ibid., 21.
254 Schweller, Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest.
255 Ibid.
A definition central to this dissertation is *elites*. This definition is critical as the neoclassical realist framework I use views elites as the conduit for state behaviour. They must enact policy. In other words, real people ultimately must actualise material pressures upon the state through responses. At the most basic level, I define elites as the executive level of the state, including (but not limited to) the Prime Minister or President, the heads of foreign policy alongside the most senior bureaucrats in the public service of related departments, most notably in foreign affairs and defence. This is in line with Steven Lobell’s definition of the ‘foreign policy executive’ (FPE), which has the goal of devising grand strategy and maximising national security. Of course, these organisational structures vary across the cases, and one motivation behind the case selection is to test for congruence across several political systems to see if they respond in similar ways to external material pressures.

A secondary type of elite is also present when using Lobell’s position. These are the *societal elite*. The societal elite include business leaders within major industries such as the finance sector, natural resources and the media. While not capable of making foreign policy, they do recognise threats to their interests from decisions made by the FPE. They lobby and act to counter-balance the ability of the FPE to make unitary decisions. These consist of both niche groups that rally around single issues, as well as actors with broad instruments, such as the media. In this sense, the societal elite represents a domestic variation on balance of power. The FPE ultimately makes decisions but must make calculations about the response and preferences of the societal elite.

For this thesis, I do not treat the media as a central variable. This case is made elsewhere and in detail in the communications and public diplomacy literature. For example, Steven Livingstone described the so-called ‘CNN effect’ in the early 1990s, framing the media as central to policy agenda setting. Rather, I favour

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258 Steven E. Lobell, “Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey. W Taliaferro (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57.

259 Ibid.


Norrin Ripsman’s interpretation of the role of the media. This claims the media ‘mould public opinion […] but[…] ultimately travel the same causal path’. Similar arguments are found in Jack Snyder’s *Myth of Empire*, which frames the media as part of the political structure that elites exploit for self-serving purposes.

**Sources**

The claims within this thesis are made using an array of sources. These include diplomatic histories, documents generated by government and their agencies, scholarly research, data collected by third parties, and media coverage. I avoid primary research because decision-makers and elites make unreliable narrators. They are constrained in their ability to make transparent statements. Indeed, part of this thesis aims to demonstrate how decision-making is driven independent of agency. As a result, too much emphasis on primary research would prove unhelpful. This is a common approach used by similar academic work such as Walt’s *The Origin of Alliances*, Buzan and Waever’s *Regions and Powers* and Schweller’s *Deadly Imbalances*, where no interviews are conducted. Indeed, a notable edited volume on the theory covered in this thesis, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, does not contain any primary research at all.

Changes in public opinion and sentiment at the domestic level are harder to describe and capture. Nonetheless, a few established methods exist to measure perceptions and ideas. Many credible sources routinely publish public opinion polls within each country, such as Pew, the Roper Centre, Gallup, alongside institutional outputs from organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and the World Bank. Some content analysis is used, but with caution and in context. This is because media ownership and ideas are covariant in many examples. These are assessed within each case and any notable conflicts of interest are noted and contextualised.

Each case has variations with the data available. Australia has a long history of strong public opinion polling, and therefore few obstacles exist when interpreting the

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262 Norrin M. Ripsman, “Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Interest Groups,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven Lobell, Norrin Ripsman, and Jeffrey Taliaferro (Cambridge University Press, 2009).


264 Steven E. Lobell, Norrin. M Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

265 Though harder, a body of growing literature does try to perform this task. See Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.”
public mood on a wide number of issues. Mexico also has a thorough databank of public opinion polls via resources such as the Latin American databank provided by the Roper Centre.\textsuperscript{266} Turkish data is less reliable in this sense, but its general political movement towards Europe has been accompanied by the need for transparency, resulting in widely available surveys from reputable agencies.

More considerations that are practical include language translation. However, in the current research environment this is not a substantial issue. Most of the applicable data is translated by default, while both Mexico and Turkey have high quality and reputable journals and news outlets that publish in English, such as \textit{Insight Turkey}, \textit{Turkish Review}, \textit{Journal of Turkish Weekly}, \textit{Hürriyet} (‘Liberty’) and, until 2016, \textit{Today’s Zaman}. Furthermore, approximately forty daily newspapers are available online in Turkish, which are accessible in English via online translations. Many top European political journals also cover Turkish issues. Mexico is covered by reputable area studies journals including the \textit{Journal of Latin American Studies}, \textit{Latin American Politics and Society}, \textit{Latin American Research Review}, while its proximity to the US results in coverage from US sources. Apart from this \textit{The News} publishes in English and again online translation services coupled with a workable understanding of Spanish by the author means that access to data is not a substantial obstacle.

\textit{Chapter Structure}

Using this collection of tools, I survey notable events across the cases, both domestically and internationally to probe for examples that: (a) demonstrate a noticeable disconnect between domestic sentiment and foreign policy outputs; (b) threaten security by introducing damaging rhetoric into the public sphere, and; (c) trace the decline of domestic forces that threaten to poorly amplify security threats.

This involves a chapter structure that begins with an overview of the historical and material considerations of the case. Each chapter provides an overview of the general security environment; relative security and security competitors; the security and foreign policy responses to external security dynamics; and an overview of the domestic environment and elites with the case. I follow this with the application of

the framework in the following order: deflection, dilution and inflation. Each chapter ends with an analysis of the broader implications and outcomes after applying the typology.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has surveyed the literature and established a framework that can answer the research question. It has also addressed several secondary questions. First, it has explored how external pressures can drive the security stances of middle powers. Second, it established an empirical framework that can manage and place myriad domestic factors without fetishizing variables. Third, as a theory based framework, it has shown how this thesis will contribute to neoclassical framework in pivotal middle power setting. Finally, I have presented a chapter structure which has the goal of understanding the security dynamics at play at the international level, and how these interface with the domestic rhetoric of elites. With the framework established, the cases commence in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3: AUSTRALIA

This chapter applies the neoclassical realist framework of deflection, dilution and inflation outlined in Chapter Two to the case of Australia. I begin with an overview of Australia’s security environment. This initial section outlines the external pressures that Australia has faced and shows how they have responded as expected under a material reading. It does so by demonstrating how Australia has adapted its security and foreign policy posture in line with three major changes to the international political environment. These are: (1) the period following the Second World War, when Australia’s key alliance switched from the UK to the US; (2) the Cold War period; and (3), the post-Cold War period, where Australia has viewed political and economic integration into the Indo-Pacific as a core part of the national interest into the twenty-first century. The last set of strategic changes coincides with the rise of China as a great power, and an intensification of security dilemmas, focused on North Asia. This helps contextualise the wider pressures shaping Australia’s security environment, and demonstrates how systemic pressures in large part guide Australia’s foreign and security policy.

The central part of the chapter places issues that cross the domestic-international nexus including China, Indonesia, resources and terrorism within the typology of deflection, dilution and inflation outlined in Chapter Two. This allows us to make connections between the systemic pressures identified above and shows why elites must reorder debates that threaten to harm the national interest.

The first type, deflection, uses evidence from Australia’s relationships with the US, China, India and Indonesia to show how these critical security discourses are handled in a sensitive way by elites and key political actors. Next, I apply dilution to several examples, including the fringes of the political left and right in Australian politics. More specifically, I assess certain minor and fringe parties and domestic political actors who have sought to act as political entrepreneurs, and therefore have the potential to hijack debates in ways problematic for security policy. Dilution demonstrates how such actors and their problematic discourses have been pulled into

the centre, frequently by taking on parts of core messages and reframing them around less problematic debates.

The final type, inflation, is applied to issues including immigration and terrorism. These dominate Australia’s domestic debates, despite a lack of evidence that they present a significant existential threat to national security. This focus demonstrates that elites prefer the public to focus on benign security threats. By concentrating on these less important issues that present few security risks, they obfuscate other higher order threats that do have substantial security implications, such as the emergence of China as a central actor in the Indo-Pacific and the state of the US-Australian alliance.

An analytical section is the third main part of the chapter. This argues that the typological approach, based on a neoclassical realist framework, is well equipped to explain the difference between Australia’s security and foreign policy practice and its domestic debates, and that it can provide rich descriptions of how a state in a pivotal middle power setting acts.

**Historical and Material Context**

**Security Overview**

While Australia is a relatively powerful country in pure material terms, having the world’s twelfth largest nominal global GDP in 2014, three larger states—the US, the PRC and Japan—all have a stronger regional security presence. This produces a complex security environment in which major power competition has been a continuing feature of East Asian geopolitics. Despite this, broad regional stability has held since 1945, and Australia has no immediate military challengers. This is largely due to the continued presence of the United States, with whom Australia is a key strategic ally, and its commitment to the region.

To understand Australia’s security posture, it is useful to explore three reconfigurations of Australia’s foreign and security policy whereby Canberra has responded to external security pressures. The first is the period following the Pacific

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269 For the purposes of the analysis here, the ‘region’ is the Indo-Pacific. Broadly speaking, this encompasses four large powers: India, China, Japan and the US. The most thorough overview of the Indo-Pacific as the best way to encapsulate the region is found in Rory Medcalf, “The Indo-Pacific: What’s in a Name?,” *The American Interest*, October 11, 2013, accessed August 14, 2016, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/10/10/the-indo-pacific-whats-in-a-name/.

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war (1941-1945), when attacks on Australia dramatically highlighted the United Kingdom’s (UK) inability and unwillingness to act as Australia’s external security guarantor.\textsuperscript{270} The second period revolved around the emergence of regional Cold War politics that enmeshed the US—and by proxy Australia—in Indo-Pacific security.\textsuperscript{271} The subsequent rivalry between the US and the USSR dominated Australian security and foreign policy for the next forty years. Australia responded with support for the US alliance in several ways, including participation in the Korean and Vietnamese Wars. Most recently, following the demise of the Soviet Union, the rise of the PRC has dominated Australia’s security concerns, which have been visible in documents such as the 2009 Defence White Paper that identified China’s rise as a key threat to the national interest.\textsuperscript{272} Ultimately, each period represented a distinct set of external pressures that forced Australia to adapt its security stance and each has been a focus of literature on Australian foreign and policy.\textsuperscript{273}

What is notable is that despite considerable security challenges, each period has elicited what can be termed ‘appropriate’ security responses from Australian elites. ‘Appropriate’ means that Australia has responded as would be expected under a realist reading of international politics. An ‘appropriate’ response at the domestic level is therefore when foreign and security elites have successfully undertaken substantial changes in security posture with little push-back or protest from the domestic population. For example, John Curtin’s speech of 27 December 1941 stated that ‘Australia look[ed] to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom’\textsuperscript{274} can be interpreted as an appropriate response to the security environment given regional security was increasingly scarce following the UK’s retrenchment from the region. In contrast, Australian foreign and security

\textsuperscript{270} See Chapters 1-5 of Alan Watt, \textit{The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938-1965} (CUP Archive, 1967).
policy functioned smoothly and consistently when the UK was one of the key global security actors. During this period the UK was largely responsible for the foreign policy of Australia. However, events in the Pacific, including the fall of Singapore, Churchill’s indifference to requests to deploy Australian reinforcements closer to the Antipodes, the sinking of the ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, and attacks on Darwin in 1942 shifted Australia towards independence in foreign policy.\(^{275}\)

The process of Australia’s foreign and security policy adaptation to external security pressures was also visible in the post-World War II environment, which was dominated by Australia’s participation in the US regional security architecture and a clear position on Cold War politics. In essence, the newly formed US alliance became the ‘insurance policy’ for Australian security following UK retrenchment.\(^{276}\)

A striking feature of this period was general bipartisanship, where domestically contentious issues (such as participation in the Vietnam War) were supported across a number of successive, yet different Parliaments and Prime Ministers. These included Menzies (the Liberal Party), Harold Holt (Liberal), John McEwen (Country) and John Gorton (Liberal). This foreign and security policy continuity flowed into a range of security arenas. For example, Australia has provided military and intelligence infrastructure for US bases in Exmouth since 1963\(^{277}\) and Pine-Gap since 1966.\(^{278}\)

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of the PRC as a regional power represented a third period in Australian foreign policy and strategic thinking.\(^{279}\)

During this time, Australia continued to value pragmatic security decision-making, demonstrated by its close alignment with US strategy as East Asia grew in relative power. A key way that Australia renewed its commitment to the US alliance occurred after the 9/11 attacks and subsequent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq,

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\(^{279}\) See White, “Power Shift.”
where John Howard formally invoked the ANZUS treaty.²⁸⁰ So, despite a public and popular focus on institutional engagement on Asia and an emphasis on cultural and soft diplomacy, the case can be made that in security terms US and Australian forces, objectives and interests are closer than ever, and remain the backbone of Australian strategic policy.

**Relative Power and Security Competitors**

The pressures exerted on Australia by North Asia have continued, creating a challenging environment for Australian security planners despite the US military presence. For instance, while Australia’s military budget has doubled since 1995, the PRC’s military budget has increased more than tenfold. In direct dollar terms this equates to Australian military spending growing from USD$13.1 billion in 1989 to USD$27.8 billion in 2015, while Chinese spending expanded from USD$16.6 billion to USD$214 billion.²⁸¹

The PRC is not the only potential challenger for regional hegemony. Elsewhere, India more than doubled its military budget (in constant USD) from twenty billion in 1995, to fifty-one billion in 2015.²⁸² States such as Thailand and Indonesia, with considerable populations and territory are also expected to grow economically and military into the future, further eroding Australia’s relative position.

Optimists may argue that Australia’s strong economy mitigates many of these security concerns. For example, Australia’s economic outlook is excellent, having avoiding a severe downturn during the global financial crisis of 2008. In contrast, the neighbouring economies of the PRC, India, Thailand and Indonesia all experienced recessions, while there are lingering questions about whether the PRC’s growth is sustainable, as demonstrated by high levels of economic volatility during 2015.²⁸³

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²⁸² Ibid.

Nevertheless, even positive assessments of Australia’s economy still result in a declining relative capacity. The PRC’s economic growth highlights this trend. The PRC’s economy was twice the size of Australia’s in 1995. Now it is six and a half times larger. India, too, has experienced substantial growth, surpassing the PRC as the world’s fastest growing large economy in the first quarter of 2015. The likely outcome under most estimates is that Australia will experience a decreasing share of relative wealth and military power over the next century, which creates a regional security dynamic less favourable to Australia over the long-term.

These factors all affect Australia’s security outlook and feed into a secondary set of long-term questions. One central concern is that the US may retrench from the region. The drivers here include increasing Chinese power and the maintenance of a security architecture in the Pacific that is increasingly high-priced and often prioritised over US domestic arenas. It is unlikely the US will go as far as Barry Posen’s scenario where the US might end its ‘unnecessary, ineffective, and expensive hegemonic quest with a more restrained grand strategy’. Instead it is more likely that it will, as Posen later suggests, ‘recast its alliances so that other countries shared actual responsibility for their own defence’.

A supplementary concern about US decline is Australia’s place within any new regional security order. Even in the absence of dramatic US retrenchment, there are signals, from both the US and Japan, that the current security framework requires retooling. On the Japanese side, this is visible in debates on military normalisation. These discussions naturally draw in Australia, given full Japanese military normalisation is likely to lead to frictions between Tokyo and Beijing. As it stands, Canberra continues to engage closely with Japan in both economic and

284 The World Bank, “GDP (Current US$).”
288 Ibid.
military affairs. For example, in July 2014, Japan-Australian relations improved considerably with the completion of a free trade agreement and a memorandum to share defence technology. The defence deal initially paved the way for cooperation on the sharing of submarine technology. This was originally of interest to Australia, due the replacement of the ageing Collins class fleet, although the tender was eventually awarded to the French company DCNS in April 2016.

Any readjustment of the US-Japanese relationship could also affect neighbouring states, such as North and South Korea. This again challenges Australia’s interests. In this instance, the Republic of Korea (ROK) is Australia’s fourth biggest trading partner, with over AUD$30 billion trade during 2012-2013. At the same time, tensions on the Korean Peninsula have consistently threatened regional stability and any prospect of war naturally draws in the PRC and the US, which favour the North and the ROK respectively.

Competition in North Asia complements strategic posturing by the PRC in South East Asia and the Pacific, where they will soon be the second largest individual donor to the Pacific islands behind Australia. However, sub-regionally, most aid to the Pacific now comes from the PRC in the form of concessional and interest-free ‘soft loans’, often tied to restrictive conditions. For example, recipients of Chinese aid must recognise the PRC over Taiwan, and the loans are conditional on the use of Chinese contractors and materials. The first condition concerning Taiwan automatically politicises the relationships between the PRC and its Pacific aid recipients. This in turn creates an environment where Taiwan uses the region to


Chinese engagement is also causing concerns for Australia in Fiji. Indeed, Fijian-Australian relations have been problematic since the 2006 coup that removed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. His replacement, Frank Bainimarama, was a vocal critic of
Australia, accusing Alexander Downer in 2006 of ‘inciting Fijians to violence’ during the coup. Bainimarama made these claims despite John Howard rejecting a request from Qarase to intervene during the coup process. Overall, Fiji’s military government was believed to prefer the PRC to be more active in the region as it will be less concerned with governance issues, preferring stability and increasing trade relationships. Subsequently, relations remain strained, and Fiji has lobbied for the removal of Australia from the Pacific Islands Forum, further problematizing Australian security.

Timor Leste is a focus of the PRC too. This was visible when Dili purchased naval boats from the PRC that were manned by Chinese sailors. It has also involved the PRC on issues concerning oil and gas reserves, in an effort to diversify the Australia-dependent relationship brought about by the contentious Timor Gap treaty. Domestically, Timorese elites have used the treaty as a way to justify Chinese cooperation, with Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão proclaiming that the ‘Timorese must unite to stop Australia stealing their wealth as it did in 1989’.

When viewed together, this group of smaller states combines to complicate Australian security by forming a so-called ‘arc of instability’. This, in turn, invites renewed great power competition that complicates Australia’s interests. For instance, the US has generally deferred to Australia over Pacific aid since the 1990s, but it has re-entered the Pacific in order to counter the PRC’s bullish aid attitude. The PRC, for its part, is countering this US pivot by weakening established mechanisms such

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309 Ibid.
310 Ibid.
as the Pacific Island Forum in favour of its own groupings such as the ‘Melanesian Spearhead Group’.  

These examples help demonstrate how China—and to a lesser extent Indonesia and India—are increasingly active in the region, and therefore more central than ever to Australia’s security outlook. All have grown in material terms, and China’s rise in particular is threatening to shift the stances of some of Australia’s core security partners: most notably, the US and Japan. This is also problematic for Australian elites, as China has shown a willingness to exploit avenues such as soft power, aid and development support for strategic purposes. Consequently any Australian criticism in these areas can be framed through a variety of antagonistic lenses to Chinese domestic audiences, including neo-colonialism and US subservience. For example, even a minor issue, such as when Australian swimmer Mack Horton publicly called fellow Chinese competitor Sun Yang a drug cheat at the Rio Olympics, can quickly become a powerful political tool. In this instance, the Chinese media outlet, Global Times, stated that Horton’s attitude was typical of Australia’s need ‘to be completely accepted by the Western world’ and that ‘in front of Asian countries, it cannot help but effuse its white supremacy’. As a result, Horton received over half a million ‘hate’ messages on social media site Instagram after Chinese state media, including Xinhua, publicised the issue. The lesson from this incident is that Australian elites must be highly attuned to the consequences of problematic rhetoric as these public incidents can be exploited for strategic gains.

Security and Foreign Policy Responses

These shifts create an environment where Australia’s core interests—preventing an attack on the mainland, ensuring regional and international stability, and fostering a strong international economy—are increasingly threatened when viewed over the long-term and in the context of wider international developments. But, importantly, Australia has responded as would be expected under a traditional realist

313 Brady, “China Matters in the South Pacific.”
reading to most these new challenges. The Australian-US security relationship is strong, and Australia is increasingly embedded within the post-Cold War US military structure. Military relations are arguably more enmeshed than ever on issues such as intelligence, where the Five Eyes Agreement (FEA), comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States has become a critical security tool in the information age. Australia has also committed to the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter project with the Australian variant able to land on US carriers, while also enabling high-level interoperability with US command and control networks.\(^{318}\)

Additional responses include the acquisition of Boeing-P8A Poseidon aircraft that rely on shared intelligence networks. The Australian government has committed to the purchase of eight of the aircraft at a cost of AUDS4 billion.\(^{319}\) Similarly, the government is acquiring MQ-4C Triton drones, designed to work in parallel with the P8A. The combination of the P8 and MQ-4C provides high-level interoperability with the US Navy on maritime surveillance.\(^{320}\) Further interoperability and modernization in line with US forces comes from the use of the Aegis combat system on three new Hobart class destroyers, the first of which is due for completion in 2017.\(^{321}\) These complement two new Canberra Class ships with helicopter decks, which fulfil an amphibious assault role, but also extend Australia’s ability to deliver humanitarian assistance in the region.\(^{322}\) The decks also allow for the short take-off/vertical landing (STOVL) variant of the F-35 in the future, permitting US carriers and Australia’s Canberra class ships to act in concert.\(^{323}\)

In terms of broad policy responses, the 2009 Defence White Paper outlined the reasons for force modernisation and cast them as a response to changing balance of power in the region. The 2013 Defence White Paper also supported this trend and identified Sino-US tensions as the most important factor in Australia’s future


strategy. Moreover, while defence spending decreased to a low point of 1.59 percent of GDP in 2013-2014, spending is again on the rise after the 2016 Defence White Paper allocated another AUD$30 billion to the defence budget over the coming decade. In fact, overall, spending has been consistent since 1948 at 2.7 percent real growth, with small periods of increased spending to compensate for military actions in Korean, Vietnam and Iraq.

Institutional enmeshment in the Indo-Pacific complements hard defence capabilities. Australia is active in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), and the East Asia Summit (EAS), all of which are derived from the US order. On the other hand, the institutional sphere allows Australia to hedge against US dependence with few risks, and it does so primarily via economic engagement. This includes membership of the newly formed Asian Investment Bank (AIIB) and the ongoing China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (CHAFTA), which entered force in December 2015. These complement other bilateral frameworks such as the Australia-China Council and human rights dialogue. These allow engagements and cooperation on highly visible areas that might lie under the scope of ‘smart’ power, such as student exchanges and broad notions of Asian cultural literacy. These have bidirectional logic too: they pacify the PRC’s threat perception of Australia and its relationship with the US, while also calming Australian citizens’ domestic concerns about the PRC. More recently, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has become a focus after President Donald Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on the 23rd of January, 2017, shortly after he took office.

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At the economic level, Australia has a comprehensive investment regime that integrates tightly with the security infrastructure. Of these, the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) is most visible. For example, the 2007 takeover proposal by China’s Minmetals for OZ Minerals was rejected on security grounds due to its proximity to the Woomera Prohibited area.\textsuperscript{330} Similarly, a 2011 application by China Nonferrous Metal Mining for a majority stake in Lynas, a major extractor of rare earths—a resource The Economist termed the ‘oil of the twenty-first century’\textsuperscript{331} and essential in the manufacture of technology such as mobile phones—was withdrawn when it became clear it would not meet regulatory requirements.\textsuperscript{332} Canberra has also prevented PRC companies from accessing major infrastructure projects. For instance, the Chinese firm Huawei was blocked from tendering during the construction of the National Broadband Network (NBN) due to security concerns.\textsuperscript{333} At the same time, debates have emerged about the efficacy of the investment regime’s ability to understand the wider security environment after a AUD$506 million May 2016 deal by Chinese company Landbridge to control the Port of Darwin was widely criticised, given it could allow the company (which is closely linked to the PRC) to collect intelligence about ADF and US Marine forces who operate in the area.\textsuperscript{334}

These responses reinforce the important claim at the centre of this thesis: Australian foreign policy and security planners face a number of challenges, but the evidence suggests they are responding to the regional environment largely as expected when using a reading grounded in material factors. Australia has consolidated the US alliance in terms of procurement, defence materiel and access to bases, in response to increasing security scarcity. Further responses include military support for actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and the war on terror, in order to demonstrate its commitment to the US regional order and alliance. At the same time, Australia engages the PRC

\textsuperscript{330} John Larum, \textit{Chinese Perspectives on Investing in Australia} (Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011).


economically and institutionally, while also maintaining a rigid framework to balance foreign direct investment (FDI) concerns with national security in a way that is expected under a structural reading.

**Domestic Environment and Elites**

Paradoxes begin to emerge when we move to the domestic level and explore how debates there intersect with pragmatic decision-making on diplomacy and defence. Very quickly it becomes apparent that the uncertain security environment is at odds with many domestic conditions and attitudes. Unlike many other neighbouring Asian states, these attitudes are shaped by high developmental metrics. Australia ranks tenth in GDP (PPP), ahead of substantial powers such as Japan, Germany, France and the UK.\(^{335}\) It is also second on the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings, sitting only behind Norway.\(^{336}\) Its quality of health is fourth in the world, above the US. Australia is also one the ‘happier’ countries in the world (ranking tenth, above all great powers).\(^{337}\) Furthermore, Australia has enjoyed a twenty-five-year period of uninterrupted economic growth.\(^{338}\) Consequently, Australian attitudes can be described as post-materialistic, with few concerns about the scarcity of goods, leading to a domestic political environment increasingly focussed on values and identity.\(^{339}\)

These metrics inform and shape Australia’s political system, which is the most plural and open of the three cases assessed in this thesis. For example, the 2016 Freedom House Index rates Australia first on all their available indicators.\(^{340}\) The 2012 Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Australia at number six globally: it scored a perfect ten in electoral processes and pluralism, and it was the highest-ranked G20 member.\(^{341}\) Compulsory voting and a rigid political system underpin these

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The government consists of a bicameral legislature, with the High Court having judicial review over Federal and State laws, in addition to constitutional interpretation. The state is a constitutional monarchy, although in practice the monarchy’s power is largely symbolic. The only domestic event of note to cause any political consternation was the Whitlam ‘dismissal’ of 1975 where the Governor-General dismissed the Prime Minister in controversial circumstances. Despite this, there have been few revolutionary events in Australian political history, and the domestic political environment is highly stable.

Politically, the government is organised as a federation, with state and national governments given sovereign authority over specified areas of policy. All security and foreign policy decisions are taken at the federal level. Only once (if terrorism related issues are set aside) has a national security issue crossed into domestic politics during 1983, when Gareth Evans sent F-111Cs for surveillance on the Tasmanian Gordon Dam project. This was undertaken because of fears that construction of the dam inside the World Heritage Area was breaking Australia’s obligations under the Convention concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Federal level domestic politics revolves around a two-party system, with occasional third players entering the fray. The two key entities are the Australian Labor Party and the Liberal/National Coalition. The Liberal and National parties have formed a permanent coalition since 1923, and represent the centre-right. The Labor party has its basis in the social movements of the early 20th century. The Greens emerged as a third minor force in Australian politics at the turn of the millennium. While holding little power in the House, the nature of the Senate has meant the Greens have held the balance of power on a number of occasions, and have therefore enjoyed considerable weight in negotiations concerning the passage of bills.

Security matters themselves are handled by a wide variety of organisations. The core organisations for security matters are the Department of Foreign Affairs...
(DFAT), the Department of Defence (DOD), the Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) and the Office of National Assessments (ONA), which coordinate the assessment of threats gained from intelligence, assess risk, and provide coordination of responses. ONA assessments are for the use of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and are deliberately detached from DFAT and DOD in order to allow independent advice. Together, these three organisations serve Australia’s nation security interests and receive broad bipartisan support. This means they have been relatively impervious to domestic politicking. In addition, although DFAT has been subject to substantial budget trimming, with AUD$7.9bn of cuts forecast for the five years following 2014, this has been partly offset by increases in intelligence spending and the expansion of agencies such as ASIO, ASIS and the AFP.

Taken together, this domestic political structure can present problems for foreign and security policy makers. While Australia’s transparency is enviable when viewed through a liberal democratic lens, it is arguably less beneficial under the neoclassical realist position and when viewed strictly in security terms. This is because high levels of pluralism make Australian debates porous and open to a wide range of messengers and potential political provocateurs. This contrasts with other security competitors in the region, including China, and to a lesser extent Indonesia, where debates can be controlled more easily by elites, enabling decisive actions to counter security threats. The corollary is that Australian elites need to be subtle and careful when invoking certain discourses, because they are difficult to control once they are released into wider political narratives.

Applying the Framework

The first section of this chapter has established the security threats to Australia and how the balance between China and the US is a major force behind the direction of Australia’s foreign and security policy. It has also outlined the porous nature of Australia’s political system and how this can present problems when addressing

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security issues. At this point, I move away from a materially based assessment, and instead probe how elites respond to issues that may intervene with foreign policy decision-making that has the goal of maintaining Australian security.

Deflection
As detailed in the previous chapter, deflection occurs when problematic foreign policy debates are removed from the political agenda because short-term reactions to these issues can affect long-term security outcomes. The most prominent way this occurs in the Australian case is via bipartisanism on critical security issues. This has created a political environment where, in general, and as Derek McDougall points out, there is scant parliamentary debate on issues of Australia foreign policy.

The deflection of foreign policy debates has a long history in Australia and is visible in responses on defence policy, where, as Daniel Flitton claims, bipartisan agreement is the norm. Further back, in 1988, Trevor Matthews and John Ravenhill provided strong evidence to suggest that Australian elites exhibited strong bipartisanism on policy towards the PRC, Japan and the US. More recently, Matt McDonald’s review of Australian foreign policy from 1962 to 2012 found numerous examples of bipartisanism, including contentious and arguably easily exploitable issues for political gain, including the Indonesian annexation of East Timor. What this suggests is that the foreign policy competitions that do occur between the major parties in domestic debates on are often on ‘softer’ or less ‘traditional’ topics, such as immigration or terrorism.

A more recent and specific example of how certain debates are removed from domestic political competitions was Julia Gillard’s 2011 announcement that US Marines would be stationed in Darwin. The implications of a permanent US military presence in Australia were considerable, with experienced commentators such as Hugh White arguing that this was ‘potentially [a] very risky move for Australia’ given China’s sensitivity concerning attempts to contain its military presence in the

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Indeed, as the analysis of potential antagonisms earlier suggested, Chinese threat perceptions of Australia are a critical element of Australian security. Hence we witnessed a bipartisanship response in support of the placement of US marines on Australian territory, which has kept it from deeply penetrating the domestic agenda. In fact, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s only complaint about the US presence was that two and a half thousand troops were not enough, and that the Coalition ‘would be happy to see the establishment of another joint facility so that these arrangements could become more permanent’. Chinese officials did express concern over the plan, with the state news outlet The People’s Daily warning that ‘if Australia uses its military bases to help the US harm Chinese interests, then Australia itself will be caught in the crossfire’. But, overall, muted domestic debate from within Australia helped prevent the PRC from promoting or highlighting any particular damaging discussions.

Later, in mid-2016, China again demonstrated its sensitivity concerning military issues, this time in the South China Sea, which is strongly linked to both nationalist and hard security concerns for Beijing. After an arbitration ruling against China by the International Court of Justice, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop warned the PRC of harm to its international reputation, and was rebuked by various Chinese sources, with a Chinese foreign minister spokesperson stating he was ‘shocked’ by Bishop’s comments. Bishop moderated her language later that month, clarifying that ‘we don’t take sides in the various claims’, but an opinion editorial in the government-owned Global Times followed soon after which called Australia a ‘paper cat’. It claimed Australia had ‘unexpectedly made itself a pioneer of hurting China’s interest.

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with a fiercer attitude than countries directly involved in the South China Sea dispute.  

Fear of this type of Chinese response contributes to a political climate where matters concerning general defence policy, such as strategy and materiel procurement, that can antagonise security competitors, are generally restrained. For example, while the purchase of multirole F-35s for the RAAF has been flagged by some media commentators, both parties have downplayed this in the political rhetoric given this is a core security and defence issue. This is despite attempts to politicise the matter by the media, including criticism from defence experts with engineering and flight backgrounds. Peter Goon, a former RAAF flight-test engineer, has been one such prominent critic, claiming the F-35 design is ‘riddled with single points of failure’.  

Similarly, journalist Jamie Seidel has publicised the F-35’s shortcomings, and especially its inferiority in simulated combat with the in-service SU-35.  

While these deficiencies are potentially concerning, there have been few moves to politicise the issue by the established parties, even though electoral currency has been available. For instance, while the 2014 budget was widely criticised for its cuts to areas such as social services, education and health, the Opposition Leader Bill Shorten refused to criticise the government’s commitment to the F-35 procurement, stating instead that:

‘Labor does think that the addition to our air force is the right way to go. These are a very long-term purchase. The acquisitions are over a very long period of time. So these defence purchases are necessary for our forward-security plans over a number of decades’.  

This helps create a domestic environment where issues that might normally be highly contentious, such as the US presence in Darwin, have warm acceptance. Indeed, 55 percent of Australians were in favour of the US base according to a 2011

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Lowy poll. This issue also subsequently failed to rate at either the 2013 or 2016 elections.

Similar logic appears within critical overseas appointments with security implications. In 2014, then Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott extended Labor party stalwart Kim Beazley’s term as US ambassador—the most senior foreign policy posting within the Department of Foreign Affairs—after coming into power. Yet, ten years before that Beazley and Abbott had frequently clashed as Opposition Leader and Health Minister respectively, with Beazley then claiming that Abbott treated ‘the Australian people with contempt’ and that Abbott’s decision making (in regards to health policy) was a ‘class A, rolled-gold, world’s-best-practice piece of deceit’. In this example, there is evidence the adversarial approach used within ‘softer’ domestic issues disappears when actors engage within a foreign policy structure. Indeed, Abbott’s attitude to the posting was in stark contrast to other domestic contests involving high-level bureaucrats. For example, the arena of ‘values’ driven diplomacy has been contested as it presents few immediate existential threats to Australia. This was visible when Tony Abbott attacked Gillian Triggs as head of the Australian Human Rights Commission, publicly questioning her ‘extremely questionable judgment’ and ‘bizarre rulings’.

Japanese-Australian relations also exhibit clear signs of deflection, despite highly publicised contests on the subject of whaling. The most obvious example is that the rhetoric on whaling has rarely intervened in higher-level diplomatic negotiations, despite its prominence in Australian domestic discourse. For example, the issue had no impact on the signing of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEP), which was signed on July 8th, 2014, and allowed free trade on 97 percent of goods between the two states. This bilateral agreement raised the threshold of ‘non-sensitive sector’ investment from AUD$248 million to AUD$1,078 million. This was undertaken with broad bipartisan support, although Labor’s Penny Wong

argued that it ‘it fell well short of what Australia “should have had”’. More importantly, the Japanese and Australian leaders signed a defence research agreement to allow joint development of military technology.

Consequently, inflated issues, such as whaling, can be interpreted as largely immaterial within the higher order security agenda and largely a function and tool to appease domestic audiences. This acts to deflect the focus away from diplomatic engagement on matters such as FTAs, which help reinforce the existing security order in the region (which is central to the interests of both Japan, Australia and the US). From this position the use of whaling as political topic is bidirectional. For Japan whaling is one of the few assertive ways Tokyo can engage internationally without falling afoul of its restrictive constitution, giving its citizens a (relatively) benign issue to focus on. This is not to discount genuine concerns about Japanese whaling practices, but under the reading here, foreign and security policy elites are likely to prefer political conflicts about oceanic mammals rather than more critical security matters.

But while Japan and Australia share an important strategic partnership, it is ultimately the role of the PRC that is central to Australia’s security concerns. Here Australian deflection of issues about China is informative. It is no surprise that the China threat thesis lies at the heart of Australia’s strategic outlook. The 2009 Defence White Paper opaquely identified the PRC as the key future threat to Australia, while in 2009, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, stated (to a Retired Serviceman’s League [RSL] conference) that ‘the pace, scope and structure of the PRC’s military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern if not carefully explained’.

In a similar manner, the PRC was the focus of the 2012 Australian Defence Posture Review, which noted that most of Australia’s weaknesses are relative to its ability to ‘support current and future abilities […] in Australia’s North and West’ and that it must be able to sustain operations into ‘the wider Asia-Pacific region’. This attitude complements the broader US ‘pivot’ to Asia to contain the rise of China,

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where Barack Obama had pledged to deploy 60 percent of its Navy by 2020 in the Pacific, including six aircraft carrier strike groups, while President Trump has pledged to dramatically expand the US Navy’s ship numbers from 272 to 350. In this context, Australia’s participation is vital, given it possesses a number of emerging alliance competitors for the US military umbrella, most notably India.

The most recent 2016 Defence White Paper has followed this trend by identifying the U.S.-China relationship, military modernization, and rivalry in the Indo-Pacific as central challenges to security. This allows a situation where Australia—despite its domestic narrative about ‘good international citizenship’—is an increasingly a major military player in the Indo-Pacific, and is now the world’s sixth-largest arms importer. Consequently, Australia’s security policy has increasingly focused on integration with US force capabilities in order to counter PRC expansion and maximise its relevance to the US over the long-term.

What makes these strategic positions especially curious, and supports the thesis here, is that issues concerning the PRC are routinely deflected away from public debates. This results in their position within the concerns of foreign and security policy elites rarely correlating with their position in the domestic agenda. In fact, despite the rapid rise of the PRC’s material capabilities, Sinophobia or concerns about China’s rise are largely absent in domestic debates when compared to attitudes towards those of Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian origin. For example, the 2014 Lowy Institute Poll found that 31 percent of Australians viewed the PRC as Australia’s ‘best friend’ in the region.

In contrast, Lowy’s ‘thermometer’ poll—that measures ‘feelings’ for other countries, with zero degrees meaning ‘cold’ and one hundred degrees ‘hot’—showed that in 2014 Australians were generally unfavourable to the key suppliers of asylum seekers, such as Iran (thirty-nine degrees) and Afghanistan (thirty-eight degrees), when compared to important strategic regional powers of

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Indonesia (fifty degrees), the PRC (sixty degrees), Japan (sixty-seven degrees) and the US (seventy-one degrees). Additionally, the ‘temperature’ for Iraq in 2011—the last time this was polled—was thirty-five degrees.

In the context of the PRC, the risk for Australian foreign and security policy elites is that domestic discourses may be used by Beijing to test its relative position. Australia is an attractive target for several reasons. It is weak in relative military terms and cannot directly challenge the PRC. Similarly, its role as a virtual US security proxy makes it an excellent test case for US reactions. This type of behaviour has precedents. In recent history, a great deal of the PRC’s assertive rhetoric has been directed towards Japan, especially in reference to the atrocities of the twentieth century. Notably, Junichiro Koizumi’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which houses the bodies of fourteen Class A war criminals, are frequently used by Beijing as a domestic rallying point. Similar debates emerged after Japan began using a set of new historical texts in schools, which downplayed the role of the Nanjing Massacre and promoted a view of the Japanese as liberators of colonial dependencies. These events, combined with Japan’s bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), culminated in a series of anti-Japanese riots in China and heightened tensions within the region.

Another concern for Australia is that anti-Western discourses within the PRC are arguably unfocussed, leaving Australia as a potential target. For example, Beijing has shown a willingness to harness the ‘unfair treaties’ rhetoric as a rallying point to justify its revisionist agenda. But so far, Beijing’s anti-Western discourses have rarely been backed with hard power. For instance, attempts to do so during the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1996 failed when the US deployed two carrier groups, highlighting the PRC’s poor naval capabilities and strengthening military ties between Japan and the US. Nonetheless, Beijing continues to harness emotive language about Japan-US engagement with an emphasis on abstract concepts, such as ‘hurt feelings’. While this political logic is rarely used in the West, the Chinese

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375 Ibid.
376 Hanson, The 2011 Lowy Institute Poll, 6.
government will often use the notion of feelings as a core component of national identity.\textsuperscript{380} For our purposes, this demonstrates the risk to Australia’s security, whereby the PRC may focus on softer targets, should domestic populations demand responses to security competitions. In other words, this logic helps explain why elites act to ways to deflect issues with security implications.

The broad deflection of issues to prevent Australia becoming a target of PRC rhetoric is described in a RAND report detailing the positions of US allies. According to the report, the ‘Labor party had seldom criticised [John] Howard’s approach to China, which in theory mirrored the China policy [...] of Paul Keating’\textsuperscript{381} The report further claimed that ‘few Australian policymakers or commentators promote a China-threat school of thought’. At the same time, it stresses that Australian decision makers ‘do have concerns about China’s growing economic and military power, but these concerns do not enter into partisan debates’\textsuperscript{382}

These processes of deflection are not new or exclusive to the current international political environment. Indeed, cruder examples existed before the multicultural discourses promoted by leaders such as Bob Hawke and Paul Keating became normalised. For example, before the 1970s, the PRC was viewed with trepidation, and crude Cold War paradigms dominated Australian debate. Prime Minister Robert Menzies, in particular, was vehemently anti-communist in public debates, repeatedly arguing that leftist insurgencies in Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam were Chinese aggression by proxy and part of a larger ideological threat to Australia.\textsuperscript{383} A similarly primitive notion of ‘forward defence’ was also promoted as the best way to fight the so-called ‘yellow peril’.\textsuperscript{384} The logic was that fighting offshore kept the battle away from Australia’s own immediate security environment.\textsuperscript{385}

At the same time, Menzies’ xenophobic rhetoric was accompanied by pragmatism and diplomatic progressiveness, such as when he and his foreign minister Richard


\textsuperscript{382} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{383} David Lowe, Menzies and the “Great World Struggle” (UNSW Press, 1999), 154.

\textsuperscript{384} Ronald Huisken, Meredith Christine Thatcher, and Australian National University. Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, History as Policy (ANU E Press, 2007), 64.

Casey opened legations in Chongqing and Tokyo in the 1940s, which helped Australia’s intelligence gathering and strategic statecraft efforts within the region. Later, and contrary to the populist Anglophile view of Menzies, he and his Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, engaged extensively in Asia through several institutions, including the newly-formed UN, the Colombo plan and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), while initiating a strategic trading relationship with Australia’s former enemy Japan. Menzies’ actions contributed to increasing strategic knowledge of the region, and his posture on Vietnam eventually revealed the tenuous nature of claims about Chinese expansionism.

These earlier pushes into the region set the foundation of Gough Whitlam’s engagement with the PRC in 1972. He formalised the One China policy, which forms the basis of bilateral relations that exist between the two countries today. While these moves are often framed as progressive in a domestic setting, an equal (if not better) explanation is that these actions were based on hard pragmatism. Even though Whitlam’s foreign policy emphasised shared ideas, institutions and understood the important role of cultural sensitivities, using the model advanced here, we can interpret Chinese engagement as strategic acceptance of the growth of the PRC and therefore its future role in the regional security order. In fact, the ideational backdrop to Chinese engagement can be framed as way to minimise Australia’s threat perception given its history of xenophobia and Sinophobia. Contrasting foreign policy positions support this argument. It is therefore not surprising that while Whitlam loudly protested French nuclear testing in the Pacific, he only quietly rebuked similar Chinese tests.

This trend has existed not only in diplomatic and defence matters, but also in economic affairs concerned with the PRC. One example was the proposed Rio Tinto and Chinalco deal in 2009, worth approximately USD$20 billion dollars, collapsed

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386 The Colombo plan was an early Indo-Pacific organisation, formed in 1950, and originally consisting of Commonwealth countries with a focus on Southern Asian states, such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
389 Maysing H. Yang, Taiwan’s Expanding Role in the International Arena (M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 56.
ten days before the FIRB could make a decision.392 Rio withdrew from the deal after heavy lobbying of the government by BHP, although leaked US government cables claimed the Chinalco proposal ‘made clear that [the US] considers the Rudd government’s reluctance to approve the deal [as] one of the major reasons for its collapse’.393 Soon after the failed deal, Rio Tinto executive Stern Hu was arrested in Shanghai, in what some perceived as ‘payback’ after the rejection of the Chinalco-Rio Tinto deal and the bullish 2009 Defence White Paper.394 From the Australian end, the domestic response was quiet, and discussions of Stern Hu’s detainment from political elites were commonly framed in terms of abstract human rights concerns. Kevin Rudd specifically used muted language, claiming that the PRC had ‘missed an opportunity to demonstrate to the world at large transparency that would be consistent with its emerging global role’.395 At the same time, there is no evidence to suggest that Tony Abbott, as opposition leader, made any statements at all about the affair.396

As a result, these substantial issues with security implications that link foreign direct investment (FDI) and the PRC’s strategic ambitions rarely resonate deeply outside financial and political circles. Hence, while Australians are concerned about Chinese investment (with 78 percent opposed to the PRC trying to buy a major stake in a controlling company)397, it has seldom become a central issue in domestic political debates. Indeed, those who are outspoken on investment issues are often admonished. For example, when then leader of the National Party in the Senate, Barnaby Joyce, criticised the FIRB in 2012, then Prime Minister Abbott rapidly deflected the issue because of the potential for politicization. He did so by stating

396 Based on a search of Google for the period 1 June 2009 to 1 September 2009, using the keywords ‘stern hu tony abbott’
that any criticism was constructive, and was ‘not [meant] to be critical of any of the current members of the FIRB’.

Indeed, the FIRB itself provides a notable example of deflection. The fact it still exists testifies to this despite John Howard’s 1988 initial ‘future direction’ policy seeking to abolish it. Yet, after his election in 1996, the FIRB was kept. In fact, the board became more assertive under the Howard government, with a 20 percent increase in rejected proposals during his first year in office. This supports a broader trend where, more generally, economic matters—most notably the liberalisation of the economy under Hawke, Keating and then Howard—were not subject to polarizing internal debates because they were viewed as critical to Australia’s longer-term security position.

Resources and FDI have provided a second core arena for security antagonisms to play out between Australia and its competitors in the region, and have often required deflection by foreign and security policy elites. Australia is rich in natural resources, with three main natural assets: minerals, natural gas and oil. Other strategic resources, including uranium and gold, complement them. As early as 1934, the head of BHP, Essington Lewis, travelled to Japan to lobby for increased iron ore trade using the reasoning that entwinement would ameliorate potential Japanese aggression towards Australia. This led to substantial disagreements between Lewis and the Minister for External Affairs, John G. Latham. The standoff was first resolved when BHP committed to using funds from Japanese iron ore sales to develop the Australian arms industry. Nonetheless it was only in 1938 that strategic reasoning triumphed, nearly a year after Japan had launched a full-scale war on Mainland China as part of its vision of a unified, and Japanese controlled East Asia. Eventually Australia banned iron ore exports to Japan in May 1938 because of

403 Ibid., 887.
the implications of Japanese expansionism. John Curtin finally justified the ban, stating that ‘iron ore may be used for the manufacture of munitions and for aggressive purposes by warlike countries […] but such action [to ban mining and export] carries with it also a definite danger to the peace of the world’. Though smaller in scale, this resembles similar concerns that arose throughout the 1980s when Japanese investment increased in Australia because of neoliberal reforms. The rapidly growing Japanese economy created incentives to invest in Australia, and FDI throughout 1985 to 1996 increased from USD$63 billion to USD$360 billion. The rapid investment growth created a number of domestic schisms whereby established parties struggled to reconcile populist sentiment with the practicalities and wide benefits of increasing FDI. One result was the emergence of populist micro parties, such as the Advance Australia Party. This party, which relied on protectionist rhetoric and thinly veiled nationalism, had a small but substantial impact, gaining 12.8 percent of the vote in a by-election for the Federal seat of Cunningham in 1993. Other populist organisations, such as ‘Heart of a Nation’ led by Bruce Whiteside, protested Japanese investment in the state of Queensland. These populist parties garnered support via increasingly antagonistic language from sources including the radio ‘shock jock’ Ron Casey and the prominent Victorian RSL President Bruce Ruxton, whose controversial views about immigration were widely publicised. The visibility of these actors in domestic debates led the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke to reassure Japanese Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru both personally and publicly that Japanese investment in Australia was still welcomed.

While antagonisms about resources remain minor, certain other issues are informative. The attempted 2009 Chinalco USD$19 billion investment deal with Rio Tinto is one such event. Here, a Chinese review of the failed bid stated that ‘BHP

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408 Narrelle Morris, Japan-Bashing: Anti-Japanism since the 1980s (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 1875.  
409 Ibid., 1874.
Billiton [which opposed the deal] took full advantage of its skilful mass media propaganda and its lobbying capacity to arouse public emotions and influence the judgements of government policy-makers’. It further claimed that BHP highlighted Chinalco’s political elements and widely advertised its state ownership in order to create domestic blowback. In this instance, companies such as BHP are detached from the national interest, and therefore harder to deflect issues away from, which can lead to problematic diplomacy (and by extension, security).

These same corporate considerations conflict with security aims and are challenging because the Australian resources sector is relatively undiversified, relying primarily on iron ore, coal and natural gas, which together totalled 40 percent of Australian exports in 2013-2014. Companies like BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Woodside Petroleum are also publicly owned, and have diversified shareholder bases. This allows individuals with concentrated wealth to exploit opportunist narratives in domestic debates, which can pitch national interests against those of individuals. For example, Fortescue Metals chairman Andrew ‘Twiggy’ Forest, whose personal wealth was estimated at USD$2.5 billion in 2016, has proposed a resource production gap in order to maximise the price of iron ore, and has called for Australia to support the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. On the resource front, he was a highly visible opponent of the Minerals Resource Rent Tax, which was successfully repealed in 2014, even though the tax was implemented with a number of national interest tests in mind.

A more overt example of resources fuelling security concerns was visible when Chinese consortium Shandong Ruyi purchased 80 percent of Cubbie Station, a key producer of cotton and an irrigation station possessing fifty-one water licenses in South-West Queensland. The purchase went through largely unchallenged despite many security considerations including food security concerns. The National Party leader Barnaby Joyce did raise the concern that ‘under this deal, a company with

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411 Ibid.
clear connections to another nation’s government will own Australia’s biggest farm by value, biggest water licence’. Still, in terms of political positions, Ticky Fullerton identified that the Cubbie Station deal revealed a strange divide. To her, in one corner was:

‘Most of “thinking Australia”, left and right: Dr Ken Henry, Bob Carr, Malcolm Turnbull, Saul Eslake, Peter Drysdale, most businessmen and most of the media. And in the other corner? Barnaby Joyce. Oh, and a few Nats and Greenies’. Joyce made similar claims in an opinion piece on the Cubbie deal, where he suggested that ‘people will try to impugn your character by dragging in a caustic inference towards you. In this one it is xenophobia’.

This reveals not only the difference in public and private debates, but the difference between economic and political debates, given the PRC’s use of resources as a political tool. This is attractive to investors, but worrying to security planners. Resources are an important political instrument because the PRC has grown at an average of 10 percent over the past three decades, and this has occurred despite Beijing possessing relatively few natural resources. The result has been strategic acquisitions targeting resources in Africa, Central Asia and Australia. For example, in June 2014, Baosteel, a Chinese state-owned company, acquired a 60 percent interest in ASX listed company Aquila Resources. Aquila has a 50 percent stake in the West Pilbara iron ore project, which will include the construction of a port near Karratha. Rapid consumption of iron ore is likely to continue for another fifteen years with other mineral companies such as Rio Tinto planning its operations.

417 Joyce, “Cubbie Station Now in Wayne’s World.”
in the context of a 2030 peak. In 2012, it had a predicted future annual production rate of one billion tons.\textsuperscript{421} In addition, while Russia and Brazil are alternative suppliers, a weakened Australian dollar, combined with political, economic, and societal stability, makes Australian procurement likely to be a preferred long-term source of minerals for Beijing.

While competitions for resources are visible in press coverage, they do not resonate in the immediate way that an issue such as the property market does. In fact a recent concern for Australia’s domestic audiences is Chinese investment in real estate, driven by Australia’s status as a safe haven for Chinese capital.\textsuperscript{422} Problematically, Australian homebuyers and families are beginning to perceive Chinese investment as pricing them out of property markets, especially in the major cities of Melbourne and Sydney, leading to anti-Chinese narratives. For instance, an opinion piece by Paul Sheehan in the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} claimed that ‘cashed up Chinese are pricing the young out of the property market’ and that this results in a situation that is ‘not culturally healthy’.\textsuperscript{423} This has been reinforced by the emergence of xenophobic rhetoric, linked to foreign real estate investment, where minor protests have been held to stop ‘invaders’ that were perceived to be ‘pricing locals out of the market’.\textsuperscript{424} Australian strategic analysts have also warned that these types of local issues could emerge as problems in the future, with Mark Beeson claiming they resonate with the PRC’s narrative about the ‘struggle for status’.

Consequently, topics with Sinophobic undertones can be dangerous to Australia’s wider perception in East Asia, and this is visible by the fact that even new stamp duty charges in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland were reported widely by Chinese newspapers as evidence of Australian racism.\textsuperscript{426} This has occurred despite

\textsuperscript{425} Mark Beeson and Fujian Li, “Charmed or Alarmed? Reading China’s Regional Relations,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary China} 21, no. 73 (January 2012): 42.
Chinese investment concerns being exaggerated. For example, a joint survey by KPMG and the University of Sydney on Chinese investment highlighted Australia’s favourable and welcoming environment for Asian investors. It also stressed that Chinese investors were attracted by a ‘mature and highly regulated developed economy’. It continued that from a domestic position, that ‘despite strong public interest, little detailed factual information has been previously available about the actual nature and distribution of the PRC’s outbound direct investment (ODI) in Australia’. Overall, it found a perception from Chinese investors about negative media portrayal of the PRC, and only 16 percent of those surveyed thought that the media was supportive of Chinese investors.

Away from the PRC, Indonesia presents the greatest immediate potential challenge to Australia’s interests. From a security position, there are concerns about its population (approximately 258 million versus 24 million for Australia), and its geographical position, which hems Australia in from the rest of Asia. These figures combine with substantial cultural differences. Indonesia is the largest predominantly Muslim state in the world, and harbours a few radical groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda who seek to exploit anti-Western sentiment.

Events such as the two terrorist bombings in Bali during the 2000s underscored these problems. This is because they created opportunities for xenophobic domestic entrepreneurs in both countries. For example, polling in 2012 by Fergus Hanson found that a third of Indonesians believed Australia ‘poses a threat to the security of Indonesia’ and 12 percent were in favour of encouraging ‘militant groups to attack Australia’. On the other hand, Australian sentiment was more measured. Those saying that it was ‘very likely’ Indonesia would attack Australia in the future dropped from a high of 31 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2013. At the same time,

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the number of people not viewing Indonesia as a security threat at all jumped from 27 percent in 2001 to 48 percent in 2013.

One would expect a more antagonistic view of Indonesia from Australians, but as Graeme Dobell has noted, the use of careful wording about close regional actors is instructive. Indeed, he claimed the term the ‘arc of instability’ was used by foreign policy elites as a ‘polite way to refer to Indonesia’, as it prevents strategic discourse concerning Indonesia entering populist domestic debates. Furthermore, messages aimed at domestic audiences have often been framed in bipartisan ways. After frictions between Canberra and Jakarta in during 2014 and 2015 both the Prime Minister and opposition leader both frequently used the term ‘Team Australia’ when discussing Indonesia. Opposition leader Bill Shorten claimed he was on ‘Team Australia’ regarding the revelation that Australia had bugged the phone of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and later announced that ‘no one side of Australian politics owned the Australia-Indonesia relationship’, suggesting a willingness to deflect the issues of the political agenda.

Earlier in the bilateral relationship, Indonesia demonstrated the extent of Australian elites’ discursive control. For example, Gough Whitlam is often perceived domestically as an ideationally driven leader. Yet in foreign affairs, and during the Indonesian takeover of East Timor in 1975, he made few criticisms of Jakarta’s actions. Later, leaked documents quoted Whitlam as telling President Suharto that ‘Portuguese Timor should be integrated into Indonesia, but this should not be done in a way to upset the Australian people’. His policy of disengagement from Timor was driven by the fear of a weak and unstable state on Australia’s borders inviting great power competition. Thus, although approximately 60,000 perished over the course of the occupation, a geopolitically grounded assessment suggests that

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432 Graeme Dobell, *The South Pacific: Policy Taboos, Popular Amnesia and Political Failure* (Menzies Research Centre, 2003), 244.
Whitlam was highly pragmatic when making decisions about security and foreign policy. This can be compared to his deputy, Jim Cairns, who appealed to domestic sentiment when he called US actions in Vietnam ‘the most brutal, indiscriminate slaughter of women and children in living memory’ only two years previously. The corollary is that Whitlam and his Cabinet’s closed-door decisions (which were classified at the time) were in stark contrast to his external posturing on other regional issues such as Vietnam. We can assume the motive classifying the actions was to prevent morally problematic decision making penetrating domestic political debates.

More recently, this type of political deflection was notable in the Australian political response to the execution of Myuran Sukuraman and Andrew Chan in 2015 for drug trafficking. An editorial in the Jakarta Post claimed that the ‘Australian media is engaged in a surreal form of hypocrisy’. In this instance, the response to Indonesia’s legal system has been in stark contrast to domestic voices criticising the PRC and its high number of executions. Similarly, the editorial pointed out that the Australian government were not opposed to the Indonesian legal system when it sought to execute the Bali Bombers Amrozi bin Nurhasyim and Imam Samudra. Therefore, within Indonesia there is a perception that Australia has double standards and invokes human rights to demonstrate that it is somehow exceptional in Asia. While the issue was prominent in the media, political leaders’ statements were firmly worded but used tempered language. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten released a statement demanding only ‘a strong response from the Australian government’. Tony Abbott did lodge a formal protest, by removing the Ambassador, but relations were normalised soon after the initial protests subsided. Eventually, the Ambassador returned only five weeks after being withdrawn. In this instance, a great deal of domestic political responses can be interpreted as theatre, with political leaders

440 Ibid.
441 Ibid.
needing to cater to their domestic constituents, and respond with the motive of maintaining domestic legitimacy, given Australia has a strong anti-execution norm.

Other less obvious areas, such as the live cattle trade, have also created domestic concerns within Indonesia. In 2011, Australia banned the live export of cattle to Indonesia after concern about abattoir standards. In response, Indonesia threatened to submit complaints to the World Trade Organization (WTO). As Louise Staley highlighted, this was a significant double standard given that there had been a notable lack of Australian criticism of poor conditions in US slaughterhouses. At the same time, the Jakarta Post pointed out that food and culture were closely linked, with the live export industry largely reliant on the Islamic concept of halal. Countries such as Indonesia have a strong preference for halal slaughter of live animals and distrust of Australian halal abattoirs, despite the fact these are regulated by local Islamic accreditation agencies. Hence, attempts by Australia to intervene, ostensibly in a regulatory manner, were perceived as a form of cultural interventionism by Indonesian domestic audiences.

Overall, this means that Australia must be highly sensitive when invoking discourses that focus on Indonesia, because Australia is the state most strongly identified with the West in the region. And, as demonstrated above, cultural issues are open to misperception and exaggeration. Indeed, these themes have emerged in numerous forums including a Jakarta Post editorial that claimed Australia is perceived as ‘as an arrogant neighbour that has a strong sense of superiority toward Indonesians’.

Indonesia’s nascent democracy has amplified these concerns, where there is no clear

balance between major parties, and minor secular and Islam parties vie opportunistically for power, increasing the chance of entrepreneurs harnessing anti-Australian sentiment.450

Australia’s relationship with India—another key regional power—often ranks lower in Canberra’s foreign policy priorities than China, but is increasingly problematic. For example, narratives about Australia are often used negatively in Indian domestic debates. Hate crimes directed at Indian students in Melbourne during 2009, for instance, fuelled significant anti-Australian sentiment. Indian media coverage of those attacks resulted in a 46 percent drop in the number of Indian student visas the following year.451 Yet student numbers recovered as the controversies abated, experiencing a 38 percent increase during 2013-2014,452 thereby demonstrating the pertinence of messages projected abroad to Australia’s economic and soft power in the region. It is also instructive that the controversy about violence directed at Indian students correlated with a decline in Indian-Australian relations. This was demonstrated by New Delhi’s tepid response to Kevin Rudd’s 2011 suggestion of a trilateral security pact with the US and India.453 Even though this was predominantly informed by high-level security considerations, these domestic perceptions fed into India’s own political debates. Consequently, at a time when US-India relations have deepened, Australia-India relations remain lukewarm at best, despite attempts by Canberra to repair the relationship through initiatives like the formalisation of an agreement on uranium exports in September 2014.454

The relationship has been further complicated because India competes for US military loyalty in the region, possessing an equally strategic position and with the potential to devalue Australia’s security position in the future. India’s own security posture is driven by an ‘Act East’ policy that stresses integration with Eastern

Asia. This is partly driven by a post-Soviet world order in which India is no longer able to hedge via the non-aligned bloc. Thus, India has pursued closer integration via organisations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and agreements such as the India-ASEAN free trade agreement, which was codified in 2009. Furthermore, India hopes to strengthen ties using its historical cultural links to South East Asia within countries such as Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia. A longer-term goal of India is membership of the UNSC, which is unlikely, but if successful would create a substantial change in the normative security dynamics of the region.

Despite these problems, Australian foreign and security policy towards India is informative. India has a strategic need for reliable uranium supplies, which helps underpin its development ambitions. At the same time, Indian security is upheld by its nuclear program, which sits outside of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). Furthermore, Australia has used uranium to improve relations with India, in recognition of its importance strategic role in the Indo-Pacific. John Howard broached the initial deal in 2006 as part of an Indian memorandum of understanding on Defence Cooperation. The private component of the Howard government’s deflection strategy came to light in a leaked US cable that stated ‘We are […] struck by the openness of the GOA [Government of Australia] to the US-India civil nuclear deal despite the strong anti-nuclear sentiment at home’. This underpinned a strategic positioned that aligned Australia with the US and its position on the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), where India was granted an exemption under the 123 Agreement, giving India access to nuclear markets, the only country outside of the NPT to do so.

Deflection here works on two levels. As Matthew Sussex has noted, at the international level Australia’s interests shape its behaviour. But its discourse about upholding rules and norms as cornerstones of middle power diplomacy is questionable when viewed in the context of the 123 Agreement, especially where Canberra could (but did not) block the agreement. At a domestic level it helped


appease deteriorating relations between the two states where Indian officials stated that Australia was engaged in ‘pathetic hypocrisy’ and Australia was attempting to ‘cosy up to the world’s largest autocracy [the PRC], while nullifying a decision [...] to help build a closer rapport with the world’s biggest democracy’.  Despite this, support for the 123 Agreement eventually helped repair the relationship.  

Domestically, Kevin Rudd’s initial public statements concerning the deal can be interpreted as a way to appease the party base, given he later quietly supported the broader 123 agreement and supported a number of pragmatic security decisions.  After Julia Gillard replaced Rudd, she advanced the deal, which was eventually signed by her Coalition successor Tony Abbott.  Notably there was little public dissent about the deal, despite 39 percent saying they were ‘strongly against’ selling uranium to India in the 2012 Lowy poll.

This evidence suggests that deflection is frequent and creates an environment where debates about security competitors in the region are regularly downplayed by the major parties. The way that the major parties deal with China is instructive, as is the carefulness concerning Indonesian issues. This demonstrates a high level of bipartisan rationality behind Australian decision-making, given Jakarta and Beijing are prone to exploiting contrary ideational messaging from Australia to enhance their own rhetorical positions.

Furthermore, deflection occurs not only during the administrative period of government, but also during election campaigns. This results in a phenomenon whereby authentic foreign policy debates during election campaigns are very rare. As Geoffrey Garrett observed in 2010, ‘foreign policy has played virtually no role in Australia’s race to the polls on 21 August beyond the domestic hot button issues of asylum-seekers and immigration’. In a similar manner, Peter Jennings declared

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459 Ibid.
defence policy as largely bipartisan at Federal elections, from 1987 through to 1998.\textsuperscript{464} And during the 2016 Federal election campaign, Russell Trood claimed that there were few choices to be made about foreign policy given the ‘high degree of consensus, […] among Australia’s mainstream political elites’.\textsuperscript{465} Taken together, these examples focused on generalised foreign and security policy show quiet approaches to sensitive issues with the PRC, Indonesia and India, and demonstrate how problematic discourses that may intervene with security matters are deflected away from public debates.

\textit{Dilution}

Although established players will often seek to deflect discourses with security implications, sometimes they can quickly gain in currency. This allows for their exploitation by political entrepreneurs. As the Sukuraman and Chan case demonstrates, deflection is particularly problematic when unexpected crises have occurred that force a populist response, or required Australian elites to take sides on issues that may clash with more immediate security concerns such as human rights norms, or contentious issues in the region such as Taiwan and the South China Sea. This means that a range of problematic discourses with security implications can and have become popularised despite attempts to deflect them. This can occur when niche, populist or radical actors not previously exposed to the security implications of political rhetoric opportunistically hijack debates.

Indeed, the dangers of populism and idealism leading to irrational foreign policy are widely described by international relations theorists. For example, George Kennan warned that public opinion about foreign policy is not necessarily democratic, but rather ‘the expression of the interests of special highly vocal minorities’.\textsuperscript{466} More recently, Zbigniew Brzezinski presented a similar warning as domestic constituents often sought ‘simplistic sources of comfort and clarity’ and warned against elected representatives tendency to be ‘stunningly ignorant to pursue an intelligent policy.

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\textsuperscript{466} Kennan, \textit{American Diplomacy 1900-1950}. 

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that does justice to the complexity of the world." In other words, popular voices, if followed uncritically, created unhealthy foreign policy.

With this as context, the alternative to deflection, then, is to dilute. Elites may do so for various reasons, but the objective is to remove the ability of rogue rhetorical actors to derail discourses with security implications. Consequently, dilution recaptures problematic narratives, and then repackages them in ways that are less challenging to the security interests of the state. This involves reinterpreting fringe issues in ways that seize the populist sentiment underpinning the issues, and then repositioning the most problematic part of those narratives in ways that mitigate any security consequences.

Dilution can be observed in the Australian setting in several arenas related to foreign and security policy. Xenophobic populists, such as the One Nation Party in Australia, are a key target of dilution. As demonstrated by the resurgence of far right-wing parties world-wide, and the re-emergence of One Nation as a political force in 2016, the sentiments these new actors espouse are, as Richard DeAngelis claims, unlikely to disappear, and are more commonly ‘absorbed and integrated’ into the system. Across various cases populists share a number of similar beliefs, such as anti-elitism and fear of outsiders, alongside a belief in a number of ‘facilitating conditions’, such as anxieties about globalisation and economic insecurities. Often their grievances are linked to international pressures, blaming their perceived marginalisation on forces such as Islam and immigration. In a European setting, including in Denmark and Austria, where anti-immigration parties have experienced successes, the security considerations are less pertinent because of the architecture of NATO. Similar patterns have emerged in the US where Donald Trump was elected on a platform with a strong immigration focus, including substantial restrictions on entry to the US for Mexicans and Muslims. However, in Australia, permanent


468 Ibid.


470 Ibid., 83.

471 Ibid., 87.

isolation and reliance on bilateral relationships can underscore the perception of security vulnerability.

The experience of the One Nation party, which rapidly emerged in the 1990s with an anti-immigration and anti-foreign investment stance, is instructive here. Pauline Hanson’s maiden speech typified the target audience, when she stated ‘I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians’, and that immigration must be stopped to prevent ‘unskilled migrants not fluent in the English language’.\textsuperscript{473} By 1998 One Nation’s unsophisticated and indiscriminate xenophobia captured approximately 8 percent of the national vote at the 1998 Federal election, and almost 23 percent at the 1998 Queensland state election.\textsuperscript{474}

The core concern of Australia’s elites was that ‘Hansonism’ damaged Australia’s security position and clashed with the ideational and cultural discourse promoted through the 1990s, via concepts such as ‘good international citizenship’, which had the motive of securing the national interest at the regional level.\textsuperscript{475} As a result, the response of dilution was visible when the Howard government took on a number of ‘Hansonite’ positions in a moderated form, with the end goal of recapturing the anti-immigration vote at the following federal election. The process began with Philip Ruddock’s claim in 1999 that the issue of asylum-seekers was a ‘national emergency’ and an ‘assault on our borders’,\textsuperscript{476} thereby courting the attention of the marginalised bloc. Similarly, the coalition exploited the Tampa Affair in 2001 as part of a wider strategy to dilute One Nation’s vote. In a widely publicised speech, John Howard proclaimed that ‘we decide who comes into this country and the circumstances in which they come’.\textsuperscript{477} Indeed, dilution was accidentally described by Pauline Hanson herself, who complained that she was ‘castigated a racist by the media and major politic parties’, but viewed this as hypocritical because the ‘same

\textsuperscript{473} Australia, House of Representatives, 1996, Parliamentary Debates. 10 September. Pauline Hanson.
policies [...] advocated back then are now almost populist policy, being advocated today by the federal government’. 478

In the aftermath of Tampa and the coalition’s tougher line on immigration, One Nation’s vote halved to 4.3 percent at the 2001 election, while the Liberal Party’s primary vote increased 3.19 percent.479 In essence this validated Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth’s neoclassical realist premise that ‘a crisis creates a window of opportunity by discrediting old policies and the ideas associated with them’. 480 In the case of the Liberal/National Coalition, this can be viewed not only as an attempt to ‘outbid’ One Nation, but also an attempt to redirect xenophobic sentiment towards asylum-seekers, often of Afghani or Iraqi descent, rather than Hanson’s blanket dislike of ‘Asians’, which was accompanied by potentially harming trade and security.

Of course, the opposing view suggests that Howard and Foreign Minister Downer were simply opportunistic. But Australia’s foreign policy at the time actually demonstrated a keen awareness of regional security. For instance, under Howard two-way trade with the PRC increased six-fold, and he successfully managed several potentially problematic areas including East Timor, the Bali Bombings, the Asian Financial Crisis, and a period of Indonesian instability with four different Presidents in six years.481 Given the prudent management of these issues, it is unlikely, then, that the Tampa Affair was the result of reactionary or reckless foreign policy. Instead, we can view this as the response of dilution working to correct problematic security narratives from entering the domestic discourse.

Similar efforts to dilute can be found on the left wing of the political spectrum. The Australian Green Party’s policies were initially problematic from a (relatively minor) strategic point of view. After gaining popularity in Tasmania during the 1980s, the collapse of other third party actors (such as the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) in the 1960s and 1970s and the Australian Democrats in the 1980s) created a third party electoral vacuum ultimately filled by the Greens. While initially focused on environmental issues, its early approach to the PRC and human rights was of note.

479 “AEC: When: Past Electoral Events.”
For example, earlier Green policies included directives to ‘restrict co-operation with governing regimes that violate human rights’. While such claims are valid in other contexts, this particular narrative was one that could have had a direct impact on the Chinese relationship if actualised or popularised. These worries were amplified by the Australian Green’s leader Bob Brown’s relationship with the Dalai Lama, and by a covert trip by Brown to Tibet, which was criticised by Chinese authorities after he called it the ‘world’s largest militarised colony’.

Despite Brown’s rhetoric, which included the claim that Julia Gillard was ‘another prime minister kowtowing to the communist bosses in Beijing rather than standing up for this nation’, the Greens’ role as the third party has been accompanied by a softening of its foreign policy attitudes. Hence, for the Greens, there has been a shift away from direct references to the PRC, and a preference for more distant national security issues. For example, the ‘peace and security’ policies of the Green party, as of 2015, featured three cornerstones: withdrawal from Afghanistan; independence in foreign policy; and voting before war. These opaque sentiments appeared after a shift in its policies toward the centre after 2001, when its federal vote increased from 4.96 percent (up from 1.86 percent in 1993) and more specific references to policy concerning the PRC were removed.

Similarly, rogue elements of the Greens are increasingly reprimanded for loose rhetoric about foreign policy issues as the party captured a larger domestic audience. For example, in 2015 Bob Brown censured NSW Greens senator Lee Rhiannon because of her views on Israel and support for a boycott of Israeli goods. He criticised her publicly, stating that her foreign policy positions were ‘damaging to the Greens campaign, […]because[…] they had very good policies on transport, preschool education, [and] renewable energy’ and that the ‘NSW Greens have taken to having

486 “AEC: When: Past Electoral Events.”
their own shade of foreign policy’. 487 This was in contrast with Kerry Nettle’s period as foreign affairs spokesperson for the Greens in the early 2000s, which was vocally pro-Palestinian, and included the claim that ‘one of the most powerful military machines in the world is waging war on an occupied people’. 488 Other parliamentary statements by Nettle suggested that Israel was engaging in ‘indiscriminate killing: bulldozing, shooting and blowing up men, women and children’ and that it was the instigator of ‘fifty years of violence’. 489

The trend then, within the Australian Greens, has seen moderation on several foreign policy issues as it sought a position closer to the centre, and hence closer to the realities of power. This broader trend was evidenced by the fact that popular Green politicians Rhiannon, Adam Bandt and Scott Ludlam, were overlooked for the party leadership in 2015, in favour of moderate Richard Di Natale, who has publicly advocated a desire to appeal to the political mainstream. 490

This differs from the example of the political Right by virtue of the Greens’ self-moderation, although this is partly explained by a traditional party analysis, where the Greens have moved to capture a disenfranchised, progressive section of the Labor party. Nonetheless, the broader political forces have incentivised the shift to the centre on security issues, including the extension of invitations from establishment think-tanks like the Lowy Institute for Richard Di Natale to present the Greens national security platform. 491 In doing so, he was forced to engage with the traditional rubric of Australian security issues, including the US alliance, submarine capabilities and maritime security. Mark Beeson claimed this was an


example of The Greens ‘growing up’, forcing the party to ‘dirty their hands in the polluted waters of traditional security issues’.

Established actors have also exhibited similar traits of dilution when using problematic rhetoric. For example, in 2003 Mark Latham was highly critical of Howard’s relationship with George W. Bush, calling John Howard an ‘arselicker’ and a ‘yes-man to a flaky and dangerous American president’. Yet on his elevation to the leadership of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), Latham was quick to praise ANZUS. In fact, an opinion piece by the journalist Gerard Henderson highlighted the drastic difference between Latham’s first foreign policy statements at the Lowy Institute in April 2004 and then in July the same year, going so far as to label them ‘Latham Mark I’ and ‘Latham Mark II’. The corollary is that Latham, who had used populism dependent on a maverick narrative to secure leadership of the Labor Party, was now attuned to the political implications of his rhetoric. Thus, Latham ‘Mark II’ softened his foreign policy polemics, publicly supported ADF actions in Afghanistan, and backed Howard’s use of the ANZUS treaty in the context of the 9/11 to justify military assistance to the US.

The process of dilution is also visible in the shifting stances of newly elected leaders, who may initially be unaware of the material realities of their newfound position. For example, Alexander Downer’s initial handling of the Indonesia relationship in the 1990s came under scrutiny, especially over the aftermath of the Suharto regime and the ascension of President B.J. Habibie. This included the delivery of a letter to Habibie demanding that he ‘negotiate directly with the East Timorese and consider the option of an act of self-determination after a substantial period of autonomy’. Downer also attempted to cancel the Development Import Finance Facility (DIFF), which prompted protests from the PRC, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Yet after becoming familiar with his role Downer managed to control the relationship, allowing better deflection of ideas through prudent management of his

494 Ibid.
497 Ibid.
communications to the domestic audience. For example, he was widely praised for his approach to the Asian financial crisis, his deepening of bilateral relations with Japan and the PRC, and his role in embedding Australia in important regional forums such as the East Asia Summit (EAS).

A similar trajectory can be found in the career of Bob Carr as Labor foreign minister, who used one of his first press conferences in 2012 to propose sanctions against PNG for its delays in holding elections. He boldly claimed that there was ‘no alternative but to organise the world to condemn and isolate Papua New Guinea’. Carr’s comments, after only two days in the job, resulted in PNG calling in the acting High Commissioner, Margaret Adamson, to complain. The next day Carr released a statement claiming the remarks had been taken out of context, noting that ‘PNG is a robust democracy with a proud history of holding elections as provided for under its constitution’.

This process can even be seen within administrations typically framed as more radical. For instance, Gough Whitlam’s bullish positions on regional foreign policy that antagonised US planners were only temporary. Privately, during the 1970s, the US was concerned over Whitlam’s ‘continuing turn to the left’, thanks to public comments from influential figures such as Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns, who raised concerns in Washington when he stated he wanted to ‘get Australia out of the big power military system’. Nonetheless, a few of the populist actions attributed to Whitlam, including the removal of Australian troops from Vietnam, had already begun under his predecessor McMahon. Hence, a number of Whitlam’s public deviations from the US alliance were short-lived, and by mid-1975 American diplomats were expressing pleasure with the way that Whitlam administration had ‘matured in its views’. The process was complete in 1975 with the release of the Defence of Australia document, which Graeme Dobell claimed was ‘delivered by


500 Ibid., 615.


503 Ibid.
Fraser, but built by Whitlam’. Pantagonism reaffirmed the role of the US in Australian affairs, while removing the lingering undertones of xenophobic and western-centric messages attached to the notion of ‘forward defence’ in prior White papers.

Dilution therefore occurs in two ways in the Australian setting. First, when political parties gain access to power, they are exposed to the realities of the policy decisions about security. The result is a moderation of their position on security and foreign policy issues. In the case of the Greens, foreign policy platforms have diluted as a matter of pragmatism, while One Nation’s position required dilution via hijacking and marginalization. Similarly, the major parties have acted to moderate their own elite’s views if they start to risk intervening in national security issues and rein in rogue voices.

This helps explain an important aspect of the international-domestic nexus in the Australian context. It explains why actors in the centre may act in ways that initially seem paradoxical, such as when Howard engaged the alienated constituents that Pauline Hanson exploited in the 1990s, and who she again successfully courted in the aftermath of the 2016 election, with the reformed One Nation party gaining four seats. Pantagonism, similar patterns are likely to emerge in pluralistic democracies, and many liberal democracies possess anti-establishment third parties sitting outside of the centre. This includes groups such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the National Front in France, the Freedom Party of Austria, and most prominently the rise of the ‘alt-right’ movement during the campaign of Donald Trump during the 2016 Presidential election campaign. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, politicians from both sides of the House of Commons worked to dilute rogue messages that were successfully exploited by nationalist entrepreneurs, such as Nigel Farage. This included actors such as Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who in January 2016 ordered Labour MPs to vote in favour of Brexit Bill through Parliament, essentially supporting the Conservative position.

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However, we can also observe that dilution only works to an extent. Taking on a fringe actors messages does not always remove the political concern within the electorate. The answer, then, is take on these rogue messages and then obfuscate them with the amplification of other issues that are similar, but ultimately benign to the national interest. And, as the evidence above demonstrates, Australian elites have been able to successfully do so on numerous occasions.

**Inflation**

In this section, I present evidence showing several key instances of the inflation of benign security threats to Australia by elites. As this case has shown so far, Canberra possesses a number of substantial security pressures that could be exacerbated by problematic domestic narratives. In this section I argue that the focus on immigration and terrorism is politically expedient and highly visible in domestic debates for the simple reason that they present few existential risks to Australian security when compared to the larger geopolitical factors at play in the region.

The most overt example of inflation in Australian politics has been over immigration. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin leveraged ‘invasion anxiety’, linking this to national security.507 Similar fears were used by Arthur Caldwell to popularise the notion of ‘populate or perish’, which was linked to fear of the large populations of Asia when compared to Australia.508 In recent history, Peter Costello invoked a similar theme when he told citizens to have three children: ‘have one for the father, one for the mother and one for the country’.509 The implication was that low birth rates influenced the future security and economic prospects of the nation, with the subtext that Australia’s value system was also at risk if not populated from within.

These anxieties have often manifested themselves as xenophobia. Early in the twentieth century, Minister for External Affairs Billy Hughes exploited this sentiment, and opposed the ‘racial equality proposal’ during negotiations to form the League of Nations. In more stark terms, the populist notion of the ‘yellow peril’

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became embedded in domestic narratives, resulting in a unique literary genre—‘invasion novels’—with inventive titles in the late 19th and early 20th century including *The Yellow Wave* and *The Australian Crisis*.  

These cultural narratives helped legitimise the ‘White Australia Policy’ set of laws established to protect an Australian ‘identity’, which began with the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act. In the context of the time cultural and racial homogeneity were viewed as critical to national security given Australia’s place in Asia. For Alfred Deakin ‘these people differ[ed] from us in such essentials of race and character as to exclude the possibility of any advantageous admixture’.  

He continued with the claim that non-Europeans ‘do not and cannot blend with us; we do not, cannot and ought not to blend with them’.  

In the domestic context, these xenophobic narratives helped justify strong alliances with the UK and then the US. Hence, to the domestic audience, foreign and security policy elites were not averse to the presentation of a cartoonish ‘evil’ and unknown force to the North. This was so deeply embedded that many of these views still penetrate debates, as evidenced by the section on dilution earlier. The paradox is that those narratives were perpetuated despite Australia’s defensive posture being complex and nuanced when addressing regional matters. For instance, under Menzies, Australia was actively engaged in many contentious events, including the Korean War, the Malaysian Emergency, and the Indo-Malay ‘Konfrontasi’.  

In addition, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, every Australian leader since Menzies had made small and incremental steps towards engagement with Asia. In fact, this progression supports the broad neoclassical realist notion that material considerations drive long-term outcomes in foreign policy.  

One result has been that newer discourses informed by xenophobia have been shifted to areas that have a lesser effect on Australian security. Specifically, Australia has moved a great deal of its discourse on immigration to target more far and distant actors, and specifically those of African or Middle Eastern heritage, rather than those.

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512 Ibid.

of Chinese origin. The turning point for this recent inflationary process was the Tampa incident in August of 2001, when a Norwegian freighter picked up 438 Hazari refugees. The boat was subsequently denied entry to Australian waters, and the government threatened to prosecute the Norwegian captain for people smuggling if he proceeded. The widely publicised act, shortly before the November 2001 Federal election, had the effect of turning immigration into a highly politicised issue. However, despite concerns over Australia’s commitments to international laws, and a diplomatic dispute between Norway and Australia, the action was popular with domestic audiences. A second event public event linked to immigration occurred in October of 2001, this time after the 9/11 attacks, when the ADF and Australian Coast Watch intercepted a vessel carrying 223 passengers, believed to be operated by people smugglers. Ministers claimed that children had been thrown overboard by asylum-seekers in an attempt to force a search and rescue operation by Australia, thereby allowing them to enter the country. The claims were eventually proven false, but not after substantial debate, spurred on by the events of Tampa. Though controversial, domestic responses to the Howard government’s stance were broadly supportive too. Howard’s popularity increased dramatically after the incident, and his net ‘satisfaction’ rating jumped ten points. These events helped initiate a shift in domestic sentiment against those of Middle Eastern heritage, and the 2001 Australian Electoral Survey, taken soon after the events found that 54 percent of respondents believed that Australia should ‘accept some less or a lot less’ migrants

from the Middle East.517 This was in comparison to 15 percent who believed that there should be less British immigration, and 36 percent against Asian migration.518 These opinions are at odds with the realities of immigration. In fact, the superficiality of asylum-seekers as a ‘security’ issue is demonstrated by the fact that the PRC is the top source of people seeking asylum in Australia.519 However, this is largely unknown because Chinese asylum seekers arrive predominantly by plane. For example, in the 2008-2009 financial year at the height of the asylum ‘crisis’, 84 percent of asylum applicants arrived by air.520 In contrast, Afghani and Iraqi refugees were the dominant groups featured in media coverage throughout the 2000s.521 This divergent perception is driven by a combination of media and elite messages, where 29 percent of the ‘authoritative’ viewpoints used by the media were from politicians, compared to 12 percent from professionals working with refugees.522 Inflation as an elite response is therefore visible in the actions of domestic political parties that set agendas using topics such as immigration. In short, rhetoric is the main difference between the parties, with each party appeasing a certain domestic bloc: Labor frames its position as compassionate on asylum-seekers; while the Coalition acts as a catchall for the ‘stop the boats’ contingent. For example, the Labor Party has externally painted itself as the more compassionate party, providing a neat cleavage between those for and against the issue. Yet closer examination of the actual policy changes on these issues reveals that they are minimal. On paper Labor ended the Pacific Solution and abolished temporary protection visas.523 However, in practice it retained the Migration Zone set up by the Howard government, which included the mandatory detention of all people entering illegally by sea.524 Furthermore, despite the fanfare surrounding the end of the Pacific

518 Betts, “Migrants’ Attitudes to Immigration in Australia: 1990 to 2004.”
522 Ibid., 354.
523 The ‘Pacific Solution’ was the policy of using offshore detention, rather than allowing asylum seekers to land on Australian territory, thereby the need to meet international commitments under international humanitarian law.
Solution, Labor moved to set up a ‘regional processing centre’, first in Timor Leste and then again in Malaysia. Both had many similarities to Howard’s policies. Eventually, in July, party leader Bill Shorten decided to back the government approach to turn back boats, while moving the political debate to Australia’s refugee intake numbers.\(^{525}\)

One further paradox is that national security considerations, which are meant to be at the heart of the debate, are handled in a relatively bipartisan manner too. For example, the security element of immigration was transferred to ASIO via the Security Referral Service (SRS).\(^{526}\) Hence, processes that addressed the central claim in the asylum debate—that illegal immigrants are a threat to Australia’s national security—were handled in a way that was deliberately detached from public debate. Furthermore, in the case of the SRS, the scheme had transitional government support. It was initiated by the Coalition Howard government in mid-2007 and continued by the Labor Rudd government.\(^{527}\) Later, in 2013, Tony Abbott launched ‘Operation Sovereign Borders’, which despite its controversial status was successful in policy terms. Eighteen months after its launch there was only one ‘irregular’ boat arrival, no deaths at sea, and all asylum-seeker claims were redirected through established immigration channels.\(^{528}\) Therefore, despite the centrality of the immigration debate, the only substantial differences in general policy have been the stance on boat turnarounds, and the denial of permanent visas to any sea arrivals.

Overall, this suggests that the core framing of the immigration debate has occurred through a security lens, but this lens is largely detached from the one used by national security elites in Canberra. Moreover, as the framework for this thesis suggests, this ultimately works to the benefit of security planners, who can then address the core security concerns unencumbered by domestic populism. In contrast, the narrative of immigration is one that is easily exploited, with the benefit that it creates few existential threats to Australia’s security position. In short, the inflation


\(^{527}\) Ibid.

of a threat that is far and distant, such as asylum seekers in small and ageing boats from Iraq and Sri Lanka, is preferable to the inflation of a more immediate threat such as China or Indonesia.

A further example of inflation, which has become closely linked to the immigration debate, has been the profile of terrorism in domestic discourses. Terrorism and asylum seekers are often linked surreptitiously in the post 9/11 environment with Peter Slipper declaring in 2002 that ‘there is an undeniable linkage between illegals and terrorists’. In fact John Howard’s popularity that had jumped because of the Tampa incident increased another eleven points in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and the Pentagon. Yet, much like immigration, fears about terrorism diverged substantially with the pragmatic risks of any potential attacks.

This has helped created highly visible debates concerning terrorism that exaggerate the threat and security implications. For instance, John Mueller has assessed the risk of being killed by terrorism (in the US) at one in 3.5 million over any year. Applying this logic in an Australian setting brings equally low odds, with a 2015 article showing 113 terrorism related deaths over the period 1978-2014. This equates to an average of 3.13 causalities per annum, resulting in roughly a one in six million chance of dying from an attack in any one given year. Terrorism is in fact less dangerous than daily life threats such as falls from beds, which killed 417 people from 2003-2012. Indeed, on Australian soil, there have been only four terrorist incidents of note: the Sydney Hilton bombing in 1978, the assassination of the Turkish Consul General in Sydney in 1980, the failed car bombing of the Turkish consulate in 1986, and the 2014 Martin Place siege. Significantly, none of these events explicitly targeted Australian political interests, with the Hilton bombing aimed at the CHOGRM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting) meeting being held there, while the Turkish attacks were linked to Armenian

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530 Brent, “Howard, September 11 and Newspoll.”
533 Ibid.
groups. Indeed, Australia has never suffered any type of mass terrorist attack on its territory and the most existential threats of note for Australian security planners stemming from this region are not from terrorism, but rather from instability in resource markets.

Nonetheless, the terrorism debate, along with immigration, has dominated domestic discourses thanks to reactions to failed events such as the 2009 Holsworthy Barracks terror plot and the 2005 Sydney terrorism plot. This is even though the first two of these plots did not progress past the planning stage. In the Sydney plot, twelve guns had been stockpiled, along with various chemical materials, but no bombs had been assembled. In the Holsworthy plan, a group planned to use automatic rifles to massacre as many as possible in an al-Shabaab inspired attack, but claimed they had not yet obtained an appropriate fatwa to carry out the mission.

Other attacks included the Sydney Martin Place siege, where three people (including the attacker) died, and received saturation coverage that framed the siege as terrorism linked to ISIS. However, in the aftermath the motive was frequently linked to the mental health of the perpetrator or reinterpreted as a ‘lone-wolf’ attack. Regardless, security elites such as Foreign Minister Julie Bishop used this and other similar events abroad to unfairly claim that groups such as ISIS ‘wield great global power that would threaten the very existence of nation states’. Similarly, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott consistently used the term ‘death cult’ when describing ISIS in order to reinforce and amplify threat perception. Overall, this trend in the inflation of terrorism has created undue and disproportionate fears. The 2010 Lowy

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Poll found 73 percent of voters viewed combating terrorism as the most important issue behind protecting jobs and protecting the economy, up from 65 percent in 2007.\textsuperscript{540} In the 2014 poll, the figure remained comparable, with 65 percent viewing international terrorism as a critical threat, versus 41 percent for China.\textsuperscript{541} Similarly, in 2015, 69 percent viewed ‘the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’ and the highest-ranked threat to Australia, while only 20 percent viewed conflict between the US and China as a ‘high risk’.\textsuperscript{542}

From the position of the neoclassical realist framework outline in Chapter Two, inflation fulfils several functions at both the domestic and international level. For one thing, it allows politicians to push through security legislation. In the Australian case, fifty-four laws focused on terrorism were passed after 9/11, with a new law passed on average every seven weeks under John Howard.\textsuperscript{543} These included the 2004 anti-terrorism act that made it an offence to be a member or promoter of a terrorist organisation. Further measures were introduced in 2005 including measures to allow preventative detention and control orders as well as preventing ‘reckless’ funding.\textsuperscript{544}

The focus on terrorism works on another level and has justified shifts in financing security. For example, ASIO’s newfound importance in counter-terrorism was demonstrated in a budget of AUD$717 million in 2009-10\textsuperscript{545} compared to AUD$62.9 million in 2000-01, despite no terror attacks occurring.\textsuperscript{546} In a similar way, the Australian government spent over AUD$11.5 billion on counter-terrorism between 2001 and 2005 to counter perceived threats during the war in Iraq and


\textsuperscript{541} \textit{The Lowy Institute Poll - 2014}, 8.


While this may seem wasteful on the surface, it has consolidated Australia’s domestic security in line with wider material pressures at an international level. Hence, it has helped unpin the US alliance loyalty, high-level interoperability and intelligence sharing. Using this lens, Australian support for counter-terrorism, and military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, were not driven by a need to secure the immediate self-defence of the state, but rather to access a wide form of security currency via the US.

Analysis and Implications

The framework laid out in Chapter Two, when applied to Australia, demonstrates how elites’ public and private responses to security issues vary, depending on the issue at hand. They do so because Australia’s position in international politics is largely reactive due to its power status which logically seeks to maintain the status quo. Therefore, it must adapt to wider systemic changes, and simultaneously minimise interference from domestic populism.

It is worth repeating the key theoretical points and interpretations of Australia policy used by this thesis. Using a security reading, Australia could be interpreted as a vulnerable country that is largely invested in traditional defensive capabilities and operations. Its defence budget for 2013-2014 was AUD$25.5 billion, and this is increasing to AUD$30.8 billion in 2016-2017. Australia ranks thirteenth globally in terms of defence expenditure, above Turkey and just below Brazil. More tellingly, Australia has been engaged in in eight direct military conflicts in the post-World War II environment. This hardnosed assessment is rarely seen in domestic debates, nor is it promoted by Australian elites. Interestingly too, Australians exhibit relatively high levels of nationalism internally when compared to other states. The 2012 World Values Survey found 61.8 percent of Australians were ‘very proud’ and

550 The eight conflicts are the Korean War, Malayan Emergency, Indonesian Confrontasi, Vietnam War, First Gulf War, Afghanistan War, Iraq War, and intervention in Syria.
28.5 percent ‘quite proud’ of the country. This contrasts with states that are commonly viewed as nationalistic, such as Japan (25.1 percent and 40.2 percent) and Russia (28.6 percent and 47.5 percent). This suggests that despite Australia’s democratic system, there is relative social cohesion and a unified national identity and discourse.

Consequently, what the framework reveals is the security and foreign policy elite’s role in shaping public debates. This results in a situation where despite Australia’s weakening relative position and growing regional threats, Australian citizens do not exhibit proportional fears about hard security issues. As shown earlier, terrorism dominates Australian fears about security. The 2015 Lowy Institute poll found that 69 percent of Australians viewed ISIS as a high risk to their security, whereas conflict between the US and China was viewed as the lowest worry of eight separate options (coming in at 20 percent). What quickly becomes visible is that the focus of domestic ‘security’ debates is often concerned with ‘softer’ security issues such as immigration, climate change, terrorism and whaling, rather than ‘hard’ issues such as China or the US alliance.

Aside from terrorism, immigration has been (and remains) a core concern of domestic audiences. In recent years, the subject consistently ranks highly as a perceived risk to Australian society in opinion polls and media measures. In Ipsos content analysis reports, immigration was placed in the top five of all issues from November 2010 to November 2012. This contrasts with issues on defence, which peaked at 6 percent in October 2012, despite Australia’s strong military capability and geopolitical security concerns. This trend continued into 2013, 2014 and 2015 where Ipsos reports showed that over 20 percent of Australian’s viewed immigration as the top security issue facing Australia. Over the same period, concerns about defence increased, from 3 percent in 2013 to 16 percent in 2015, although this increase was potentially linked to the conflation of terrorism and defence considering

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552 Ibid.
553 Oliver, *The Lowy Institute Poll 2015*.
the increasing prominent of ISIS. Nonetheless, in 2015, immigration still ranked higher as a political issue than education, housing and poverty.\textsuperscript{556}

Similar polling taken on the Tampa incident and 9/11 are instructive. In the aftermath of both events, news time spent on terrorism and asylum-seeker issues accounted for more than all other election issues combined.\textsuperscript{557} A similar survey in the lead-up to the 2010 election found that refugees and asylum-seekers were an ‘important issue’ for 75 percent of voters, while only 5.5 percent viewed defence in the same light. In fact, the resources tax, industrial relations, the environment and unemployment were all viewed as more important issues than defence.\textsuperscript{558} In this instance, the inflation of a relatively benign security issue became a prudent security tool. Some 438 refugees were a relatively small overall number considering the extent of the conflict in Afghanistan, and when compared to other similar humanitarian crisis, such as that during the war in Indochina, where Australia accepted approximately 95,000 refugees in the period between 1975 and 1985.\textsuperscript{559}

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that many of the threats that have preoccupied Australian domestic audiences are detached from the concerns of the security community, especially in regard to strategic competition in East Asia, where more Australians see China as a better friend regionally than any other state.\textsuperscript{560} Thirty-one percent see China as Australia’s ‘best friend’ in the region, above Japan at 28 percent. Some 65 percent of respondents to a 2015 Australian National University (ANU) foreign policy poll believed Chinese growth was a positive development for Australia, while only 30 percent saw China as a potential military threat.\textsuperscript{561} At the same time, military defence was viewed by only 0.3 percent of those surveyed as the most important policy issue to Australia.\textsuperscript{562} Similar trends are visible in Australian-Indonesia relations. Even though Indonesia is viewed as a source of

\textsuperscript{556} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid.
instability within academic circles, in the domestic population over 70 percent of Australians viewed Jakarta as either ally or ‘friendly but not an ally’, versus 19 percent who viewed Indonesia as unfriendly or an enemy.\textsuperscript{563}

The perception of safety amongst the Australian populace is helped by emphasising threats that are far and distant. Most notably, asylum-seekers dominate threat perceptions, with 76 percent of respondents in a Lowy report stating they were concerned about asylum-seekers entering Australia via boat.\textsuperscript{564} Similarly, Media Monitors analytic services ranked asylum-seekers, along with climate change and Australia’s involvement in Afghanistan as the most-mentioned foreign policy issues during 2009.\textsuperscript{565} At the same time, only 40 percent of people polled viewed China as a threat, despite 90 percent perceiving China as the leading power in the region.\textsuperscript{566}

Correspondingly, fears about immigration and asylum seeking have little correlation with their real position in the hierarchy of threats. The vacuous nature of the immigration debate is revealed when examining the data closely. For example, only 2,726 people arrived by boats in 2009 (up from 161 in 2008)\textsuperscript{567} compared to 53,900 overstaying their visas.\textsuperscript{568} Together, those numbers only account for a small percentage of the 203,874 people on permanent visas that entered Australia in 2008.\textsuperscript{569} In this respect Australian immigration numbers are comparable to several other Western countries. For instance, in 2008, the UK inflow of asylum-seekers was 31,315, while France took in 35,404 people.\textsuperscript{570}

The other inference from the evidence here is that discussions about defence matters enjoy broad support. There is a perception that Australia’s security and strategic positions are generally appropriate because of their management within the domestic discourse. The ANU’s 1987-2013 Trends in Australia’s Political Opinion survey supports this position, where 90 percent of the population believed Australia spends

\textsuperscript{563} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{566} Hanson, The 2009 Lowy Institute Poll: Australia and the World. Public Opinion and Foreign Policy.
\textsuperscript{568} Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Annual Report 2009-10, 159.
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid.
the right amount, or needs to spend more on defence.\textsuperscript{571} Despite this acceptance of security spending, Australians feel safer, and in 2013 48 percent saw Indonesia as a ‘not very likely’ security threat. Similarly, only 14 percent of voters in 2013 saw China as a ‘very likely’ security threat. This figure dropped to 9 percent in 2001 and 8 percent in 2004 at the height of the immigration debate in the aftermath of Tampa debate and the Howard administration.\textsuperscript{572}

Consequently, the findings in this case also help demonstrate why elites are driven to address potential antagonisms. The deflection of issues about Indo-Pacific politics away from domestic debates establishes an appreciation from Australian elites of the dangers of rhetoric. This is designed to mitigate the use of emotive language by growing states, and to facilitate their own changes in security posture. Current maritime and territorial disputes in East Asia are particularly instructive in this context. For example, the Spratly Islands have become source of tension between China and other states in the region, both at an international and domestic level. This is because their ownership is disputed by China, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines, who all have claims stemming from a mix of cultural, political and material factors. On one level, Chinese brinksmanship concerned with the Spratly Islands can be interpreted as testing expansionism, with a focus on gas and oil resources and controlling strategic choke points such as the Malacca Straits.\textsuperscript{573} Yet, on another level, it unpins a broader attempt by China to avoid US containment. On a third level, the islands resonate with domestic symbolism. Here, Beijing asserts its claims on the islands are justified, being lost as the result of ‘foreign intrusions’,\textsuperscript{574} with these sensitivities being exposed after the 2016 arbitration decision on the South China Sea by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the subsequent outbursts in the China media against Australia’s role.\textsuperscript{575}

The lesson is that small and seemingly insignificant issues, such as China’s use of a map showing islands in the South China Sea on the cover of its passports, can be


\textsuperscript{572} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{574} Leszek Buszynski and Christopher B. Roberts, \textit{The South China Sea Maritime Dispute: Political, Legal and Regional Perspectives} (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014), 211.

problematic for security. In this instance, there was a domestic furore within Vietnam and the Philippines over the map used, which, in turn, acted to consolidate China’s nationalistic domestic pronouncements.\textsuperscript{576} Indeed, even before the 2016 arbitration decision, there were revelations in 2015 that had China warned off Australian RAAF AP-3C Orion aircraft over the South China Sea. This was kept secret by the government, but eventually revealed by the BBC.\textsuperscript{577} Following the revelation, a stern editorial in the Chinese language version of the \textit{Global Times} emerged. It warned that ‘it would be a shame if one day a plane fell from the sky and it happened to be Australian’.\textsuperscript{578} The English version eschewed the strong language, but this suggests that papers, such as the \textit{Global Times}, which is widely viewed as a strong pro-government voice, are willing to engage American allies such as Australia in regard to issues in the South China Sea. A final point is that while these actions are challenging for Australian security planners, they do not seem to represent a unified grand strategy from China. Hence, for Fergus Hanson China is ‘stumbling through the region’, and while expanding its influence, it lacks a focus.\textsuperscript{579} Consequently, the main relevance for Australian security planners is to understand how states such as China are increasingly using the islands dispute to enable broader strategic objectives, as the work by Schweller, Pu and Sterling-Folker has previously described.\textsuperscript{580} From a neoclassical realist position, this means Chinese leaders often order and dictate the ideas that are fed down to the domestic audience. The risk for Australia is that China’s large population means that ideas are often carelessly used by elites. Fareed Zakaria has described this as dangerous nationalism, because elites stoke the flames of domestic audiences, but then panic when reactions get out of control. The CCP has used this ‘pragmatic nationalism’ alongside ‘patriotic’ education as a way to mobilise opinion against Japan, which has contributed to


\textsuperscript{580} Schweller and Pu, “After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of US Decline.”
events such as the anti-Japanese riots in Beijing in 2005.\textsuperscript{581} Hence, the concern is that Australia may become a focus this type of pragmatic nationalism. Indeed, Australia is attractive within this context. It is symbolic of the Western legacy Beijing often invokes, while also being a relatively weak military actor.

It also demonstrates why issues like the Taiwanese question present substantial strategic dilemmas in the future for Australia and demand careful management of the accompanying discourses. US commitments via the Taiwan Relations Act and ANZUS automatically enmesh Australia in any regional crises. Although sometimes ambiguous in its wording, the ANZUS treaty specifically declares that ‘armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes’.\textsuperscript{582} This was tested in 2004 when then-Foreign Minister Alexander Downer claimed that Australia might not automatically help the US defend Taiwan if it were attacked.\textsuperscript{583} This led to the US Ambassador, Tom Schieffer, restating that the treaty commitments of ANZUS. He reiterated that the US and Australia ‘are to come to the aid of each other in the event of either of our territories are attacked, or if either of our interests are attacked, our home territories are attacked or if either of our interests are attacked in the Pacific’.\textsuperscript{584}

In this context, Australia’s role is further complicated given Washington has made it clear that the US is pivoting towards Asia. In 2010 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that ‘America’s future is linked to the Asia-Pacific and the future of the region depends on America’.\textsuperscript{585} It follows that regional structure and the rise of China presents not only security, but normative problems for Australia. Australia is at risk of becoming normalised domestically as antagonistic to Beijing if it sides too strongly with the US. If China ‘needs’ to be aggressive, there are concerns that Australia could become a proxy for this aggression. Finally, it demonstrates why Australian domestic discourse sometimes veers into xenophobic rhetoric on the


surface, since the method of dilution has the goal of controlling problematic messages being used by external actors.

Chapter Conclusion and Implications for Middle Power study

In this chapter I have examined how Australian security and foreign policy elites have reacted to changes in the external security environment. I have also demonstrated that domestic elites and decision-makers reorder internal ideas to prevent interference occurring between the domestic and international arenas. Furthermore, this chapter has shown that Australian elites prefer the promotion of far and distant threats. Hence, immigration has consistently been used as a domestic security tool, despite little evidence to suggest that it is a significant problem. As a maritime actor, Australia has many natural advantages, and this prevents the high numbers of immigrants seen in other states, such as Pakistan, the US and Europe. In contrast, when issues that are problematic for security appear, such as those about Indonesia, China and the US, they are deflected or diluted by elites.

One further finding of this chapter is that Australia is a largely passive, status quo actor, rather than active middle power when framed through a material and security-driven analysis. This is not to deny the important role of institutions, but in a security setting it is very much a status quo player, which is a consequence of its pivotal middle power position. The contrasts with the established orthodoxy on Australian foreign policy and the corresponding middle power literature that suggests Australian foreign policy is grounded in activism. This account instead suggests that a great deal of Canberra’s core security and foreign policy objectives, in both material and ideational terms, sit on the defensive end of the offensive-defensive spectrum.

This also contrasts with a body of Australian academic literature on foreign and security policy which assigns disconnects between policy and discourse to domestic factors such as history, culture and identity. In fact, a number of scholars see cultural factors as the genesis of foreign policy formulation. For example, Anthony Burke has designated ‘fear’ as driving a political culture of xenophobia and homogenization. Similarly, Stefano Gulmanelli has articulated how John Howard reshaped Australian foreign policy narratives about the ‘Anglosphere’, and in doing so

586 Burke, Fear of Security, 8.
so rejected multiculturalism in favour of British-derived values.\footnote{Stefano Gulmanelli, “John Howard and the ‘Anglospherist’ Reshaping of Australia,” \textit{Australian Journal of Political Science} 49, no. 4 (2014): 592–593.} Richard Devetak and Jacqui True have also ascribed Australia’s foreign policy to ideational factors, claiming that Australia pursues an inconsistent and opportunistic trajectory towards international affairs.\footnote{Richard Devetak and Jacqui True, “Diplomatic Divergence in the Antipodes: Globalisation, Foreign Policy and State Identity in Australia and New Zealand,” \textit{Australian Journal of Political Science} 41, no. 2 (2006): 242–255.} From this position actions, such as implementing stricter immigration controls are the result of ‘different governmental worldviews and conceptions of state identity’.\footnote{Ibid., 254.} But as the account here suggests, these important contributions are less useful when assessing why elites respond to domestic concerns (such as immigration) in one way, while smoothing over contentious rhetoric that influences relations with important strategic competitors such as China. They do not address the puzzle where China is not a target of xenophobic entrepreneurs despite incentives to do so. In addition, if xenophobia is a driving force behind Australia’s security agenda, then why are threats being constructed in reference to asylum-seekers from distant countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, rather than more immediate strategic competitors? More puzzling is why Australian foreign policy has followed a highly stable and bipartisan trajectory. If ideational and socio-historical factors are important variables, then we might expect evidence of generally divisive and dangerous policy outcomes given Australia’s regional security environment.

In contrast, the evidence presented here using the neoclassical realist framework suggests the opposite. Through this lens Australia has managed its regional position with pragmatism. Overall, Australia has had good relations with key regional players and has faced no serious strategic threats since the end of the Pacific War in 1945. Furthermore, despite the prominence of xenophobia as a variable in critical analyses, security competitors, such as China, are far from the focus of political hyperbole. Indeed, China—once publicly viewed as the key ‘threat’ during the Menzies era (when it arguably was not)—is now viewed by the public as ‘Australia’s best friend
in Asia’. Paradoxically, this corresponds with a period in which security planners in both Australia and the US designate it as the key regional security challenge.

This also reveals why the ‘pivotal’ passive middle power interpretation is useful. It tells us that while Australia does engage in middle power activism, it is primarily undertaken in the context of material concerns. It means that when understanding Australia as a middle power, one must assess the role of, and intersection between, domestic politics and the wider security environment.

In conclusion, the evidence presented here proposes that political rhetoric from elites encourages domestic audiences to engage in debates that have benign outputs for security. This allows the underlying state mechanisms to work and respond to external threats as expected while giving the domestic audience national security issues to ‘own’. A further reason for inflating ‘soft’ issues is that those parts of Australian policy pertinent to national security can become problematic if they are too keenly politicised. In this circumstance, there can be a ‘win-loss’ whereby an internal political party can ‘win’ on a politicised issue, but this can spill over and affect the states’ threat perceptions. For example, the Prime Minister or Opposition Leader could notionally increase their electoral chances by providing a critical stance towards the US relationship or by overstating China’s military and economic threats. Yet neither does so because this has great implications for higher-level games in which critical issues such as state survival dominate. With this in mind, I move to the case of Turkey.

590 The Lowy Institute Poll - 2014.
CHAPTER 4: TURKEY

This chapter applies the neoclassical realist framework developed in Chapter Two to Turkey. Turkey is an instructive case because it fulfils the criteria of a pivotal middle power also outlined in Chapter Two. It also exhibits many of the inconsistent paradoxes between public and private security discourses that were found in the Australian case. Indeed, the evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates how Ankara’s rhetoric is frequently vocal concerning many populist topics for domestic consumption, yet its actual foreign and security practice have remained largely pragmatic.1

Prior to the ascent of the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkýnma Partisi or Justice and Development Party), the notion of ‘Kemalism’ dominated public discourses about security. This facilitated a clear and unambiguous outlook on matters of national security, grounded in a political framework geared towards Western integration and secular modernity. This came at the expense of freedom of expression, and for most of the twentieth century Turkey’s domestic discourses were highly controlled, assisted by a lack of communication mediums to disperse alternative views.

Furthermore, as this chapter demonstrates, parties and leaders deemed to be hostile to Kemalism were routinely banned and jailed. For example, only twenty years ago, in 1997, Turkey’s military removed Necmettin Erbakan from office after he used language and policies deemed too close to Islamism, and in violation of the state’s staunchly isolationist foreign and security outlook.2 Similarly, in 1998, then Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was jailed for ‘inciting hatred’ after citing a Ziya Gökalp poem linking politics and Islam.3 In both these instances, foreign and security policy elites were simply enforcing a long held norm in Turkey that political Islam was a threat to Turkish security as it aligned Ankara with ‘regressive’ forces in the Middle East, thereby inviting intervention in Turkish affairs.4

These discursive contests have been more pronounced since the AKP gained power. Here, the content of the security rhetoric from elites has changed in line with the new

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1 There are some notable exceptions, especially concerning the behaviour of Recip Tayyip Erdoğan. An overview of Erdoğan’s agency versus security policy is found in Wayne A. McLean, “Erdoganism (or Why Turkey Is Leaving the West),” The Strategist, last modified August 1, 2016, accessed October 11, 2016, http://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/erdoganism-turkey-leaving-west/.
regional order. Additionally, the avenues for the delivery of rhetoric have changed, with the growth of the internet and social media. In turn, these have facilitated new alternative political narratives. Consequently, the previous emphasis on secularism and isolationism now provides a stark contrast with today’s environment, in which loud revisionist oratory is the norm, with the motive of recapturing and centring political narratives to encapsulate the new security dynamics facing the Turkish state. Former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu used this type of revisionist language in 2013 when he invoked a ‘neo-Ottoman’ discourse and sought to ‘tie Sarajevo to Damascus, Benghazi to Erzurum and to Batumi’. President Erdoğan was even more outspoken in 2014 when he used pan-Islamist language to claim that the AKP election was not only a victory for Turkey, but that ‘Islamabad, Erbil, Sarajevo, Skopje, Hama, Homs, Ramallah, Gaza, Jerusalem, have all won’.

One way to understand these changes is by replicating the framework used when analysing the Australian case. This allows us to examine how the shifts in language employed by Turkish elites intersect and relate to the broader changes bearing down on the Turkish security environment. Consequently, the neoclassical realist framework presented in this thesis allows us to ascertain the extent to which the agency of prominent current and former elites, including Erdoğan, Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım are responsible for changes in Turkey’s traditionally isolationist foreign and security policy. Using this framework allows us to explore whether rhetoric from Turkish elites is a way to seek ‘permission’ to allow pragmatic responses to the emerging security environment, or alternatively, whether they are the result of simply ideological shifts as some of the Turkish literature on the topic suggests.

If the patterns of deflection, dilution and inflation observed in the Australian case hold, the typology should reveal that the rhetorical and discursive tools used by Turkish elites have the function of reordering security concerns to adapt to the new regional security environment. In the context of pivotal middle powers, this will allow us to understand how discursive tools are employed by middle powers in environments with intense security dynamics and with differing ideational frameworks.

As in the previous chapter, I start with an overview of Turkey’s security environment. This is shaped by its geographical position, wedged between the Middle East, Russia, Central Asia and Europe. The security dilemmas this position present are outlined via a description of three major periods in Turkey’s security history and an overview of the corresponding policy responses. The first is the end of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Turkish isolationism, which was used to maintain the security of the Turkish state in a volatile geopolitical environment. The second and third periods—the Cold War and the post-Cold War period—correspond to those used in the Australian case. During the Cold War period, Turkey remained a hesitant, but reliable US ally for pragmatic reasons, while during the post-Cold War period Turkey has pursued a more assertive foreign and security agenda, which is understandable given the ambiguities that emerged from the surrounding security setting.

The middle part of the chapter applies the typology to incorporate domestic level variables to highlight the nexus between the domestic discourses and Turkey’s external security dynamics. In this section, I present examples of Turkey deflecting discourse concerning the Kurdish question, Iran, China and Greece. I subsequently show how each has presented distinct challenges to Ankara and its regional outlook, and how each has been subject to the reordering of political rhetoric by elites in ways that complement the respective security challenge. Next, I find evidence of dilution when exploring Islam, fringe political actors, established actors and the military. In contrast to the Australian case, I find that the Turkish examples of dilution are much more explicit, because the comprehensive power of the military and the centralised nature of their political and military system can easily manage rogue actors and political parties viewed as detrimental to the security of the state.
Finally, I demonstrate processes of inflation visible in Turkish positions on Kemalism, social media, anti-Westernism, Israel and Gülenism. Inflation in Turkey is more obvious when compared to the Australian case. This is because the Republic of Turkey has a long history of inflating threats—most notably the question of Kurdish statehood—and using them as a tool to maintain domestic unity. Hence, I find inflation is highly focused when compared to the Australian case, where only vague ‘out groups’ (primarily immigrants and ‘terrorists’ of Middle Eastern heritage) were targeted. Nonetheless, the overall patterns have important similarities: obscuring and redirecting public narratives away from the most pertinent security concerns, leaving elites free to enact pragmatic policies unencumbered by domestic pressure.

The third section provides a wider analysis of the findings revealed by the typology. It presents arguments for why Turkey’s foreign and security policy practice is often at odds with the language found in domestic debates. As with the Australian case, I find patterns in which Turkish elites have attempted to rearrange the hierarchy of domestic debates about foreign and security policy to meet external security challenges. However, there are important differences. The most notable is that the frequency of the reordering in the Turkish case is higher. To explain this I attribute this frequency to the proximity and intensity of Turkey’s threat environment.

**Historical and Material Context**

*Security Overview*

A great deal of the enduring security rhetoric about Turkey’s independence was fuelled by the post-World War I climate, and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Notably, the 1919 Treaty of Sèvres unfavourably partitioned post-Ottoman territory, leading to fears that Turkish identity would be destroyed. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk harnessed this sentiment to lead a Turkish nationalist movement that culminated with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, with Atatürk as President. Although infused with nationalistic narratives, Atatürk’s immediate foreign and security policy was highly pragmatic, and revolved around the withdrawal of all foreign interests not core to the immediate security of the state.

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This included troops in Africa, the Middle East and in the Balkans, thereby avoiding the diffusion of military resources and expenditure on now-futile imperial legacies.\(^9\)

To accompany this, Atatürk emphasised domestic reform as critical to security. This included a radical modernization project and attempts to deeply integrate into the emerging international order, rather than relying on material strength alone.\(^10\) As a result, Atatürk’s ‘reforms’ emphasised foreign policy isolationism, the secularization of Turkish politics, the introduction of a representative democracy, and educational and economic reforms.\(^11\) These were designed to engage Turkey deeply with the West, thereby removing certain avenues for interventionism that had created instability and fractured states elsewhere in the Middle East.

Turkey’s second major security period occurred during the Cold War, when isolationist norms became unsustainable in the face of increasing competition between the Soviet and US spheres of influence. Events during the late 1950s helped Turkey shift closer, albeit reluctantly, towards the US. The outcome was that without strong US support, Turkey risked becoming a target of Soviet expansionism and adventurism. This culminated with the deployment of US Jupiter missiles on Turkish soil as part of NATO’s nuclear deterrence efforts.\(^12\) The Turks accepted the missiles, despite the risks, moving Turkey closer to the centre of NATO’s concerns. In the process, this consolidated Turkey’s place within US strategic thinking, while also providing an element of regional prestige during a time of flux.\(^13\)

At the same time, and as demonstrated by unrest in Cyprus, Turkey remained nervous about the role of the US. In June 1964, Turkey planned to intervene in the geopolitically important Mediterranean island. However, US President Lyndon Johnson was concerned that this would create an unnecessary Soviet-US conflict on NATO’s south-eastern flank and warned Prime Minister İsmet İnönü against unilateral action.\(^14\) This, in turn, caused Turkey to reconsider its pro-Western position and investigate rapprochement with the Soviets. As a result, Soviet Leader


\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) See Ibid.


Nikita Khrushchev briefly engaged with the Turks, helped by the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko’s support for the Turkish position on Cyprus, by acknowledging the ‘the legal rights of the two national communities’.  

Similar themes of Turkish vulnerability emerged during and after the First Gulf War, underscoring Turkish concerns about relying on the US security guarantee in the longer term. The academic literature at the time also suggested NATO was likely to disband in the absence of the Soviet threat, which further worried Turkey’s security elites. This was accompanied by fears about new nuclear states emerging in the post-Soviet environment, although the Nunn-Lugar Act was ultimately successful in constraining further proliferation after the breakup of the USSR.

Nonetheless, technological advances in warfare meant that a few smaller states, including Iraq, had acquired ballistic missile capabilities. Turkey’s vulnerability in this new environment was apparent during 1991 when NATO was slow to provide protection to Turkey against possible Iraqi ballistic and chemical missile attacks. More pertinently, this occurred during a period when intelligence suggested that Iraq was developing a nuclear weapons program. Although this was later discovered to be in its infancy, Turkey was sufficiently concerned to look beyond the US and NATO for assistance. In 1997, it signed a defence cooperation agreement with Israel, with the goal of participating in the Arrow ballistic missile defence system, even though the project later faltered due to US objections. Elsewhere, Turkey signalled a pivot in its foreign policy stance and began acting more proactively towards EU membership. It signed a customs agreement in 1995 and entered the membership

15 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
candidature list in 1999.\textsuperscript{21} Together, these shifts in Turkey’s policy signified its concerns about its place in the post-Cold War security architecture.

This has led into the third (and current) phase of security, in which Turkey has sought to revise its position in the international order. It has done so by moving away from isolationism, especially in relation to the East, and becoming more assertive in international affairs by actively pursuing a so-called ‘neo-Ottoman’ agenda.\textsuperscript{22} This period has been typified by a muscular foreign and security policy, with Turkey beginning to engage more comprehensively with not only Europe but also Central Asia and the Middle East. Ahmet Davutoğlu, then former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, was the key architect of this revisionist foreign and security policy. The hallmarks of the policy included practical engagement with key Middle Eastern actors, including Iraq, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. Other symbolic gestures that signified a departure from Kemalist secularism included the AKP sending a ‘Turkish flag, a Turkish dictionary and a Quran to every person of Turkish origin’ in Macedonia, in an attempt to use soft power and public diplomacy to exploit its rich cultural history with the Balkans.\textsuperscript{23}

Notably, this revisionism was also visible in official speeches, in which Davutoğlu claimed that Turkey ‘will reintegrate the Balkan region, Middle East and Caucasus […] together with Turkey as the centre of world politics in the future’.\textsuperscript{24} Later in the same speech he stated:

‘What is Turkey? Turkey is a small Balkan, a small Middle East, a small Caucasus […] Why do we have all of this? Because of the Ottoman legacy. For all these Muslim nationalities in these regions Turkey is a safe haven’.\textsuperscript{25}

This shift in rhetoric that invoked the pre-Kemalist imperial period accompanied a broader security-based doctrine known as ‘Strategic Depth’. In the broadest sense, Davutoğlu had asserted that Turkey must use its power—predominately soft

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
power—to act as a player of regional (and potentially global) significance.\textsuperscript{26} For him, Turkey was naturally suited to this role given its geopolitical place in international affairs.

To the North and North East, Central Asia was designated as a core area designed to add ‘depth’ to Turkey’s foreign policy. In practical terms this meant Turkey embarked on strategic partnerships with post-Soviet states, including Kazakhstan, with whom it had developed deep economic ties, culminating in Turkish support for its entry into the WTO.\textsuperscript{27} Ankara also improved its ties to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, despite their weak economic positions, because they provided strong cultural and geopolitical links into the central Asian heartland helped by a shared Turkic heritage.\textsuperscript{28}

At an institutional level, Turkey has been active in Central Asia multilateralism via the Black Sea Economic Organisation (BSEC), the Council of Turkic Speaking States (CTSS) and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), the latter of which was designed to place Ankara at the centre of a common market consisting of over 500 million people.\textsuperscript{29} In 2013, Turkey was also instrumental in forming the Organization of the Eurasian Law Enforcement Agencies with Military Status (TAKM) with Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, with the goal of tackling transnational crime issues within a policing framework.\textsuperscript{30}

An important security motive for more extensive Turkish engagement with Central Asia has been the emerging role of China in the region. Overall, China’s main regional interest is energy, with neighbouring Iran the third largest supplier of crude oil to China, supplying approximately 10 percent of its consumption.\textsuperscript{31} This provides a small, but important, source of energy diversification for Beijing. More importantly, close relations with Turkey facilitate secondary routes and sufficient redundancy to transport energy away from Russian and US sources. This type of

\textsuperscript{26} See Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy,” \textit{Middle Eastern Studies} 42, no. 6 (2006): 945–964.
\textsuperscript{27} Thomas Wheeler, \textit{Turkey’s Role and Interests in Central Asia} (London: Saferworld, October 2013), 5–6.
\textsuperscript{28} Wheeler, \textit{Turkey’s Role and Interests in Central Asia}.
thinking had led China to heavily invest in infrastructure, such as Pakistan’s Gwadar Port, which links into the Iran-Pakistan pipeline currently under construction. This enables China to access Iranian gas without entering the Persian Gulf, while also providing an alternative to the US-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. These energy competitions have implications for Turkey, which is resource poor, but attempting to leverage its central transit position and consolidate itself as critical to any future East-West energy corridors.

Consequently, these shifts in Turkish foreign and security policy make sense when viewed in the context of the wider security pressures bearing down on Ankara. Furthermore, when detached from the often-hyperbolic rhetoric of Turkish elites, the switch from Kemalism’s isolationism towards regional activism in the Middle East and Central Asia suggests a deep level of pragmatism, driven by the material realities of the region rather than one guided by personal ambition, as many Turkish analysts have claimed.

Another argument that supports the view of Turkish security policy as essentially pragmatic—despite its increasingly outlandish rhetoric—is its recent economic record. It has experienced rapid growth over the past fifteen years because of economic reforms and closer integration into a variety of markets, including Europe, China, the Middle East and Central Asia. Turkey is now a substantial regional power with the seventeenth largest nominal GDP globally ($751 billion as of 2016). This gives it the largest material capacity of any Middle East state, sitting above Saudi Arabia ($618 billion) and over double that of Iran ($386 billion).

36 Ibid.
Turkey’s most recent economic successes have derived from AKP economic policies designed to attract large-scale investment. One of the AKP’s first major policies was to substantially increase FDI.37 This was a departure from earlier Kemalist positions, in which FDI was viewed with suspicion, thanks to a population ‘culturally conditioned against foreign economic influence’.38 But, as Ioannis Grigoriadis and Antonis Kamaras argued, the bankrupting of many older and ‘less reputable’ Turkish companies associated with the old guard, helped dismantle the domestic norm against economic liberalisation.39

These changes have helped the Turkish economy grow at average rates of 4 percent a year since 1999.40 Furthermore, the AKP has exploited these economic conditions for domestic gain by backing various ‘mega’ projects designed to highlight the ‘new’ Turkey, and advertise its successes to the region. These have included the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge across the Bosphorus, and close to the Caspian Sea. It also includes the Eurasia Tunnel, which opened in December 2016.41 This tunnel has formed a fifth crossing point across the Bosphorus and complements the recently completed Marmaray undersea rail link.42 Additionally, the ‘Istanbul New Airport’ will have the biggest passenger capacity in the world (two hundred million per year), including six runways.43 Finally, construction has commenced on ‘Kanal İstanbul’, which will supplement the Bosphorus by carrying tanker traffic into the Sea of Marmaray from the Caspian.44

These projects complement the wider notion of the so-called ‘2023 vision’ designed to make Turkey a global leader in many areas by the centenary of the Republic of

38 Ibid., 57.
39 Ibid., 60.
And they are in distinct contrast to the policies of the mid-twentieth century, when Turkey’s economic position was weak due to its lack of diversification. This period was typified by dependence on agriculture, combined with high spending on the military. Economic problems also contributed to domestic political instability, whereby fringe groups, including the ultra-right nationalist Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar) and the revolutionary left Devrimci Yol, harnessed discontent. Politically, this type of polarization had earlier created fears of the US and the Soviet Union exploiting domestic divisions for their own security gains. Indeed, it was one justification for the 1980 military coup, which ‘reset’ the political environment to the centre. Turkey eventually implemented economic reforms in 1983 after three years of military rule, with the goal of reintegrating into the global financial system, in recognition that economic progress would assist political stability.

Relative Power and Security Competitors

Turkey’s assertive outlook has been accompanied by a foreign policy that emphasised a ‘zero problems with neighbours’ approach to regional engagement. This—at least initially—involves a shift of Turkish political and security interests to the East, and deep engagement with rivals such as Iran, Egypt and Syria.

The Syrian relationship ranks near the top of Ankara’s emerging concerns. Syria was initially one of Turkey’s new ‘friends’, but leader Bashar Al-Assad’s reluctance to acquiesce in the face of Turkish pressure concerning domestic political reform has led to friction. This included the cancellation of the free trade agreement brokered between the two leaders, resulting in trade falling 25 percent over the four-year period 2011-2015. The most recent tensions have concerned Turkey’s support for

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the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the al-Nusra Front, and its insistence on regime change as part of any Syrian peace deal. This is the result of attempts to install a regime favourable and sympathetic to Ankara’s ambitions in Syria (and therefore Ankara’s wider policy of strategic depth), including support for a ‘military’ refugee camp made up of defectors from the Syrian regime in Reyhanli.

Turkey’s interests in Syria are plentiful. Ranking highly is the role of the Kurds in Northern Iraq, in which the weakening security situation in Syria has provided incentives for Kurdish populations to gain international support for independence. This was demonstrated during the growth of ISIS from 2014 onwards, with its goal of creating a caliphate across the Levant region. One of Ankara’s core concerns has been that an increasingly chaotic Syria could result in the emergence of new Kurdish autonomous areas, which in turn could lead to renewed calls for a Kurdish state or a revival of Kurdish nationalism on Turkish soil.

Success for the Kurds would affect Turkey’s vision under the strategic depth doctrine of a stable region in which it acts as a leader and regional unifier.

Egypt presents a second potential threat, and poor relations between the two nations have revolved around Ankara’s refusal to accept the government of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Instead, the AKP viewed Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim brotherhood as the legitimate Egyptian power centre, which was previously the recipient of a USD$2 billion aid package from Ankara. Turkey’s troublesome relationship with Egypt has also revealed deeper geopolitical problems. These include the use of the Suez Canal as a political tool. Turkey was snubbed during the recent opening of the


53 Ibid.


canal’s upgrade\textsuperscript{59}, and politics in regard to the canal have the potential to affect Turkey’s energy security. This is because an increase in the use of sea-lanes, as opposed to pipelines, reduces Turkey’s ability to position itself as a pivotal energy transit route.

Further threats from Egypt stem from its advanced missile capabilities, including the R-300 Elbrus, with a 500km range\textsuperscript{60}, along with unconfirmed reports it possesses Chinese Silkworm missiles\textsuperscript{61} and it may have obtained a Buk medium range system.\textsuperscript{62} Egyptian air defences are hence well-developed, especially since they are underpinned by multiple Patriot systems supplied by the US government.

A third, and more substantial concern for Turkey is emerging from Russia. Russian revisionism has been on display in Georgia and Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea. Moscow’s resurgence is also visible in Syria, where Russia has a naval base in Tartus.\textsuperscript{63} This provides an important strategic function for Moscow, by providing it with a Mediterranean presence, and acting as a counterbalance to the perceived encirclement of Moscow by NATO. More specifically, Turkey is viewed as part of the rim of the Russian sphere of influence, especially given the significance of the Caspian Sea and the Turkish sea-lanes into the Bosphorus.

These issues have combined to create an intense set of security challenges for Ankara. In practical terms, they demonstrate that Turkey’s interests are now much more diverse than at any point in its recent history. In the past, the two core threats were focused on simple maintenance of the US alliance, to balance against Soviet expansion, accompanied by a clear Kemalist narrative of Kurdish nationalism as a risk to the state. But, as the examples above demonstrate, these pragmatic security concerns have widened to include Middle Eastern instability, the potential leadership of the emerging Middle Eastern political order, enhanced links with Central Asia, and attempts to manage China’s influence in the region. Importantly, this has corresponded with a domestic rhetorical shift towards Islamic and anti-Western

\textsuperscript{59} “Turkey Snubbed in Suez Canal Opening Celebrations,” \textit{Ahram Online}, last modified July 30, 2015, accessed March 5, 2017, \url{http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/136569/Egypt/Politics-/Turkey-snubbed-in-Suez-Canal-Opening-celebrations.aspx}.

\textsuperscript{60} “Syria,” \textit{Nuclear Threat Initiative}, last modified August 2014, accessed March 9, 2016, \url{http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/syria/delivery-systems/}.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.


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narratives that are consistent with Turkey’s strategic outlook and assist the national interest and state security policy.

Security and Foreign Policy Responses
It is interesting that across this wide range of security threats, and in spite of the discourse emerging from Ankara, Turkey is responding relatively consistently and largely as one might expect in terms of a neoclassical realist model grounded in geopolitics, as advanced by this thesis. At the international level, overall US-Turkish relations are relatively positive, with US officials referring to Turkey as the ‘anchor’ of the region. This is backed by the fact that Turkey has agreed to host a NATO anti-missile system and in 2015 cancelled a tender for a Chinese missile defence system, which was the subject of multiple US and European objections. Even after the coup attempt of July 15 2016, and criticism of the subsequent purge of Gülenist sympathisers, Turkey-US relations have remained robust, and the ultimate security guarantee of the alliance—US nuclear weapons—remain at Incirlik in the country’s south, despite attempts by Russia to exploit the situation by inducing Ankara to change its strategic posture.

Similarly, while the use of ‘mega projects’ such as the Istanbul Canal have been criticised as being vanity projects, they have an important strategic function. The construction of the Istanbul Canal consolidates Turkey’s role as the key transit route for shipping into the Black Sea, adding a strategic advantage when dealing with states such as Russia and the Ukraine. Furthermore, development of these sea-lanes diversifies Turkey’s energy sources, allowing the transit of energy into the Caspian and potentially to and from China, given the development of the gas and oil pipelines across Central Asia. Finally, an increased role in Mediterranean security makes Turkey a naval pivot between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, adding to the overall enhancement of its strategic position. The construction of a new bridge and tunnel over and under the Bosphorus has also provided redundancy for transit links,

64 A great deal of the research in this thesis was undertaken before the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 and while attempts have been made to integrate this information, the rapidly changing political environment may result in some redundancies in the information supplied here.
66 Cook, Albright, and Hadley, U.S.-Turkey Relations: A New Partnership, 8.
67 For an overview, see Wayne A. McLean and James Dwyer, “Nuclear Deterrence, Missile Systems and the Security of Turkey in the ‘New’ Middle East,” Insight Turkey 17, no. 3 (2015).

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which is critical given Turkey’s wish to be central to the emerging geopolitical landscape, shaped by initiatives such as China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ project.69

Acting as a pivotal transit state is increasingly important given the role of energy security in both Russia and China. Both have been developing energy corridors designed to underpin their own security interest, and Turkey has attempted to place itself at the centre of these new developments. The proposed Nabucco pipeline was to lie at the centre of an East-West energy corridor. Formal agreements to construct the pipeline between the stakeholder states were signed in 2009, while the pipeline itself stalled because of Russia’s use of pricing mechanisms to undermine the viability of the project.70 Indeed, both Russia and Iran have protested against the pipeline’s construction. In January 2013, the BP-led Shah Deniz II consortium committed to a 50 percent share in the pipeline on completion, which increased its likelihood of construction.71 This route traverses Baku through to Vienna via Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, and providing a direct energy conduit competitor to the Russian South Stream pipeline. Most recently, in October 2016, Turkey and Russia have renewed their commitment to build a natural gas pipeline under the Black Sea.72 Overall, this demonstrates the willingness and capacity of Ankara to engage the great powers and position it as a regional energy transit point, in an international environment where resources are playing an increasing central security role.

The new centrality of energy politics has complemented a broader push to develop a stronger indigenous defence industry. Military modernization was initially undertaken during the 1980s, which, notably, resulted in the product of a Turkish F-16 variant manufactured by Turkish Aircraft Industries (TIA).73

70 For details on Russia’s use of energy as a security tool, see Karen Smith Stegen, “Deconstructing the ‘energy Weapon’: Russia’s Threat to Europe as Case Study,” Energy Policy 39, no. 10, Sustainability of biofuels (October 2011): 6505–6513.
ROKETSAN was founded in 1988\textsuperscript{74}, but this capability was investigated with more rigour after the end of the Cold War, where programs to develop ballistic missile capabilities such as the J-600T Yıldırım system and HISAR (İrtifa Hava Savunma Füze Sistemi) short-range surface to air missile attracted heavy state investment.\textsuperscript{75} But Ankara has also accelerated its investment and capabilities in missile defence, viewing this as critical to maintaining security independence. Indeed, Erdoğan has claimed that Turkey’s plan is to ‘to completely eliminate external dependency on defence equipment supply with ongoing plans and investments until 2023’.\textsuperscript{76} This includes the development of the Göktürk-2 and 3 observation satellites, built with foreign assistance, and the fully indigenous Turksat communications satellites, with a target launch date of 2019, alongside an indigenous missile defence system.\textsuperscript{77}

The development of missile and communications assets not only provides hard defence capabilities, but also valuable currency when engaging with larger and more power security partners such as China and the US. For example, Turkey’s new capabilities led it to approach China to co-develop a missile defence system independently of NATO.\textsuperscript{78} Superficially, this seemed like a deliberate antagonistic move against the US. Yet it can also be interpreted as a form of signalling. This allows it a stronger negotiating hand when dealing with its NATO partners. Indeed, Turkey subsequently opened parallel negotiations with other suppliers, suggesting there is pressure on the US and NATO to accommodate Ankara’s concerns and provide concessions.\textsuperscript{79} Additionally, the later cancellation of the Chinese contract did not irritate Beijing substantially. This is because the arms industry is a secondary issue to Beijing regionally, with commerce and consolidation of energy transit routes a higher-degree concern in China’s objectives.

\textsuperscript{74} ROKETSAN is a state owned Turkish defence company and contractor with a focus on missile and rocket systems. See http://www.roketsan.com.tr/en/kurumsal/hakkimizda/


\textsuperscript{78} See McLean and Dwyer, “Nuclear Deterrence, Missile Systems and the Security of Turkey in the ‘New’ Middle East.”

This hedging is understandable in a security context in which Turkey may need to revisit its place in the US-Turkish relationship due to changing regional security dynamics. Turkey has a powerful ally in the US, but the underlying reality is that this relationship has always been contingent on convergent interests in the region. Several incidents support this view. For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Turkey was used as a pawn within regional brinksmanship, where it was provided with substandard Jupiter missiles to provide defence.\(^{80}\) Similarly, the ‘Johnson letter’ of 1964 told Inonu that Turkey would lose its security guarantee should it occupy Cyprus, and demonstrated that the US would only defend Turkey when their interests were closely aligned.\(^{81}\) Similar trends have emerged over the past few years, especially concerning the Syrian border, when NATO has signalled it would reject Turkish requests for assistance based on the notion of collective defence in Article Four and Five of the Atlantic Treaty.\(^{82}\)

This also helps explain Ankara’s fluctuating relationship with respect to Russia. Moscow’s attempts to revise its own position over the past decade have been critical to Turkish security. In 2014, Russia’s activities in the Crimean Peninsula demonstrated a shift in Russia’s strategy to one of active protection of its sphere of influence, and a posture that is prepared to push back against NATO and perceived US-led encirclement.\(^{83}\) Elsewhere, Russia has also signalled its intention to reassert ‘sub-regional primacy’ through the establishment of new security architectures, including the SCO, CSTO, and the Eurasian Economic Union.\(^{84}\) In response to these shifts, Russia was identified as one of the two key ‘strategic partners’ of Turkey by Davutoğlu.\(^{85}\)

However, Russian-Turkish relations were severely strained by the Downing of a Russian Sukhoi jet in November 2015. The jet crossed into Turkish airspace for forty seconds, triggering an attack by a Turkish F-16. The domestic responses were loud, with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu asking ‘Russia to act as a more mature

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\(^{80}\) An excellent overview of the ‘Jupiter Missile Affair’ is found in Criss, “Strategic Nuclear Missiles in Turkey”.


\(^{83}\) Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault.”

\(^{84}\) See Sussex, “Russia-Ukraine: What Is Putin up to in Crimea?”

state and that Moscow had ‘put itself in a ridiculous position’ when it claimed that Turkey shot down the jet to protect its oil supplies entering via ISIS controlled pipelines. Despite the statement, initial blowback was primarily economic rather than security-focused. Russia imposed sanctions on Turkey, including bans on agricultural exports and charter holidays by Russians to Turkey. Elsewhere construction work on the Akkuyu nuclear plant was halted briefly, but resumed soon after. This is particularly important in regard to nuclear energy as Russia was assisting the construction of new plants designed to fend off energy dependence on external states. Despite this, Russia-Turkish relations improved as of July 2016 in the aftermath of the coup attempt against Erdoğan, to the extent that Çavuşoğlu began suggesting that Moscow and Ankara were investigating deeper military cooperation.

This context is informative for the analysis here since it demonstrates how quickly Turkey can become a tool and target of great power adventurism. At the same time, it also indicates that while Turkey faces substantial security challenges, it has addressed them largely as expected under a conventional realist reading. Importantly, this has occurred in parallel to an increase in hyperbolic language on certain topics from the AKP leadership.

In short, Turkey seems to have acted appropriately in the context of the regional security dynamics. It continues to bandwagon with NATO and the US, while engaging in hedging via Russia and China. During the Cold War, these patterns were clear and largely unambiguous. Nevertheless, this clarity has now diminished over the past twenty years, with US influence potentially waning in the region, while Russia has become increasingly assertive. Therefore, the conditions are favourable to attempt the establishment of a new regional balance, which Turkey views itself as

naturally being at the centre of. These actions are backed by a shift in its hard-military posture, with an increase in military spending to USD$32 billion in 2014, up from USD$9 billion (constant USD) in 1988. These general responses also align favourably with the processes found in the Australian case: a pragmatic response in a challenging geopolitical environment. And although critics would be quick to point out that Turkey’s responses are much more erratic, this stems from the fact that the security pressures are more intense and immediate that in the Australian case.

**Domestic Environment and Elites**

Justifying its security pivots to domestic audiences has represented a major challenge for Turkey’s security elites, and it is here where paradoxes between the domestic and international discourses emerge. The key mechanism for selling security decisions to the domestic audience in the past was the state ideology of Kemalism, which Menderes Cinar neatly characterised as a ‘shield against the outside in the aftermath of the Ottoman empire’s decline’. Another similar interpretation is that Kemalism reflected the rewriting of official history in the post-World War I environment, by distancing and rebranding itself as distinct from the Ottoman Empire.

While Kemalism described the broad state ideology and outlook, it also encompassed and embraced a wide range of domestic groups, and united them through the rejection of foreign interventionism and imperialism. Each had differing interpretations of Atatürk’s vision, and included an eclectic mix of the left, the right, and ultra-nationalist groups that incorporated the neo-fascist and Pan-Turkic ‘Grey Wolves’, and the nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (the National Action Party). Elsewhere leftist parties combined Maoism and Kemalism, such as the ‘Patriotic and Revolutionary Workers Party’ led by the socialist Dogu Perincek. Consequently, many of the central pillars of Kemalism, including modernisation, nationalism, statism and secularism, were largely uncontested in the rhetoric emerging from the fringes of traditional left-right Turkish politics.

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91 “The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.”
Perhaps more importantly, the narrow and state-controlled media was a key mechanism for communicating the concept of Kemalism to the domestic audience. Throughout the Cold War period, the media was routinely censored, allowing for easier manipulation of messages intended for popular consumption. Similarly, pluralism, combined with targeted censorship, has been a core part of the Turkish newspaper environment since media liberalisation in the mid-1980s, when Turkey began a stronger push towards European integration and began using liberalisation as a security currency. However, this new pluralistic environment was largely a façade, and Hürriyet (the ‘secularist’ paper), the sensationalist Posta, and upmarket Radikal were widely viewed as the mouthpieces of the Kemalist military. As Dexter Filkins has observed these allowed the ‘Kemalist élite and its allies in the deep state [to] employ the press to exaggerate threats to the state’.

In the first years of the AKP following 2003, attempts to refocus the media environment to reflect the new political agenda resulted in political meddling in popular news sources. Importantly, they differed from the military ‘resets’ of the news environment, and instead used coercive techniques mixed with conspiratorial narratives. For example, in 2009, Aydin Doğan (the founder of the Doğan Holding and publisher of Hürriyet), was fined USD$2.5bn for tax evasion and was forced to sell two of his papers. This included the pro-military Milliyet and strongly nationalistic Vatan, along with Star TV. Similarly, the Turkuvaz Group was pressured into selling its secular and nationalist station KanalTürk to an associate of Erdoğan after its founder Tuncay Özkan—a former Hürriyet journalist—was arrested and implicated in the Ergenekon scandal, and jailed from 2008 until 2014. Overall, according to the European Journalism Centre, Turkey has 70 percent of the

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media owned by a few cross-media groups, which are segmented into clear pro-
government or pro-military groups. This results in a ‘very biased and extremely
} This also suggests that the AKP has switched from constitutional and legal methods of controlling discourses to ones that are grounded in coercion, with the motive of aligning public messages with its wider policies.

Contrastingly, the AKP has used sympathetic media outlets to project its messages to both domestic and international audiences. For example, the AKP had become closely aligned with the Ciner media group, which runs the popular Show TV and Habertürk news outlets.\footnote{Ibid.} Furthermore, in 2007, the Sabah was forcibly taken over and is now owned by Çalık Holdings, which has Erdoğan’s son-in-law Berat Albayrak as its CEO.\footnote{Joshua D. Hendrick, Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2014), 172.} Its English language version, Daily Sabah, has now become one of the most prominent sources for English-language news on Turkey, after Today’s Zaman was taken over and then shut down by the government in March 2016.\footnote{Nina Ognianova, “‘Erdoğan Is Killing Journalism,’ Says Today’s Zaman Editor Forced out after Takeover - Committee to Protect Journalists,” Committee to Protect Journalists, last modified April 14, 2016, accessed October 4, 2016, https://cpj.org/x/6833.
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Consequently, within Turkey a variety of contests exists to control the messages expressed by the media. This has become more pronounced under the leadership of Erdoğan, who has frequently been accused of trying to silence opposition. This is supported by the fact that 435 journalists were prosecuted in 2008\footnote{Barış, “Media Landscape - Turkey.”}, and a further twenty-two of these journalists remained imprisoned in 2014.\footnote{https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/turkey
} Prosecutions of journalists by both the AKP and the CHP before them have often relied on the Article 301/1 of the Constitution, and Law 5816 of the Turkish Penal Code. These make it illegal to insult Turkey, its institutions, or the ‘legacy of Atatürk’.

When these domestic factors are assessed together, they provide logic for what often appears to be emblematic of authoritarianism to outside scholars. While Turkey has an open media environment in certain respects, the channels used to propagate

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messages are prone to censorship and political manipulation. This demonstrates the AKP’s preference for takeovers, rather than outright censure of popular news outlets. It also provides important context for the next section, because it highlights some of the key mechanisms used by elites in Turkey to reorder debates to prevent them from clashing with wider national security interests.

Importantly, the domestic environment also presents a clear difference to the Australian case. Australia’s media is more transparent, yet it is ultimately more concentrated, allowing politicians to court and focus on fewer rhetorical avenues. In contrast, Turkey sits in an environment of intense security competition, and its elites must contend with a highly diverse and polarised media environment.

**Applying the framework**

The discussion of Turkey’s historical and material context demonstrates that while it may seem like an unusual comparison of cases, Turkey actually shares many similar structural and geographical constraints to those faced by Australia, even though internal characteristics are very different. Both are in dynamic security regions and work as pivots between great power interests. Both must also be careful about the discursive content of their domestic politics lest it weaken their security positions and invite adventurism. But, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, Australian leaders are subtle in their approach to discourses that clash with the national interest. In contrast, Turkey’s media, domestic narratives, and the elites work within a system where norms concerning democracy, leadership and the role of the military are radically different.

Put simply, Turkey has been compelled to constrain more radical and more variable narratives than Australia. Additionally, Turkey must also act more carefully so as not to alienate European institutions. Lurching too far towards censorship has the potential to harm its security outlook with important EU partners. In contrast, a truly free media environment has the potential to embolden rogue voices, thereby opening it up to interference from external actors with interests contrary to Turkey’s. Consequently, in this next section, descriptive richness comes from applying the neoclassical framework and the typology of deflection, dilution and inflation to the Turkish case in order to explore assess whether comparable behaviours exist. As with the previous chapter I identify how elites: (1) deflect problematic issues away
from debates; (2) *dilute* issues that have managed to penetrate debates; and (3) prefer to *inflate* benign threats.

**Deflection**

The first type of response, deflection, helps us understand the domestic foreign policy attitude to several external threats to Turkey from states including Iran and Syria, as well as the transnational threat of Kurdish groups. While threats from these actors should enjoy strategic primacy because they directly affect Turkish security, the evidence suggests they are increasingly managed within public debates.

The Kurdish issue may seem a puzzling starting point for deflection as much of Turkey’s national narrative of the past century has revolved around the ‘threat’ that Kurds present to the Turkish state. Furthermore, tensions and conflict between the PKK and the government have re-emerged alongside the Syrian War after a series of bombing and attacks on targets in Ankara, had have renewed calls by the Kurds for independence and an attendant upsurge in Kurdish nationalism.\(^\text{108}\) Nonetheless, the Kurdish issue is instructive regarding the way Ankara manages discourses. Indeed, part of the original unity of Kemalism relied on the narrative of a common enemy, and the Kurds stood in the way of Atatürk’s cultural revolution.\(^\text{109}\) Given the complex and varied groups being tied together by Atatürk’s vision, Kurdish nationalism was viewed as a threat to Turkish territorial integrity, thereby perpetuating post-Ottoman instability and weaknesses.\(^\text{110}\)

Once elected, the AKP originally deflected this emphasis because it viewed anti-Kurdish rhetoric as damaging to Turkey’s pro-European credentials. This made sense through a security lens in the early-mid 2000s to provide a hedge against overreliance on the US relationship, especially in the environment after 9/11 where core EU nations like Germany and France came to oppose to US interventions in the Middle East. Consequently, during the period after the 2003 election there was a shift away from the politicisation of Kurdish issues. As Ömer Taşpınar pointed out, at a domestic level there was a shift in the political discourse to a situation whereby ‘Neo-Ottomanism […] under the AKP…] sees no major threat behind Kurdish cultural rights and the expression of Kurdish national identity, as long as Kurds

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\(^{108}\) Alfoneh, “The Syria Strategies of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.”


maintain a sense of loyalty to the Republic of Turkey’. Similarly, Muhammet Keleş has described a new ‘careful vagueness’ about Kurdish issues. In this instance, Erdoğan in particular had initially retreated from the use of direct language concerning the ‘Kurdish problem’ to indistinct sentiment about ethnic integration, which he later claimed were ‘all Turkey’s problem’.

Further processes of deflection during the apex of Ankara’s attempt to woo Europe were noticeable when Turkey acted against PKK positions in early 2008, sending 10,000 troops ten kilometres into Iraqi territory and killing approximately 250 rebels. But in the context of Turkey’s European focused policy, publicity about the operation was muted. Instead, the action was only announced quietly via the military’s official website. This approach supported the notion that engaging gently with the Kurdish question was now in the Turkish interest. An additional interest was the increasing role of a future Kurdistan as a gas and oil exporter in the region, and the intense security environment in which Iraqi Kurdistan was viewed as a buffer between Turkey and Salafi Jihadists. In this sense, the deflection of PKK out of the mainstream discourse during this period can be viewed as consistent with the wider security challenges facing Ankara.

In fact, one of the more interesting policy shifts during the late 2000s was the tacit acceptance of the Kurdish presence in Northern Iraq, which it subsequently came to see as critical to fending off the ISIS challenge. For example, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) is now exchanging intelligence with the Turks. This contrasts with poor relations with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Northern Syria with whom Turkey has been in active conflict, including cross-border shelling in February 2016, and airstrikes in August 2016.

This runs in parallel to a wider electoral environment in which pro-Kurdish voices, through parties such as the HDP and its ethnic Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş, were originally welcomed into the political process by the AKP. This worked to the benefit of ruling elites in a number of ways. First, the dilution of members of the HDP was a useful tool in pacifying domestic concerns. This included HDP representatives visiting PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in jail, and helping draft a statement praising the election of Erdoğan as President. Öcalan’s widely-publicised letter claimed that the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish government was almost over. Overall, these processes suggested that elites were behaving in ways that deflect the Kurdish issue away from the centrality of public security debates. Within the framework presented here, we can argue that the motive was to prevent the Kurdish issue being overly politicised at a time when European integration was increasingly a private security concern of elites.

More recently, the initial acceptance of Demirtaş’ candidature for the 2014 Presidential election also demonstrates deflection. Prior to 2000 it would have been unthinkable to have a Kurdish candidate lead a (relatively) major party in a national election, with some sources framing him as a ‘Turkish Obama’. In the end, Demirtaş came third in the 2014 Presidential elections, garnering 9.7 percent of the vote. One interpretation of this result is that anti-Kurdish rhetoric clearly lacked the power of the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps more importantly, Demirtaş’ popularity corresponded to the increasingly worrying security environment in the Levant. Again, there is a security motive visible, whereby the visibility of actors such as Demirtaş allowed Turkey to promote inclusive pro-EU credentials westward as a hedge in an uncertain security order. Moreover, and more practically, this meant that Ankara could at least initially use the popularity of politicians such as Demirtaş as a sympathetic voice to assist in the creation of a buffer between Turkey, Shia groups, and radical Sunni influenced by Salafist principles.

The rationale for deflecting certain discourses is also apparent when undertaking a critical assessment of Turkish foreign policy. For example, there was evidence to suggest Turkey was quietly supporting radicalism to fracture Kurdish groups, despite elites deflecting this away from public narratives.\(^{120}\) This took advantage of the porous nature of the Turkish-Syrian border during the rise of ISIS, and a perceived lack of government responses to address the problem. It also helped create the so-called ‘Jihad’ highway: a key transit route for ISIS fighters and their supply lines.\(^{121}\)

In the other direction, materials from Syria have been moved to Turkey and exchanged for hard currency. In this context there are claims that the smuggling of diesel from seized Syrian refineries has benefited ISIS to the value of USD$800 million.\(^{122}\) For Turkey, the strategic rationale was that quietly supporting radicalism also decreased the chances of an independent Syrian Kurdish region emerging in North Syria directly on the Turkish border, given both Turkey and ISIS view the Kurds as a common enemy. In this instance, the consolidation of Kurdish Rojava as an independent political entity in Northern Syria was likely to result in increased international calls for an independent Kurdish state, further harming Turkey’s regional ambitions.

From this position, quiet support for radicalism also placed pressure on Washington to maintain a regional presence and therefore promoted Turkey’s ‘special’ role in the region. Additionally, limited instability stemming from radicalism in Syria can be perceived as advantageous for Turkey because Ankara wished to see the Assad regime fall. This antagonism emerged after Assad rejected a Turkish-modelled ‘redesign’ of its government, incorporating more Sunni members,\(^{123}\) and therefore became an obstacle to Turkey’s broader regional goals. Consequently, Turkey has


hosted the Syrian rebel headquarters\textsuperscript{124} and has recognised the Syrian opposition coalition as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people.\textsuperscript{125} Ankara has also allowed the border area between Syria and Turkey to be used as a conduit for arms and supplies and has welcomed refugees, including former Syrian soldiers.\textsuperscript{126} Turkey’s overall concern with Syria is driven not only by fears of instability via ISIS, but perhaps more pressingly by the fear of new Kurdish autonomous areas emerging, in turn leading to renewed calls for a Kurdish state or a revival of Kurdish nationalism.\textsuperscript{127} This would jeopardise Turkey’s vision of a stable, unified region acting in its own autonomous sphere of influence.

Nonetheless, such a strategy grounded in the Kurdish question was risky and has resulted in blowback. Subsequently, changes in Ankara’s discourse in regard to the Kurds again emerged during the 2010s, when a resurgence of PKK activity demanded a public response, especially in the lead-up to the 2015 Parliamentary election. However, even here much of anti-PKK narrative used by AKP leaders was not as explicitly linked to fears of Kurdish nationalism as in the past, but instead to broader concerns about Islamic extremism and terrorism. In fact, the AKP attempted to woo Kurdish voters away from HDP via several populist measures, including the publication of a Kurdish language Quran.\textsuperscript{128} Government airstrikes in August 2015 on the Qandil Mountains against PKK rebels are enlightening too.\textsuperscript{129} In this instance, the ‘terrorist’ narrative allowed Turkish elites to meld together two separate threats: ISIS and the PKK. This was effective at a security level because it deflected international criticism about Turkey’s attitude towards the PKK, and allowed it to act within a set of Western norms about counteracting Islamic terrorism. Moreover, it worked to strengthen US-Turkish relations during a period when regional security has become increasingly scarce. This, in turn, was designed to strengthen Turkey’s role as the US ‘anchor’ in the region, which had been threatened by improving


\textsuperscript{126} Kemal, “Inside Free Syrian Army’s Headquarters in Turkey.”

\textsuperscript{127} Alfoneh, “The Syria Strategies of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.”


relations between the US and Iran. These processes suggested that elites were behaving in ways that deflected Kurdish autonomy issues away from the centrality of public security debates, and moved them instead to areas that were more favourable to Turkey’s broader security concerns.

Turkish security and foreign policy elites have also been hesitant to invoke Iran as a domestic political issue. This is despite many reasons to do so, including a theocratic Iranian system that represents the polar opposite of the secular goals of Kemalism. A brief history of Iranian-Turkish relations helps contextualise this argument. Formal relations began in 1926 after a ‘friendship’ treaty was signed.130 This security agreement committed both states to neutrality in the event of attempts at foreign intervention. It was also designed to prevent renegade groups from disrupting the status quo with respect to existing borders. The Treaty of Saadabad, signed in 1937, expanded this concept to the wider region, and included Iraq and Afghanistan.131 Those two states were also key members of the Baghdad Pact, later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), at a time when Iranian loyalties swung to the West. Both also had a common goal of containing Soviet influence and ambition to the South. Until 1979 there was a tacit understanding that either Iraqi Pan-Arabism or total subservience to the USSR would exacerbate any hostilities between the two.132

Interestingly, the Iranian Revolution did not change relations dramatically, although it was very much expected. CENTO was disbanded, but the continuation of a common threat—Iraqi and Soviet influence—meant a cordial relationship endured. For Turkey, the fear was that the Iranian revolution would inspire domestic Turkish Islamist forces.133

This provides the context for why the ruling AKP and opposition CHP (Republican People's Party) have been careful in their language about Tehran, and have traditionally deflected debates concerning Iran away from the public discourse. For instance, while CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu has been vocal in his criticism of the AKP’s broader regional agenda, he was careful not to politicise certain issues, such as the

130 Elik, Iran-Turkey Relations, 1979-2011, 2.
132 Ibid.
NATO missile shield, which could antagonise Tehran. Similarly, the opposition CHP was broadly supportive of the AKPs role as moderator during the P5+1 nuclear negotiation, with Deputy Chairman Osman Faruk Loğoğlu announcing the deal was a ‘positive and promising development in terms of security and stability’.

One reason for the deflection of contentious issues about Iran is that Turkey is a main supplier of goods to Tehran. Iran-Turkey trade has been critical under a number of sanctions regimes: first in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution; second in 1995 for its support of terrorism; and more recently in 2006 over its uranium enrichment program. Hence, Turkey has maintained a degree of security leverage over Iran by acting as a proxy international gateway to trade. Conversely, energy is critical to Turkey, which itself is energy poor. Thus, oil sales are a source of hard currency for Tehran, while Turkey provides many important materials for Iran’s domestic usage including coal, plastics and chemical goods. Meanwhile, Iranian assets, including the Tabriz-Ankara gas pipeline, have provided energy diversification for Turkey, decreasing its dependence on Europe and Russia.

This combination of variables creates a climate in which strategic interdependence creates incentives to deflect Iran-Turkish relations away from public debates, despite the fact they are regional competitors. This is highlighted by changes in US-Iranian relations and Iran’s foreign policy towards Syria. Indeed, the nuclear agreement framework and willingness of Barack Obama to engage Iran had created problems for Turkey’s regional agenda, given Iranian and US interests increasingly are aligned. This has sparked the fear that a detente may harm Turkey’s attempts to lead the emerging regional order. This also provides diversification away from Russian dependence for both states. Tourist dollars also provide hard currency for Tehran along with coal, plastic and chemical imports.

138 “Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy.”
The corollary is that Turkey’s public discourse about Iran is generally quiet and contained. Furthermore, Turkish public opinion is largely neutral on Iran through a security prism. In respect to Iran’s nuclear program, the Pew 2012 Public Opinion Survey found 29 percent of Turks supported it, while 54 percent were opposed, despite Iran’s program risking an arms race. This contrasts with public opinion in EU countries that arguably face a much smaller immediate threat. Here, the numbers opposed to the Iranian nuclear program were all above 90 percent.

As a result, disputes between Iran and Turkey have been limited, and when issues do arise, responses have tended to be muted. In one well-known episode, Iran criticised Turkey in regard to the Salman Rushdie Affair. A second was Iran’s comments about the ‘Turban’ affair and the use of headscarves in Turkish universities. Finally, there was the ‘Baqeri crisis’ in 1997, when Iranian ambassador Mohammad-Reza Baqeri criticised Turkey’s Security Cooperation Agreement with Israel and called for Turkey to implement Sharia law. This led to some tensions, but overall relations have been stable and uneventful considering the wider regional environment.

Diplomatically, the Turks have also been broadly supportive of the Iranian nuclear enrichment program, with Ankara brokering a deal (along with Brazil) to move uranium outside of Iran for enrichment in return for fuel to operate a research reactor. More recently, though, Iran has taken steps to appease US interests by implementing the Geneva Agreements and reducing stockpiles of nuclear fuel.

This is also an interesting move, as it re-engaged Iran with the West and signalled the retreat from the near-complete disregard for institutions under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. At the same time, Turkey’s interests lie at the heart of these moves because Ankara has leveraged the nuclear issue to improve its perception in the Arab world, chiefly by presenting itself as a state prepared to stand up to the Israel and the US by supporting Iran’s nuclear rights.

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140 Ibid.
Therefore, underneath these actions has also been an unusual popularity contest, linked to the broader geopolitical ambitions of each state. For much of the late 2000s, Turkey was winning this competition. During the period after the Arab Spring, Erdoğan enjoyed the highest support of any leader in the region, with a personal ‘favourable’ view across the region of 65 percent according to a 2012 Pew Research Centre poll. Overall, some 70 percent of people surveyed viewed Turkey favourably. In contrast, despite Iran’s attempts to attach itself to populist regional messages, it has been less successful. More Middle Eastern people viewed Saudi Arabia as favourable (66 percent) than Iran (33 percent) in the same poll. As Larrabee and Nader observe, this means Iran’s image as the counterweight to US ‘imperialism’ in the region has resonated less deeply in the current political environment.

One interpretation of this is that Ankara’s deflection of issues concerning Tehran means it can present itself as a rival to Iran when invoking anti-imperial discourses within the wider Middle East. Furthermore, given the important trade, energy and diplomatic issues identified above, Iran is unlikely promote anti-Turkish sentiment opportunistically. More generally, it suggests that conflict between Iran-Turkey in any sphere will result in a net loss for both states’ security positions, and therefore potential conflicts are downplayed and deflected away from public debates.

Outside of the immediate region an increasingly important concern for Turkey is its management of its relationship with China. Numerous instances of deflection are visible in their wider engagement. Currently, trade is the key variable. In 2012, the two countries agreed on a goal to boost trade four-fold to USD$100 billion by 2020. The primary driver of China in the region is its interest in energy, followed by an overall Chinese interest in regional stability, especially in Central Asia. From a cultural position, Beijing views stronger Turkish relations as a technique to pacify its ethnic Turkic-Chinese population. China and Turkey now formally have a ‘strategic relationship’, which includes the construction of Turkish industrial zone in Xinjiang.

145 Larrabee and Nader, Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East, 2.
Uighur Autonomous Region. This relationship stems from the common ethnicity of the Turkic peoples that extend into Chinese territory, and has become more pertinent recently with sporadic outbreaks of violence from Turkmen separatists, such as that which occurred during the Ürümqi riots and the 2014 Kunming train station massacre.

Defence cooperation is also increasing. Originally China was tendered to build the T-LORAMIDS missile defence system, despite objections from Europe and the US. One of the key arguments from Ankara was that the Chinese deal was preferred because of favourable technology sharing agreements. This has been central to Turkish policy since 1985, and a reaction against companies from both the US and EU that have been highly protective of their intellectual property, and their own research and development programs.

Despite the advantages of the Chinese missile defence deal, it was cancelled on November 18, 2015. The timing and events about the cancelation announcement are informative, and reveal a significant degree of opportunism by Ankara. The decision was announced only two days after the 2015 G20 conference held in Antalya, towards the end of Turkey’s role in the presidency of the group. At the time, Erdoğan was involved in meetings with Barack Obama and other Western leaders and it has been suggested that Erdoğan made the announcement due to pressure from NATO and the US during these meetings. But within the broader Turkish security environment, the tender cancelation made sense: Turkey’s new foreign policy approach was faltering, and relations with Russia and Syria were

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increasingly problematic. Furthermore, a potential detente between the US and Iran would have left Ankara potentially isolated in the future.

This has also posed a challenge for the management of domestic audiences, who were increasingly being told that China was a new key ally. This is because many problematic themes were emerging about Beijing. Notably, Turkey’s large textile industry had suffered because of a flux of cheap Chinese imports, while Beijing’s treatment of Turkic peoples in areas such as Xinjiang risked emboldening domestic nationalists. To counter this sentiment, Turkish elites engaged in several public diplomacy efforts to improve China’s domestic image. Most prominently, 2012 was named the ‘Year of Chinese Culture’ by Ankara. China reciprocated by announcing that 2013 would be the ‘Year of Turkish culture’. Turkey launched Chinese language courses within its universities, and two Confucius Institutes, funded by China, also opened. Additionally, Erdoğan had warned the public about embracing negative narratives about Beijing, linking them to the notion of corrupting Turkey, and to the vague notion of the deep state. Specifically, he asked the public ‘not to rise to the bait of provocateurs’ and warned that Gülenist media ‘have made this sensibility [the Uighur issue] prone to exploitation’.

Nonetheless, some attitudes towards China have remained problematic, especially after attacks on Chinese citizens in 2015, and when Devlet Bahceli, chairman of the MHP, made a series of racist remarks about Chinese tourists. This intensified an existing dispute with China over claims that Turkish diplomats were assisting members of the Uighur minority by providing travel documents.

156 Altay Atli, “The Future of Turkey’s Relations with China,” Turkish Review 2, no. 6 (December 2012): 100.
Erdoğan visited Beijing soon after these events to appease Chinese concerns,160 and linked into wider bipartisan support of the China policy from the CHP, whose leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, has been a frequent visitor to Beijing. Indeed, during his 2013 trip he was quoted by Hürriyet as saying ‘We don’t say anything different from the state’s policy regarding China. We, as the CHP, support strategic relations with China’.161 Overall, this signalled a willingness to take advantage of China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative, given Turkey sits at the critical European gateway as an important resource pivot.

By doing so, Turkey’s leadership demonstrated an ability and willingness to deflect anti-Chinese sentiment. Indeed, there have been domestic political gains to be made in this arena given that Turkish and Chinese interests clash in Central Asia. At the same time, those who have attempted such moves have not pursued them as rigorously as could be expected, and the tendency has been to pursue any contentious issues only insofar as they have appeased domestic audiences.

Deflection extends to Greece too, with whom Turkey has an antagonistic history. The Greco-Turkish War and the so-called ‘Pontic genocide’ that resulted in the deaths of large numbers of Anatolian Greeks are important historical memories for both states.162 These inform the security competitions that occur around the Aegean Sea and Cyprus, such as the two hundred plus annual marine and airspace territorial violations by both states and that continue to plague relations.163 More recently, the emergence of SYRIZA in Greece has exacerbated these concerns, given that any potential Greek exit from the Eurozone would further harm Turkey’s geographical and institutional links to the EU.164


Despite these issues, Turkey has increasingly deflected issues about Greece away from the centre of debates. This can be understood better when viewed in the context of the politics concerning the EU and Turkey’s EU candidacy. The EU relationship has accelerated the liberalization of Turkish society and some of its political institutions because of the EU accession process and the acquis communautaire. This had required Turkey to unify its domestic conditions with the common body of EU political, economic and legal rules. Consequently, for Turkey, EU relations are critical for security purposes because there are considerable economic gains to be made, and EU engagement helps consolidate the NATO alliance. In contrast, any distinct lack of interest or institutional engagement with Europe potentially threatens the legitimacy of NATO, and therefore Turkey’s ‘special’ role. The potential for a European security community without Turkey was hinted at during the transition of the Western European Union’s (WEU) security functions to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), along with the ‘Berlin-Plus’ agreements. These gave EU states automatic access to NATO resources, yet Turkey’s ability to use such forces was only tied to the US. Turkey’s concerns about being on the fringe on EU security priorities were especially visible during the 2003 European Union Force (EUFOR) Concordia mission in Macedonia, during which Ankara could only provide minimal support because of institutional roadblocks. Thus, overall, Turkey’s security via NATO is increasingly linked to institutional engagement with the EU, or at least attempting to appear engaged in the processes of accession.

More recently, the Greek financial crisis has helped fuel the emergence of radical right wing nationalist groups. The Golden Dawn movement in particular is prone to pushing nationalistic agendas, with Party leader Nikos Mihaloliakos stating that ‘we will take Istanbul, Izmir as well as the Black Sea back’. While such threats are easy to dismiss as empty rhetoric, any clumsy Turkish response from elites risks heightening tensions and the amplification of these issues in the public debate.

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The answer has been to deflect these rather than promote them. For instance, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Athens in October 2012 as part of a charm campaign laced with practical considerations considering the Greek Crisis. Furthermore, a 2016 survey of Turkish elites by Kadir Has University found that pragmatic considerations ruled the relationship despite being taken soon after the 2016 coup attempt, where military officers sought asylum in the Greek town of Alexandroupoli. In this survey, only 12.8 percent of the diplomats, politicians, journalists, businessmen and military officers question believed that current Turkish-Greek relations were ‘bad or rather bad’.

This type of response has decreased public threat perceptions about Greece and suggests that although anti-Greek sentiment is still prominent in Turkey (indeed, a 2011 poll found that 67 percent of Turks had negative views towards Greeks), they rarely view their neighbour as a high priority existential threat. In fact, another poll in 2011 on threat perception found only 2.3 percent of respondents viewed Greece as a threat, compared to 43 percent for the US and 24 for Israel. This is despite the fact that from a security driven position Greece arguably presents a greater immediate challenge to Turkey than Israel, when viewed in the context of the EU relationship.

It—along with Bulgaria—is Turkey’s gateway into Europe. Turkey’s European credentials (especially concerning NATO) are assisted by both geographical continuity and good relations with members of the transatlantic bloc.

Consequently, when viewed together, the examples of the PKK/Syria, Iran, China and Greece demonstrate how issues are reordered within the public discourse when they are seen to be problematic for the pragmatic security agenda. So, relations with

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Iran, which possess many of the ingredients for exploitation, are rarely broached in domestic discourse. Similarly, anti-Chinese sentiment, which is ripe for manipulation about sensitive issues such as Uighur nationalism, is not exploited as widely as it could be (with the exception of the MHP) due to the underlying acceptance that China is key to Turkey’s future security prospects. Finally, management of the Kurdish question also displays evidence of deflection. This issue has been reordered multiple times in line with wider strategic pressures.

These responses have parallels to those found in the Australian case. For Australia, the most intense security threats with existential potential (China and the US) are often deflected in debates. Likewise, the responses of Turkey’s elites show a similar pattern. Issues about close neighbours, such as Iran, are often deflected, while the Kurdish question was deflected for a period during the 2000s when it was harming Turkey’s wider strategic position. Even then, when issues require attention or remain in the public discourse, they are deflected to concepts that are more abstract.

_Dilution_

Dilution is highly visible in Turkey. In fact it has arguably been the most prominent way for elites to handle problematic narratives from gaining traction. The most compelling piece of evidence in this respect can be found in the various constitutional ‘resets’ of the political system, which were explicitly designed to moderate Turkish politics. This contrasts with the Australian case, where dilutive responses have been relatively fluid. In contrast, Turkey’s tools to dilute problematic discourse are more firmly codified in both law and ideology via the constitution and Kemalism.

Religion is an important factor in Turkish politics given that approximately 99 percent of the Turkish population identifies as Muslim compared to 6 percent across the EU. As a result, a central domestic security challenge of Turkish republic has been to incorporate Islam in a ‘modern’ form (sometimes described as

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The reason for this is that political Islam is ripe for exploitation by European voices and this has been evidenced by the emergence of anti-immigration and nationalist parties including Austria’s Freedom Party, which often explicitly links Islam to extremism. For example, Golden Dawn lawmaker Ilias Kasidiaris has campaigned explicitly against the ‘Islamization of Greece’ and ‘racism against Greeks’, while the Freedom Party suggested that radical Islam should be ‘rooted out’ at the Kindergarten level to stop Vienna becoming an ‘immigrant magnet’. In fact, preventing the politicisation of Islam has always been a focus of Turkish security, and was one of the central justifications for Kemalism. In short, Kemalism attempted to align Turkey’s institutions, culture and outlook with its European neighbours, to avoid the poor security outcomes experienced by other Middle Eastern states after interference by great powers. Kemalism’s early successes were contingent on the aggressive use of historical memory, and Turks often frame their wider security discourse through the lens of ‘Sèvres syndrome’. This narrative is based on perceived unfair treatment during the partition of the Ottoman Empire at the hands of the Western powers, leading to a humiliating end for a substantial empire that once controlled most of the Balkans and the Middle East. In particular, the handing of Turkish Thrace to Greece and a clause stipulating the establishment of a Kurdish state were viewed as an attempt by great powers to extinguish the Turkish identity. From the perspective presented here, we can interpret the use of Sèvres in the security narrative as a ‘permissive’ tool.

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180 The role of collective memory has been subject to extensive research in the sociological realm, most notably by M. Halbwachs, On Collective Memory (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Within IR, China has a particularly strong collective memory with issues such as the ‘unequal treaties’ such as the Treaty of Shimonoseki at the hands of the West still referenced in modern domestic and international politics. See Alan M. Wachman, Why Taiwan? Geoeconomic Rationale for China’s Territorial Integrity (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 87.
underpinning many of the security discourses as a time when the state was under threat.

Hence, Atatürk’s reforms were used to justify a number of illiberal concepts to facilitate the shift towards a modern secular democracy, with the assumption that this would provide the best security for the continuity of the Turkish state. Consequently, ‘threats’ under Kemalism involved a range of ambiguous legal concepts, where vague but strong constitutional amendments—including insulting ‘Turkishness’—became a powerful political tool to manage discourse. Indeed, Kemalism itself represented the inflation of a specific type of nationalism that was vague, internally focussed, but also potentially problematic in a security setting, because it allowed any rogue actors to be conflated with a security threat and therefore diluted with a level of legitimacy.

Kemalism’s pillars—the so-called ‘six arrows’ consisting of republicanism, nationalism, populism, revolutionism, secularism and statism—can also be interpreted as a way to maintain general unity and engage the various post-Ottoman groupings. Taha Parla and Andrew Davidson have hinted at these processes in their work characterising Kemalism and its pillars to provide an ‘exclusivist account of Turkish national identity’. While Turkishness was a wide-ranging concept, encompassing a broad cultural, ideational and ethnic group, its limits were clearly demarcated.

Security objectives linked to narratives focused on Kemalism became more visible during the rise of tensions concerning the Cold War. A succession of Turkish coups d’état consolidated power in a more concentrated elite with the ability to act in ‘appropriately’ when viewed in the context of wider structural pressures. For example, the 1960 coup and the subsequent execution of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and Foreign Minister Fatih Rüştü Zorlu were driven by concerns that Turkey was swaying too far towards political Islam, especially after Menderes allowed the re-entry of specific elements of religion back into the public sphere. This included the restoration of cultural Islam back into the public space, the use of

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184 Ibid.
Arabic in the call to prayer, and the reintroduction of İmam Hatip (prayer) schools. Menderes’ tenure was accompanied by numerous regional crises with potential to threaten Turkish security, including the Arab-Israeli War, the Suez Crisis, the end of the Baghdad Pact, and the Syrian and Lebanese Crises. Attempts to interfere in Iraq and Syrian affairs did not strengthen Turkish security as intended, but instead alienated Turkey from the Arab world. A revised constitution was implemented after the coup, which Serap Yazıcı viewing it as a consolidation of ‘tutorship’ by the military, and enabling ‘extremely authoritarian mechanisms within the illusion of democracy’.

In the aftermath of the 1960 coup, Turkey reasserted its commitment to NATO and the US by cancelling planned trips by Khrushchev and rejecting $500 million in military aid from Moscow. But despite these moves to improve its security position, by diluting the role of religion, tensions re-emerged with the new İnönü administration, especially about Turkey’s role in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. They also reasserted the primacy of the military and the ideational centrality of Kemalism during a period where the internal polity was at risk of exploitation from several competing domestic forces.

The process whereby those who acted outside of Kemalist tenets were cast as a security threat continued to guide constitutional reform were again visible during the 1980 coup, when all political parties were banned by the military as part of a political ‘reset’. Notable changes included the high 10 percent vote hurdle for parties entering parliament as part of the 1983 Political Parties Act (PPA). The PPA created an environment in which Islamist parties maintained their core constituents, but in order to gain electoral power they diluted their policies to align closely with the political centre. Hence, one interpretation is that Turkish politics

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187 Mufti, “Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy,” 43–44.
was ‘centred’ (in other words, diluted) in 1983 after the military approved just three parties, all of which represented centrist and moderate positions.

The 1997 coup is also instructive, given that the ruling Welfare Party—the precursor to the current AKP—was banned for violating Kemalist principles.\(^\text{192}\) The so-called ‘postmodern coup’ occurred when generals submitted a list of issues to the government that were to be enforced, before instigating the resignation of the Prime Minister in what became known as the ‘February 28th process’.\(^\text{193}\) The list contained liberal provisions, designed to prevent a shift towards political Islam and the Middle East. Its new measures included the enforcement of a headscarf ban, provisions for eight years of primary education, and the closing of Quranic schools.\(^\text{194}\)

In this instance, the military was concerned about loud political Islamist voices emerging from within the Welfare Party. As in the past, a core fear of foreign policy and security elites was that the re-emergence of political Islam that could move Turkey societally in the direction of its neighbour Iran, thereby harming Turkey’s overall security position.\(^\text{195}\) As a result, the military oversaw the dismantling of the Welfare party and forced Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan out of power.

Dilution is also visible within the Welfare Party’s reinvention as the AKP in 2001. In fact, at the AKPs formation it had a clear moderate and centrist agenda, and a pro-Western and pro-American foreign and security policy.\(^\text{196}\) In practice, this meant the AKP remained largely adherent to Kemalist principles up until changes in the geopolitical environment, and, notably, the events of the Arab Spring in late 2010 and early 2011. At this point Kemalism was rendered less useful after political Islam re-emerged as a driver of popular movements in Syria, Iraq and Egypt. More worryingly for Ankara, this combined with fears of US retrenchment and an increasing opposition to Turkish membership of the EU.

One result of the AKP’s shift towards political Islam is that extremist parties have been prevented from seizing the political space from disenfranchised citizens. For

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\(^{196}\) Constantine Arvanitopoulos, Turkey’s Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2009), 59.
example, at the electoral level radical and hard-line Islamist parties such as the Felicity Party and Great Union Party have lost their relevance as the AKP harnessed the conservative Islamic vote. At the same time, the AKP has also captured right-leaning constituents who are receptive to the AKP’s neo-Ottoman language, resulting in the ‘traditionalist’ (i.e. those sympathetic to nationalist and pan-Turkic parties) vote decreasing from 25 percent in 2002 to 2.7 percent in the 2011 elections. This suggests that the increase in Islamist rhetoric from the AKP possessed a security function, which was to capture and moderate rogue political actors by diluting their messages.

The left has also experienced similar processes. Dilution has been visible in an unlikely cluster of groups that have manifested themselves in the form of the People’s Democracy Party (HDP), which have links to the Kurdish independence movement. Notably, and as addressed earlier in the section on deflection, the HDP is Green leaning, has a feminist agenda, is pro-LGBT, and has a Kurdish leader in Demirtaş. The new coalition includes the remnants of the Democratic Society Party, of which Demirtaş was a member, and had previously been banned in 2009. From the position of dilution, the emergence of the HDP worked in an assorted number of positive ways for elites, despite holding radically different political positions. Firstly, it initially allowed them to diffuse any accusations of authoritarianism or persecution of Kurdish and minorities. In security terms, this enhanced European relations, while also helping stabilise the situation in the East of the country by moving these extremes of the political spectrum and their more responsible members closer to the centre of power, where they could be carefully monitored. This is understandable given the HDP’s Kurdish connection was

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increasingly important in respect to conflict in Syria and Iraq, as well as the emergence of the KRG as a potential independent entity.

Similar processes of dilution were visible when the AKP attempted to counter the power of the military class through the September 2010 referendum, which although promoted as a tool to meet EU compliance, was actually designed to weaken the military’s control over the judicial structure. In this instance, the AKP has tried to dilute the role of the military, where its crude anti-democratic positions are viewed as a security threat.

In security terms, the dilution of the military’s power was again critical to Turkey’s alignment with EU norms, thereby functioning as an important variable in Turkey’s wider security agenda. Consequently, Turkish rhetorical changes on Europe in the post-Cold War era correlated with the weakening influence of the military and a move towards a more ‘democratised’ political structure on paper. But, as demonstrated earlier with the Kurdish example of deflection, this was driven by the fear that security agreements such as the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) might lead to the EU superseding NATO at some point in the future. Therefore, to not engage with Europe through reforms to meet acquis communautaire conditions, could have meant isolation both in economic, and (by proxy) security terms. This contrasted with the Cold War environment, where European allies and the US were more tolerant of a state with lax internal structures, including use of torture, a highly controlled media, and an impotent judicial system.

In practice, the EU accession reforms of 2001, designed to accommodate the Aquis condition, included thirty-four constitutional amendments passed under Bülent Ecevit, with the majority revolving around human rights issues. Other key reforms were the passage of free speech laws and the ‘civilianization’ of the National Security Council (MGK). The Council was reformed to comprise a civilian majority and specifically positioned as a consultative body rather than an

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204 Ibid., 74.
authoritarian one, as it was under military rule. These changes, especially within the MGK, have led to claims that the ‘elected civilians have now become the ultimate decision-makers concerning Turkish foreign and security policy’. In the broadest sense, Tarik Oguzlu termed this process ‘Europeanization without Membership’.

Indeed, Turkish domestic instability and poor democratic credentials were key factors militating against EU accession and full economic integration. Specifically, military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 led to a perceived gap between EU and Turkish political standards. Because of this, after the initial European Economic Community (EEC) application being made in 1959, it was not until 1987 that Ankara again formally made an application for full EEC membership. The EEC deferred Turkey’s application on numerous grounds, including human rights, the unresolved natured of the Cyprus and Aegean Sea issues with Greece, and a lack of political and democratic reforms. In 1995, the EU-Turkey customs union was formed and allowed free trade between the two areas, and again EU accession looked more likely. However, the 1997 military coup and subsequent EU protests delayed this. Finally, in 1999, forty years after its initial submission, Turkey was formally recognised as a candidate state for EU membership.

The paradox was that the internal discourse used to sell these radical changes was inherently undemocratic. This is visible in the shift from the soft authoritarianism of Kemalism to the proto-authoritarianism rhetoric of Erdoğan. Consequently, a substantial rebalance of the civilian-military relationship has occurred since 2003 when the AKP took power, being a combination of adhering to the EU Acquis process mixed with a consistent theme of the military acting as a ‘rogue’ and unaccountable political actor.

Publicly, this means that Erdoğan and the AKP had resorted to certain domestic narratives to dilute the power of the military, without straying too far from European

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207 Oguzlu, “Turkey and the European Union.”
political norms. A key device to facilitate this shift in public debates was the so-called ‘Sledgehammer’ plot in 2003, in which the AKP ‘uncovered’ a conspiracy to remove Erdoğan from power via a military coup. In this instance, many of those jailed had supposed connections to ‘Ergenekon’ an ultranationalist movement whose key motive was to retain a more rigid version of Kemalism.\(^{\text{210}}\) Its supporters, in turn, were suspected to be involved with a clandestine ‘deep state’. The result was that at the beginning of 2012, half of Turkey’s admirals and one in ten active generals were in prison.\(^{\text{211}}\) In September 2012 a further 330 military officers were jailed.\(^{\text{212}}\)

Dilution therefore occurs in a distinct and peculiar way in the Turkish setting. Unlike in Australia, where a simple left-right division is generally suitable, the Turkish political spectrum is split in multiple ways. Until recently, centralised military rule meant this process was straightforward, whereby the military would simply ban any rogue actors but then allow them to regather in moderated form, using clear-cut security rationales in the process. This included the experience that led to the formation of the AKP, and to a lesser extent the HDP. More recently, the domestic balance has changed, and the Kemalist system that invested much power in the military role has been reversed. Nonetheless, as the Kurdish example demonstrates, the AKP’s continuing concentration of power means it can strategically dilute public debates depending on their security implications.

As with the issue of deflection, there are also similarities with the Australian case. Although Australia’s ‘centre’ is politically different, adopting messages to control them has parallels with the treatment of the right and the left in Turkey. Hence, in the Australian case, we can see entrepreneurs such as the One Nation party and the Greens being moderated and politicians censured by their parties for making statements outside of the centre. In Turkey, similar phenomena are apparent, albeit more crudely. Thus, groups such as the Welfare Party were banned and shifted by law closer to the centre. Similarly, AKP politicians such as Erdoğan and Davutoğlu moderated their messages in line with the political thought of the time.

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\(^{\text{210}}\) Filkins, “How Far Will Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan Go to Stay in Power?: The New Yorker.”


Consequently, (and pragmatically), Erdoğan was staunchly pro-European and pro-Western at a point when this was viewed as critical to Turkey’s security interests.

**Inflation**

Dilution is made much easier when benign threats are inflated, rather than core ones. Hence, the third response type—*inflation*—suggests that elites in Turkey choose and promote issues that are ‘safe’ for consumption by domestic audiences. Here, elites seek to fill ideational vacuums. Thus, inflation is not a direct response to any distinct security threat, but instead one that seeks to obfuscate other threats through the exaggeration of less important issues in the public discourse.

One overt form of inflation has been particularly evident with the demonization of technologies such as social media since 2011. This is understandable given these electronic and virtual platforms cannot be censored in the same way as newspapers, television or radio. This led to AKP elites like Erdoğan continually attacking social media. He claimed that ‘all kinds of immorality […] and espionage can be found there’.213 Erdoğan also stated ‘I don’t understand how people of good sense could defend this Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter’ and made the broader claim that social media was a ‘knife in the hand of a murderer’.214 The ensuing blocks on YouTube and Twitter instigated by the AKP were widely publicised, and pitched in security language, with Erdoğan repeatedly claiming that Twitter was ‘threatening national security’.215 Informatively, Erdoğan’s first social media ‘outrage’ occurred parallel to campaigning for the March 30, 2014 municipal elections. The ban was lifted two weeks later, and the security tone Erdoğan used to justify it resonated with conservative voters, who delivered a 4.5 percent swing to the AKP.216

A useful way to interpret this is by viewing public outbursts from elites at social media as a form of theatre designed for the large conservative domestic audience. Hence, while the ‘damage’ done by social media is prominent in the AKPs

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discourses about Turkey, the empirical effects of highly publicised Twitter and YouTube bans are minimal, with circumvention techniques widely used to bypass restrictions. This includes the use of VPNs (virtual private networks), proxies and alternative domain name server (DNS) providers.

Indeed, the hollow nature of the ‘threats’ found online is demonstrated by the AKP’s own use of the social media environment when it deems it appropriate. For example, the I-POST project at Sabancı University found the previous President, Abdullah Gül—the co-founder of the AKP, but now an independent—was highly influential and active on Twitter, with over 4.5 million followers. Using the I-POST model, he was the second most ‘central’ figure shaping and disseminating information, while Erdoğan ranked fifth. Hence, on another level elites have used these emerging tools to help shape debates when deemed necessary. At the same time, anti-social media narratives resonate when addressing the large conservative audiences outside of the major cities. Amongst this demographic only 46.25 percent of individuals use the Internet, which represents a lower penetration rate than Russia (at 61 percent), or the UK (at 90 percent).

This means the inflation of language about security has been one of the most important processes affecting Turkish domestic politics over the last few years. In other words, much of the rhetoric out of Turkey is designed to complement empirical security considerations. At the same time, elites are aware of the dangers of rhetoric and its impact on security outcomes. Much of the rhetoric is therefore deliberate and calculated, with the current assumption being that the discourse emerging from Ankara was largely seen as benign by its core security partners—the EU and NATO—as long as it is not backed by hard action.

While the inflation of rhetoric concerning social media resonates with certain groups within Turkey, it is less useful when projecting messages about Turkey into countries of concern in the Middle East, and in particular Syria and Egypt, where

217 Identifying Policy Opinion Shapers and Trends in Turkey” (I-POST) is an online opinion-tracking tool developed by researchers at Sabancı University.
only 28 percent and 31 percent of population respectively uses the Internet.\textsuperscript{220} Consequently, crude mass media statements have been used by the AKP to promote its agenda, with the wider goal of helping its security position, most prominently about Israel. This is informative and paradoxical, because the two countries have shared close diplomatic ties since 1949.\textsuperscript{221}

The most obvious example of inflation concerning Israel was the ‘Davos incident’, when Erdoğan confronted the Israeli President Simon Peres face-to-face in 2009. Referring to the Israeli attitude to Palestine, he stated that ‘my voice will not be that loud. You must know that. […] but […] when it comes to killing you know killing very well. I know how you hit, kill children on the beach’ before storming off the stage.\textsuperscript{222} It is unlikely that an experienced politician such as Erdoğan would make the error of acting emotionally without thinking through the rational consequences of such an action on an important stage, and thus we can interpret this as deliberate theatre to inflate the issue to his domestic audience. Indeed, on his return to Turkey, Erdoğan was widely praised, receiving a ‘hero’s welcome’ with banners proclaiming that he was the ‘delegate of the oppressed’.\textsuperscript{223}

Erdoğan’s vocal support for Palestine was next followed by an ‘Arab Spring’ tour in 2011, which started with an appearance on an Egyptian TV program where he called Israel ‘the West’s spoiled child’.\textsuperscript{224} Interestingly, Erdoğan’s claim mirrored a shift in negative attitudes towards the US and the EU, with Turkey having the most unfavourable opinion of both the EU and the US of all NATO members (34 percent for the US and 38 percent for the EU).\textsuperscript{225} At the same time, Turkey had the highest number of people who believed that Asia was more important to the national interest than the US. It also had the lowest number of people that approved of Obama’s


\textsuperscript{221} Ofra Bengio, The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders (New York City, NY: Springer, 2004), 74.


international policies among NATO members (52 percent). This had the important function of legitimising and enabling a pivot in Turkey’s wider strategic policy East to a domestic audience.

But, despite these public displays, the Israel-Turkish relationship remains critical to both nations. In the 1990s, Turkey and Israel shared a strong relationship, not to mention many common threats, including a mutual suspicion of the EU and Iran. Indeed, Turkey is one of the only Muslim countries with a major military agreement with Israel (signed in 1996). Given this position, Turkey again has a larger amount of political capital to expend on the question of Israel in comparison to other states in the region.

Furthermore, bilateral trade continues to be important to both states, which has increased fourfold since 2005, reaching USD$5.6 billion in 2014. In fact, as a leaked diplomatic cable noted, ‘Turkish civil servants had advised Israel to weather the prime minister’s harsh rhetoric until ties improved’ and that ‘repeated outbursts against Israel were for “domestic consumption only”’. Similarly, less visible relationships, such as over intelligence sharing, remain important. In one quiet episode during the public feud, Hakan Fidan, the head of the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation, discussed security matters with Mossad Chief, Tamir Pardo, on visits to Ankara in 2012 and 2013. Agreements signed in the early 1990s with Mossad, which allow its agents to operate freely in Turkey, also remained in place. Further evidence of an improving relationship behind the rhetoric can be found in a USD$1.3 billion gas deal that was signed between the

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226 Ibid., 26.
Israeli Power Company Edeltech and the Turkish company Zorlu Enerji in early 2016.233

Relations between the two states were formally normalised on June 27, 2016, ending a six-year rift after Turkey agreed to drop all claims against Israeli soldiers involved in the Gaza incident.234 Here we could reasonably claim that Turkey’s political capital was being exhausted and that much of the rhetoric was designed for an internal audience with the goal of legitimatising wider shifts in Turkish foreign policy. This suggests that a great deal of the political dynamics between Israel and Turkey are grounded in pragmatism, despite the changing rhetoric. Hence, Israel begrudgingly accepted Turkish criticism in the knowledge that Ankara must appease Middle Eastern viewers. This increased Turkey’s security position by inflating issues about Israel, and thereby deflecting concerns about Turkey’s Islamic credentials to the wider Middle Eastern audience.

A larger, but more obtuse target of Turkish rhetoric has been the US. Negative messaging focused on Washington has been increasing over the past decade. This can be partly attributed to the break of the isolationist norm after election of the AKP and US actions against Turkey’s neighbour Iraq. This is visible a wide range of cultural outlets. Books in the 2000s such as ‘Metal Storm’ about a hypothetical war between the US and Turkey, which ended with a nuclear detonation over Washington, sold record numbers.235 Similarly, The Valley of Wolves: Iraq (Kurtlar Vadisi: Irak), a fictional account of the USS Hood incident (featuring US soldiers machine-gunning innocents, and an American Jewish doctor selling their organs), became the biggest budget movie and biggest commercial success in Turkish history.236 Then Speaker of the House, Bülent Arınç, was present at the premiere, and proclaimed it ‘a great film that will go down in history’.237 Such populism was reflected in domestic opinion about the US, with 64 percent of Turks in 2007 viewing the US as a threat, while fewer than one in ten Turks had a positive view of

237 Morgan, “What Turks Are Watching.”
the US—second only to Palestine. Importantly, unlike many other states of the region, US domestic politics have barely changed this trend, with net favourability towards Obama only three points above George W. Bush (at 15 percent) during 2012.

Nonetheless, US–Turkish relations have remained ultimately robust when examined in isolation, despite the anti-Western rhetoric. Notably, Ankara still toes the US line on most important security decisions, such as participating and hosting elements of the NATO missile defence system. Furthermore, Turkey is acting as expected under a structural reading, where it is hedging against total commitment to NATO. As noted earlier, it initially awarded a tender for missile defence to China and its FD-2000 missile system, and used this to pressure Brussels about its role in NATO, given it has the second largest armed force among members. NATO membership is also likely to remain a pillar of Turkish strategy in spite of the departure of Turkey from a wider set of European institutional pathways (such as the European Commission on Human Rights [ECHR] and the EU Acquis process), given that Ankara remains central to the US’s own regional security interests.

The inflation of the Gülenist movement in the period since 2010 is curious too, but one that complements the broader argument that Turkish elites inflate certain issues to sell changes in security policy to the domestic audience. The group itself is led by the exiled Fetullah Gülen, who resides in the US. During the early 2000s, Gülen’s influence helped facilitate the AKP’s rise and the decline of Kemalism. As with the other examples here, and within the other cases, there are elements of truth that sit within a larger body of exaggerated issues, which are often hard to unpack. Nonetheless—and despite the problematic outcomes of the recent push against Gülenist linked groups, including alleged human rights abuses—there is a functional role for the inflation of Gülenism within the wider state security discourse.

240 Cook, Albright, and Hadley, U.S.-Turkey Relations: A New Partnership.
242 See McLean, “Erdoganism (or Why Turkey Is Leaving the West).”
This has allowed for the consolidation of power and the wider security infrastructure of the state at a time when Turkey’s security challenges are greater than at any time during the past twenty years. From this position, even if the Gülenist threat is almost entirely manufactured, as many suggest\(^{244}\), functionally it gives Ankara ‘permission’ to undertake changes to its security posture that might not be possible during a more ‘ordinary’ time. In effect this complete shift, from a military and its isolationist stance, to one that embraced a more moderate form of political Islam, makes sense given the wider geopolitical climate of the mid-2000s, when Turkey had been concerned about political entrepreneurs harnessing the resurgence of radical Sunni actors through the wider Middle East.

In fact, this relationship initially leveraged Gülen-linked media interests, including the popular Zaman newspapers, Samanyolu and Mehtap TV, and the Cihan News Agency. And, from 2002-2010, the AKP and the Gülenist movement jointly used their combined media influence to promote domestic narratives unfavourable to the military, thereby breaking down many of the norms about Kemalism, and hence the military’s role in politics. Notably this included promotion of the events concerning the so-called ‘Sledgehammer’ coup plot in 2007 by the Gülen-associated political magazine Nokta and the subsequent ‘Ergenekon’ trials.\(^{245}\) The Sledgehammer plot was (supposedly) revealed in the anti-military newspaper \textit{Taraf} and included a plan by the military to remove the AKP from power by staging ‘false-flag’ events that included the shooting down of Turkish plane, and bombing two mosques.\(^{246}\) Some 365 people were found guilty of participating in the conspiracy during trials in 2012, but all were released in 2014 after the split between the AKP and the Gülenists emerged, and the AKP attempted to court the military again.\(^{247}\)

The result of the split was that Gülenism became inflated in the public discourse as the key threat to Turkish security, despite a lack of hard evidence. In this sense, Gülenism was the latest in a line of inflated threats that had started with political Islam in the early days of the Republic. Perhaps most interestingly, the Gülenist

\(^{244}\) An in-depth account of the anti-Gülenist arguments and their flaws is found in Dogan Koç, \textit{Strategic Defamation of Fethullah Gülen: English vs. Turkish} (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012).


\(^{247}\) Ibid.
'threat' remains the least well defined. Outwardly, the AKP rejects the Gülenist pillars of interfaith dialogue and tolerance because it sees them as a tool to subvert Turkish institutions, and regards the use of the media and professional associations as a covert way to achieve a takeover of the state.\textsuperscript{248}

Supporters of the takeover narrative point to Gülenism’s previous use of ideational rhetoric to achieve its goals. This includes Gülenist literature released in 1999 that asserted ‘every method and path is acceptable [including] lying to people’.\textsuperscript{249} There is also evidence that pro-Gülenist elements have funded lawmakers in Washington D.C. to lobby Congress, with over USD$800,000 in travel expenses since 2008, paid for by groups such as the Texas-based Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians.\textsuperscript{250} The AKP responded to the alleged political actions by a variety of security driven movements including the closure of Turkey’s largest circulation paper, the Gülenist-linked Zaman, in early 2016.\textsuperscript{251} Later Gülenists were also blamed for publishing the contents of secret negotiations between the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) and the PKK.\textsuperscript{252} Most recently, the July 15 2016 coup was blamed on Gülenist forces and resulted in the shutdown of over one hundred media outlets linked to Gülenism.\textsuperscript{253}

Yet ultimately there are few signs that the Gülenist movement has the tools, capability or desire to destabilise Turkey in the way that is now publicly promoted within Turkey. Again, this can be reinterpreted in security terms, regardless of the


position one has on the Gülen movement. By inflating Gülen as the key public threat the AKP has managed to centralise and purge the military, arguably leading to a more unified military structure. Practically, this has meant the administration could realign its security posture to one more favourable to Russia as well as Israel, and in doing so has ‘reset’ many of the problems that emerged from poor policy implementation and the rebalance of civil-military relations that occurred during the late 2000s and early 2010s.

In this respect, Gülenism is an excellent example of rapid inflation, where a pivotal middle power in a problematic position has managed to ‘correct’ troubling security narratives penetrating the public discourse. Indeed, there is little evidence that Gülenism is an existential threat, yet the AKP has used the issue as a funnel for many of the issues confronting Turkey. Finally, the AKP has emerged from events, such as the July 2016 coup, which they strongly attributed to the Gülen Movement, with a better ability to counter the myriad external pressures bearing down on Turkey, thanks to a concentration of executive capabilities.

The conclusion of this section is that important parts the domestic discourse are largely theatre—or inflation—primarily designed for domestic consumption, and with the objective of obfuscating shifts in security policy to meet more genuine concerns. One way of witnessing this divide is by examining how the AKP has backpedalled when rhetoric does impede important security relationships. For example, criticism of Israel stopped abruptly (but temporarily) when a meeting brokered by Obama in March 2013 ended with the ‘first step’ of normalization with Israel.254 Overall, there are strong strategic interests between the two states and the recent inflation of Israel as a ‘threat’ is more demonstrative of the regional security dynamics than grievances about moral, ideological or religious variables. In this way, rhetoric serves two purposes. First, it appeases low information constituents who are often malleable in their ideas. Their support can then be used to justify changes to security policy. Second, it avoids rogue messengers exploiting the periphery of debates, by appealing (however crudely) to the most problematic internal constituents: those vulnerable to exploitation by radicals.

Critics may ask here why Turkey would exploit its key security partners such as the US. The answer is simple: Turkey exploits it because inflating anti-Americanism is not overly risky. Turkey’s position as the US’s ‘anchor’ state in the region is unlikely to be challenged soon. Politically, Turkish support is critical for the US’s regional agenda, given it is widely perceived as the best model for a liberal Islamic state. Moreover, even if were challenged, it is likely that other inflated issues will be moved to alternative threats in the future in a manner consistent with the model articulated in this thesis, given the AKP’s increasing appetite for manipulating discourses via the media. Thus, overall, we can attribute the ‘inflation’ of the US as an ideational target because it is the easiest to harness in what is an underdeveloped public sphere, and the risks of blowback are minor at the structural level.

Inflation is not without risks, though. Too much emphasis on the Middle East risks Turkey being dragged into unnecessary political conflicts. This occurred in 2013 in Istanbul, when civil unrest flared up after development plans in Taksim Gezi Park became linked to wider discontent at the perception of creeping authoritarianism under Erdoğan, alongside domestic concerns that involvement in Syria was affecting internal security, demonstrated by the 2013 Reyhanlı bombings when fifty-one people were killed in Hatay. This in turn resulted in an upsurge of anti-AKP sentiment, especially in Istanbul, where perceptions emerged that neo-Ottomanism was increasingly a dangerous pursuit and not in the national interest.

One way of understanding these dangers is that certain rhetoric can become path-dependent. To deflect it too overtly risks elites losing credibility. Yet once this dissipates from public view, policies can be changed to a more pragmatic version. From a theoretical position, this supports Brian Rathbun’s claim, that under the neoclassical model, ‘leaders [who] veer too much into constructivism […] are punished by the system’.

Overall, this results in one feature that seems unique to the Turkish case: the rapid and crude reordering of ideas about potential allies and adversaries such as Russia,


257 Rathbun, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism.”
the US, Europe, Syria and Israel. In each instance, the rhetoric initially clashed with
the pursuit of prudent foreign and security policy making in the region. Nevertheless,
the evidence has shown that systemic and pragmatic factors ultimately restrain
ideational rhetoric when they begin to be problematic. For example, the
rapprochement with both Israel and Russia occurred despite Ankara’s harsh rhetoric,
after the material realities of the security environment demanded elites reengage.
Hence, despite the widespread criticism of Turkey at a political level, the Syrian war
to South and the Ukrainian conflict to its North, as of 2017 Turkey’s security
position remains strong despite many challenges.

**Analysis and Implications**
The thesis’ framework, applied to Turkey, has demonstrated how issues within the
domestic discourse are promoted and reordered depending on their pertinence to the
larger security concerns. Turkey must rearrange these narratives frequently because
of its dangerous security position, wedged between three important geopolitical
positions.

One immediate point of difference with the Australian case is that Australia is
relatively strong, with a considerable military capability when measured in material
terms, yet promotes ‘soft’ discourses. In contrast, while Turkey bases a great deal of
its internal rhetoric on what can appear to be aggressive nationalism and the pursuit
of modernity, it is actually a status quo actor. Furthermore, in material terms, it has
acted pragmatically and has managed to navigate an intense security environment
with relative success.

This account is valuable because it contrasts with other scholarly narratives about
Turkey’s recent history, where both Kemalism and the rise of the AKP are
frequently framed around ideational factors including Islam, Turkish and Turkic
identity. Journalistic commentators also prefer to attribute these problems to the
agency of elites from within the ruling AKP and especially Erdoğan. However,
the problem with these simplistic assessments based on rhetoric is that they tend to trivialise the difficult security environment Turkey continues to face. Consequently, the framework here reveals important phenomena about how Turkey, as a middle power in a pivotal position, behaves when faced with security challenges that penetrate domestic discourses. As with the Australian case study, the framework reveals how the public and private responses to security issues change in the context of regional security dynamics. In doing so, it reveals several paradoxes. It reveals that when the sum of the evidence is considered, Turkey has managed to respond largely as expected under a material reading. Furthermore, for the casual observer, many Turkish actions may seem illogical, but make sense in a strategic setting, in which Turkey is hedging against total US and NATO commitment by engaging Russia and China in various capacities. This is pragmatic considering Washington and Brussels have consistently considered Turkey as a fringe concern. Furthermore, Turkey’s attempts to make institutional inroads into Central Asia also make sense, as seeking a core role in an increasingly important trade zone helps it diversify against too much US influence. Finally, it does this in the context of a security environment to the immediate South and West where hostile actors are active, and where it has attempted to engage key actors through both private and public diplomatic channels.

So, overall, the empirical evidence suggests that under the AKP Turkey has continued to perform well in economic and strategic terms. It has done so despite a challenging geostrategic position between Russian, Central Asian, Middle Eastern, European and US interests. Recently, this geostrategic position has also required a pivot to the Middle East, as this is where the management of internal/external antagonisms is most important. The framework here suggests that the Syrian issue, while not one that can be ameliorated easily, needs to be addressed in a way to appease both domestic and international audiences. In this context, Turkey has inflated rhetoric about the US, despite engaging in close cooperation. This works on two levels: it appeals to a domestic audience, but also a wider Islamic audience in

260 As of 2016, Erdoğan is President, which is technically a neutral office, although he continues to campaign with, and is still closely associated with the AKP.

the region, removing the notion that Turkey is pejoratively the home of ‘American Islam’.  

It also helps explain the paradox in which—despite a problematic security environment—Turks have been generally optimistic, and their fears do not align with the empirical realities of Turkish security. For example, in 2011, 75 percent of Turks were optimistic about the future, while its politicians have enjoyed periods of popularity and legitimacy domestically and abroad, such as when Erdoğan was named the most ‘favoured’ leader in the Middle East in 2012.

A deeper paradox also explained by this account of Turkey’s shift east is that engagement in the 

*Acquis* process remains necessary to maintain its strong links with the EU, and by extension its security links to NATO and the US. To reject these ideas in their entirety risks Turkey’s marginalization at the edge of Europe, removing its capacity to hedge by engaging with Middle Eastern actors. This has been visible following the 2016 coup, when Erdoğan engaged in populist rhetoric about the reintroduction of the death penalty. Yet doing so would violate EU *acquis* principles, thereby formally ending Turkey’s engagement process. Correspondingly, as of November 2016, the AKP and its leadership have not pushed forward the idea, despite possessing the political capital to do so following the coup attempt. Once again, this suggests that a split exists between discourses designed for internal consumption and those designed for the realities of managing Turkey’s security environment.

Thus, the framework presented here can help to clarify a variety of other international relations positions that often appear conflicted when describing Turkey’s security outlook. For instance, from a theoretical perspective, neo-realists assert that Turkish behaviour is consistent with bandwagoning (with the US) to protect itself from threats from the East and North. Neoliberal institutionalists would suggest that EU accession is Turkey’s best option, because it reduces security threats

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by entwining and linking various institutions. From the sociological perspective, English School scholars such as Hedley Bull might view their recent actions as processes of state socialisation, with Turkey wishing to join a ‘society’ where a mutual interest would increase security. Meanwhile, Turkey could be viewed through the lens of constructivists, such as Alastair Johnson and Peter Katzenstein, in terms of its Kemalistic tradition, which desires to maintain and regain the historical legacy of a once great empire.

Yet the explanation here is arguably richer when considering the empirical record. Turkey’s relations are not as fractious as many first-image analyses suggest, and assessing Turkish rhetoric at face value is not always helpful. Again, at the international level, overall US-Turkish relations have a history of being positive, with Hillary Clinton referring to Turkey as the ‘anchor’ of the region in 2009 and Obama describing the relationship as ‘a model partnership’ in early 2016. Even after the events of July 2016, when the public discourses had generally come to view US-Turkey relations as strained, ties remain strong. Additionally, Turkey arguably has much more leverage in the relationship and flexibility that it did compared to a decade ago. The complex security environment means that Turkey can contest US objectives when they diverge from Ankara’s. Hence, Ankara has played off Russia, Chinese and US attentions, while remaining critical to the interests of them all.

Finally, the Turkish economy was the fastest growing in Europe in the first quarter of 2016. Even following the coup attempt in 2016, the OECD continues to project 4 percent annual GDP growth up to the end of 2017. This is in stark contrast to mainstream readings of the Turkish political environment, where Erdoğan is often

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framed as a proto-fascist, and Turkey as a looming disaster at the front line of the instability facing Europe.271

The corollary is that Turkey’s ideational aspects and domestic discourses should not be automatically conflated with strategic action. Turkish behaviour has been informed by the material environment and possesses a great deal of sound strategic logic. In this sense, the framework also complements and tightens analyses of Turkey’s behaviour at the international level in terms of James Fearon’s notion of signalling.272 In this context, it ‘signals’ to external security partners that it is largely rhetoric, but will back up with action when required. In the Turkish case, it can leverage many security tokens, including involvement in missile shields, the extent of its cooperation with Israel and intelligence, and the extent of integration with Western norms. In one instance, Erdoğan clearly demonstrated this dualism by attending the Charlie Hebdo march in Paris, then threatening Cumhuriyet employees with jail on his return for publishing sections of the offending magazine.273

Chapter Conclusion and Implications for Middle Power Study

This case has explained how Turkish elites have managed domestic rhetoric to align their content with pragmatic security considerations at the regional level. This includes bandwagoning with NATO and the EU as part of a balancing coalition balancing against the Soviets.274 This changed in form over the past twenty years, with the US influence potentially waning in the region, while the great power to the North (in the form of the USSR and now the Russian Federation) has also changed. Therefore, as security dynamics have altered, so too has Turkish foreign and security policy, with Turkey now attempting to align itself more closely with states to the East, while remaining open to continued integration with the West.

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271 There are many, many examples. These include Dombey, “Turkey’s Erdogan Lurches toward Authoritarianism”; Cook, “How Erdogan Made Turkey Authoritarian Again”; Akyol, “Turkey’s Authoritarian Drift”; “Recep Tayyip Erdogan”; Dettmer, “Critics, Even Supporters Say.”
274 Taşpınar, Turkey’s Middle East Policies–Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism, 19.
Consequently, the framework helps add value to other materially grounded analyses, such as those by Kaplan and Mearsheimer. It does much to explain how and why the EU is used as security currency by Turkey, when a great deal of other materially grounded literature focuses on the role of NATO. Indeed, the evidence here suggests that EU engagement can be interpreted not primarily as an economic tool, but instead one based on advancing foreign policy and security agendas.

At the domestic level, this chapter also adds value by suggesting that phenomena such as the increasing levels of anti-Americanism within Turkey (for the most part) are a tool to fill a temporary ideational gap. In the Cold War era, this was clearly demarcated, with the Kurds consistently pushed as the primary threat to the Turkish republic. Now though, anti-Kurdish sentiment has the potential to intervene in Turkey’s expansion, to the West, via the Acquis process, which requires Turkey to fulfil human rights commitments, while to the East antagonism risks threatening its desired role as an energy transit state. Thus, elites have allowed ideational threats to shift away from the PKK and towards the US and Israel. This comes with risks, but overall threats that are more distant have less chance of being translated into empirical problems on the ground. This contrasts with the exploitation of near threats such as Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria and Iran. Elites themselves are also moderated through a process of dilution, where emerging actors are pulled closer to the centre of power so their ideas do not intervene strongly and affect the self-interest of the state.

Therefore, Turkey rarely acts in the way the rhetoric emerging from the country suggests it might. For the passive observer, Erdoğan and the AKP may appear to be leading the country into an Islamist abyss, but the evidence here suggests a pragmatic logic behind many of the foreign policy decisions made by the AKP. Most importantly, the shift in foreign policy under the AKP from the CHP after the 2003 election is not driven just by party ideology. It is primarily based on changing regional circumstances to which Ankara must adjust.

The prescriptive lesson from Turkey is that if elites do not gain permission to undertake appropriate strategic changes within this intense environment, adverse security outcomes can emerge. Hence, elites rearrange the hierarchy of domestic ideas that connect with foreign policy in ways that minimise domestic populism and


political entrepreneurs affecting security. This allows them to respond to threats appropriately, without undue interference from domestic political forces. Thus, to achieve optimal outcomes, Turkish elites use emotive language about topics less likely to impact immediate security, such as the US and Israel, while deemphasizing higher order issues such as relations with Iran, which do have considerable security implications.

Finally, the implication for middle power scholarship is that Turkey has many useful parallels to Australia. While the intensity of external conditions is different, the responses fit within the typology presented here. More importantly, it opens the study of Turkey to new theoretical paradigms when using a middle power lens, without over-emphasising ideational factors. In doing so, it addresses the rush to use critical viewpoints, as demonstrated earlier on page sixty-six by Pinar Bilgin’s 2011 review of Turkish scholarship, where she found a strong focus on reflexive studies due Turkey’s ‘historico-political context’. Consequently, this research expands the theoretical range of positions on Turkey, but does so without retreating to the normative liberal lens that has often marginalised it as a case in middle power study. Hence, by using the neoclassical realism approach to understand Turkey as a ‘pivotal’ middle power, new conclusions become available. One is that Turkey acts, quite simply, as a mid-sized power would be expected to, regardless of normative and historical factors. In short, it promotes itself as a middle power to maximise its role institutionally, but ultimately its overall stance is defensive and based on maintenance of the status quo, which is best assisted by adroitly managing its internal discourses.

CHAPTER 5: MEXICO

In this final case, I apply the neoclassical realist framework outlined at the outset of this thesis to Mexico. Mexico is well suited to this analysis because it provides an important contrast with the Australian and Turkish cases. From a comparative position, it is routinely called a ‘middle power’. It also meets the criteria of the ‘pivotal middle power’ set out in Chapter Two. Yet Mexico’s main comparative value concerning middle power lies in the uniqueness of its political system and its geographical location. It is classified as a ‘flawed democracy’ by the Economist’s democracy index, lying between Turkey (a ‘hybrid regime’) and Australia (a full democracy). This ‘flawed’ nature stems from its use of a highly concentrated presidential system that gives leaders a single six-year term with extensive powers.

Mexico’s other important point of differentiation from the previous cases is its proximity to the US, with which it shares a 3,200-kilometre border. This provides a greater set of interlocked security dynamics than seen in the previous cases, working in both directions. This shields Mexico from a great deal of external interference, but also forces it to act in line with US interests. Problematic discourses emerging from Mexico risk the country becoming a focus of the US’s own security narratives. This is in much the same way that China can be framed as a risk to Australian security and how anti-Islamist sentiment can problematize Turkey’s security relationship with Europe. Consequently, reordering of certain problematic domestic discourses is critical to Mexican security. The evidence presented within this chapter suggests that Mexico does control these discourses as expected: it has a cordial relationship with the US and routinely avoids invoking issues that could be exploitable for political gain, despite numerous incentives for political entrepreneurs to do so. Together, these two points of differentiation make Mexico an excellent comparative case for understanding how domestic discourses are managed across distinct types of domestic political systems, and within different geographical locations.

1 An excellent overview of Mexico’s middle power ‘credentials’ is found in Bruera, “To Be or Not to Be.”
As with the previous two chapters, I begin with an overview of Mexico’s security environment, which is dominated by the proximity of the US. I then trace the development of Mexico’s strategic posture over the twentieth century, and demonstrate that it has managed to avoid many of the security problems experienced by other Latin American states, including left-wing populism. I attribute this to the centrist tendency of Mexican politics, which combines with a non-interventionist and largely isolationist foreign policy. Overall, I argue that Mexico’s lack of assertiveness in international affairs (despite its considerable material weight) is pragmatic in the context of its geographical position.

The second part of the chapter applies the typology of deflection, dilution, and inflation. First, processes of deflection in Mexico bear some notable differences to the previous two cases. Unlike Australia and Turkey, where certain discourses are avoided, deflection in Mexico is rooted in domestic systemic factors—such as education and the media—where knowledge of international politics is limited, and domestic audiences focus on local politics as their top priority. When international politics are invoked they are rarely about ‘high’ security challenges or existential issues. Instead, there is a preference for security discourses focused on abstract notions of the Mexican state and Mexican nationalism, rather than emphasising any specific external adversaries. The party system assists in this process given that the major Mexican parties are largely centrist, and focused on economic policy opportunities. Consequently, elites can deflect and control contentious security topics (such as the relationship with Cuba manifesting as tepid support for Havana) in ways that appease leftist sentiment, without antagonising Washington. Hence, for instance, feigning concern for the Cuban cause while maintaining a security policy aligned with the US moves issues away from the centre of debates, and prevents them becoming a central rallying point for political entrepreneurs.

Second, my assessment of dilution in this case reveals that Mexican elites are primarily concerned with diluting the role of leftist politics because a genuine leftist movement could antagonise Washington. Elites have responded to this problem by using the idea of a ‘hard’ and soft’ left to provide a distinction between ideas that are tolerated by the US, and those seen as problematic. This creates a set of ‘safe’ political cleavages to contest in the public space, where leaders can invoke leftist ideals as long as they do not veer into the type of leftist populism (the so-called
'wrong left') witnessed in other parts of Latin America. Elsewhere, I demonstrate how problematic actors, including the Zapatista movement, organised criminal groups, and vigilante groups—such as the so-called ‘Autodefensas’—have received substantial concessions and had their central messages taken on and diluted by the centre when elites have viewed these issues as harmful to state security and stability. Finally, the process of inflation is visible. In Mexico, inflation is delicate and the targets more diffuse than in the Australian and Turkish cases. One reason for this is that obvious targets for inflation, such as anti-American sentiment, are likely to have an existential impact on Mexico’s security position. Hence, inflated sentiments about the US are often unfocused and based on broad cultural narratives rather than specific issues. Elsewhere, Mexicans’ main security concerns revolve (understandably) about violence and disorder resulting from cartel activities, but outside of national borders these concerns become ambiguous and stress issues such as vague internationalism, unfocussed environmentalism, and—in common with Turkey and Australia—a disproportionate fear of outsiders and immigrants. Consequently, in Mexico, fears targeting the security role of Guatemalan and Salvadorian immigrants are inflated despite their relatively small numbers and their historical centrality to Mexico’s agricultural economy.

As with the previous two cases, the final third of the chapter provides analysis of the typology and synthesizes this with structural conditions. It finds that Mexico exhibits the same generalised responses as the first two cases when using the typology. At the same time, the balance between deflection, dilution and inflation is different. I find that this is primarily the result of proximity to great powers, as Mexico does not have the equidistant position between competing powers as Australia does with China and the US, or Turkey with Europe, the US, Russia and the Middle East.

**Historical and Material Context**

**Security Overview**

When viewed in isolation, Mexico has considerable power. Its population of 127 million is comparable to Japan’s (also 127 million). It has significant territory as well—it is the fifteenth-largest state on the planet—and it possesses both sea access

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and protection from two oceans. It is a G20 country with the world’s fifteenth largest nominal global GDP in 2014. In any other region this set of attributes would be formidable. However, in the regional security context, its size is small relative to its northern neighbour, the US. The US’s 2015 GDP of $18.5 trillion dwarfs Mexico’s $2.34 trillion, while its population is approximately a third of the US.

One outcome of its proximity to the US is that Mexican elites, in general, adhere to a strong isolationist and non-interventionist norm despite Mexico’s material capabilities. Many factors contribute to this, although scholars have highlighted the period during the Mexican revolution, the Zimmermann telegram, and the US actions in Veracruz as the cornerstones of this norm. Non-interventionism was codified in what has popularly become known as the ‘Estrada Doctrine’ (after then-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Genaro Estrada), and emerged after Mexico’s admission to the League of Nations in 1931. Specifically, Mexico pledged it would not withdraw diplomats or alter relations in the event of governmental change by any methods other than elections, because to do so would breach other states’ sovereignty. The overall argument of Estrada was that \textit{de facto} governments are not functionally different to \textit{de jure} governments. Further, the doctrine stressed that Mexico should not provide value judgements about internal political matters, including military coups, which were a common occurrence throughout the region. Overall, the policy was invested in non-interventionism and recognition of self-determination.

From a security perspective, this made sense. Mexico’s best route to avoid further US interference was to promote non-interference as a regional norm, informed by the experiences of the early twentieth century. For example, the US was instrumental in the overthrow of President Francisco Madero in 1913 after the US ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, provided support to the coup planners, due to Wilson’s

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6 The World Bank, \textit{Gross Domestic Product 2014}.
7 The World Bank, “GDP (Current US$),”
8 Comprehensive accounts of these events are found in Thomas Boghardt, \textit{The Zimmermann Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America’s Entry into World War I} (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012); Karl Jack Bauer, \textit{The Mexican War, 1846-1848} (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974).
10 Ibid., 721.
fears of socialism taking hold. Soon after, in April 1914, Mexican attempts to act assertively ended poorly after it detained US troops conducting refuelling in Tamaulipas. Mexico detained the troops after the US refused to recognise Venustiano Carranza as the leader of the state during the Mexican revolution. In retaliation, the US occupied Veracruz for six months during 1914, humiliating Mexico and highlighting the wide differences in military capabilities between the two.

Mexico’s ability to pursue an isolationist foreign and security policy following the Veracruz incident was enabled by resource income. Oil’s place in Mexican security is codified in Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917. It asserts that ‘the wealth contained in the soil, the subsoil, the waters and seas of Mexico belongs to the Nation; the right to land ownership and to exploit the subsoil may therefore only be granted by the Nation’. Isolationism and oil income therefore facilitated Mexico’s slow but steady economic development during the twentieth century. This persists today: oil remains nationalised and commercialised via the national oil company PEMEX (an abbreviation of Petróleos Mexicanos), which maintains a monopoly on production. In 2013 PEMEX accounted for almost one-third of Mexico’s total taxation revenue. Oil exports accounted for 11 percent of export income in 2014, and Mexico is the twelfth largest producer of petroleum products worldwide.

It is therefore unsurprising that oil revenue is often linked to domestic stability and security in Mexico. This rentier-styled economy has also helped create a strong central corporatist government that prioritises industries such as petroleum as central to the national interest, to the detriment of traditional military capabilities.

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12 For an overview of these events, see Cole Blasier, “The United States and Madero,” Journal of Latin American Studies 4, no. 02 (1972): 207–231.
15 John R. Moroney, Energy and Sustainable Development in Mexico (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 25.
Correspondingly, Mexico’s defence capabilities are severely underdeveloped for a state of its size. Historically, defence spending has traditionally averaged 0.4 to 0.6 percent, and in 2015 military expenditure was only 0.52 percent of GDP (at just over USD 6 billion).\textsuperscript{18} This contrasts with 4.2 percent for the US and 1.83 percent for Australia.\textsuperscript{19} In fact, Mexico has the lowest GDP-to-military-spending ratio of all the G20 nations.

This low level of spending is assisted by domestic norms, which emphasise state sovereignty and non-interference. Technically, no Mexican troops can act as peacekeepers due to Article 129 of the 1917 Constitution, which states ‘No military authority may, in time of peace, perform any functions other than those that are directly connected with military affairs’.\textsuperscript{20} At the same time, the persistence of this constitutional article provided an important way for Mexico to navigate the complex regional rivalry between the Soviet Union and the US during the Cold War, where it often retreated to legalistic arguments when called on for assistance, thereby maintaining a semblance of neutrality.

However, in the current international climate this domestic norm has proven restrictive. It has meant that Mexico is constrained from enhancing its security prospects through multilateral engagement as other middle powers do, via activities such as peacekeeping, and participation in multinational coalitions (such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan). Attempts have been made to break this norm, but they have faced strong opposition. For instance, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari raised the idea of sending troops to Iraq during his tenure in 1991, but backed down soon after opposition from Congress.\textsuperscript{21} Overall, until 2014, Mexico had only been involved in three peacekeeping missions, with the largest and last being in El Salvador during 1992-1993.\textsuperscript{22} Overall, this has created an environment where Mexico is largely subordinate to the US, and constrained by domestic normative features promoted to maintain Cold War era security. As David Aleman has observed, this overall trend

\textsuperscript{18} The International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), \textit{The Military Balance} 2016, 373.


\textsuperscript{20} Roderic Ai Camp, \textit{Mexico’s Military on the Democratic Stage} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 101.


means that means Mexico ‘remains more of a spectator than an actor on the international stage’.\(^\text{23}\)

**Relative Power and Security Competitors**

Mexico’s underdeveloped military capability is not only the result of isolationism, but also reflects differing approaches to military affairs in the region. Notably, the US has been restrained when using ‘traditional’ military interventions in Latin America, for fear of antagonising and emboldening leftist movements. This has resulted in a preference by the US to use covert channels when addressing their interests in the region. This tradition stems from the Cold War, and was articulated in the 1954 US ‘Doolittle’ report, which promoted the use of clandestine military activities to influence security outcomes in the region.\(^\text{24}\) In short, it argued that coercion was preferable to direct military action and that in the Cold War environment ‘there are no rules in such a game [...and...] if the United States is to survive, long standing concepts of “fair play” must be reconsidered’.\(^\text{25}\) The end result was that indirect action became the preferred method of engagement for Washington. So, while direct military action is rare, US interventionism has been common, with interference in Guatemala (1963), the Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1972), El Salvador (1980), Honduras (1980), Nicaragua (1980) and Panama (1989). Each instance has sent a signal to Mexico that leftist governments challenging US interests will be the target of interference.

While the US is undoubtedly the hegemonic power of the region, Mexico’s latent and economic capabilities continue to increase relative to the US. In fact, the country has enjoyed steady economic growth (with the exception of 2009 due to the GFC) since the beginning of the twenty-first century.\(^\text{26}\) Only Brazil has a larger economy in Latin America, and no other Central American state comes close to Mexico’s material capabilities. In comparison, the second largest economy in Central America is Cuba, which has a GDP of only USD$68 billion (2012).\(^\text{27}\)

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\(^{25}\) Ibid., 2–3.


\(^{27}\) Ibid.
Furthermore, when viewing Mexico’s location through a material lens, its position to the South appears secure. Mexico shares southern borders with only Guatemala and Belize. Guatemala’s military strength is largely inconsequential: it has spent less than 0.5 percent of GDP on defence over the past decade.\textsuperscript{28} It possesses only four attack aircraft, and had a total defence budget of USD$274 million in 2015.\textsuperscript{29} Belize is even smaller, with a 2015 defence budget of USD$20 million in 2015, and no functioning air force.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, with the exception of the US, only Cuba and Colombia could perceivably threaten Mexico in hard security terms in the immediate region, and there is little or no incentive for either to do so.

**Security and Foreign Policy Responses**

Although isolationism and restraint is a consistent trait of Mexican security and foreign policy, Roberto Dominguez has nonetheless argued that a few distinct foreign policy eras are discernible.\textsuperscript{31} Importantly, each allows a clear demarcation between the external political conditions and their alignment with differing internal domestic debates. For Dominguez, the initial period lasted from the end of the Second World War to the late 1970s. This was focused on state building and internal consolidation during a period of regional instability. This correlates with the consolidation of the Cold War and emergence of security competitions during the so-called ‘Central American Crisis’.\textsuperscript{32} In fact, Mexico is notable here because it avoided much of the problematic meddling seen elsewhere in the region during this timeframe. That included Soviet moves to support Cuba ending in the Bay of Pigs defeat, the Guatemalan Civil War on Mexico’s border, and civil conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, where belligerents clearly attached themselves to either the US or the USSR.

A second era of Mexican foreign and security policy began during the 1980s, largely as a reaction to the political instability emerging in Central America, resulting in the reorganisation of its disparate security infrastructure.\textsuperscript{33} As a result, the military

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} The International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), The Military Balance 2016, 399.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 379.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Domínguez, “Mexico: A Reluctant Regional Security Provider.”
\end{itemize}
became more deeply involved with the planning and organisation of security, rather than being simply tasked with maintaining the post-revolutionary domestic order.\textsuperscript{34}

Dominguez’s final period involved the emergence of transnational actors in the post-Cold War environment. Here, Mexico’s foreign and security policy was driven by institutional engagement in NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). This was also accompanied by a change in the government from the PRI’s corporatist style of governance to PAN’s more neoliberal outlook under Vincente Fox in 2000. The period was also one when Mexico’s domestic organised crime issues became a primary security concern, with claims it was a ‘failed state’ after a United States Joint Forces Command report stated ‘the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels’.\textsuperscript{35}

Similarly to the Australian and Turkish cases, we can reinterpret these phases through the neoclassical realist framework advanced in this thesis, and extract broad expectations about how Mexico should behave. Internal consolidation and adherence to non-intervention made sense in the post-WW II era and during the early phases of the Cold War, as overt support for either side invited interference. During the 1980s, neoliberal reforms and military modernisation made sense, given the problems of the post-revolutionary period had been addressed and engaging economic orders gave Mexico a way to lower its threat perception to the US, while maintaining a facade of ideological independence. Finally, the post-Cold War period saw full integration in institutions, such as NAFTA, that were favourable to the US.

\textit{Domestic Environment and Elites}

As with its isolationist foreign policy, Mexico’s domestic political system has retained clear links to the security environment it must navigate. First, it is designed to emphasise decisiveness and hierarchy. Mexico has a Federal system of government, headed by a President with unusually concentrated power, famously termed the ‘perfect dictatorship’ by Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa.\textsuperscript{36} The Mexican president has a single six-year term known as the ‘sexenio’. This combines


\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force}, 34.

\textsuperscript{36} Llosa first made this claim on a TV show entitled \textit{Encuentro Vuelta (The Back Meeting)}. See Vargas Llosa \textit{Y La Dictadura Perfeccia}, 2010, accessed May 29, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPsVWg-E38.
with no restrictions on the cabinet and executive that the President can appoint. There is no Vice-President. Furthermore, the process of succession within PAN was secretive, and colloquially known as the *dedazo* (the ‘tap’). From a functional perspective, this enabled decisive and strong leadership not bound by formalities when dealing with security matters. Furthermore, according to Roderick Ai Camp, the Mexican political system does not adhere to a rigid ideology, and nor is it built on any legalistic norms. Thus, there are few obstacles in the way of foreign policy decision making for elites.

For Camp, this creates a political elite which

‘governs, to a great extent, the behaviour of each succeeding group in the governing elite, since they, like their predecessors, are socialised to the norms of behaviour present at the time of their initial recruitment into the political system’.

The result is a so-called ‘camarilla’ pyramidal system with the President and his/her clique at the top.

Despite this concentrated political environment, three parties have played important roles in modern Mexican politics. The first, and most prominent is the PRI, founded by Plutarco Elías Calles in 1929, which held power at the Congressional level until 1997 (and at the Presidential level until 2000). According to Joseph Klesner, the PRI in Mexico became an institution that made a ‘self-reproducing civilian political elite’ leading to the claim that Mexico was only a ‘proper’ democracy after 1994 because of this deep system of patronage.

A second influential party, PAN, broke the PRI’s stranglehold on power in 2000 with the election of Vincente Fox. A second PAN Presidency occurred under Felipe Calderón from 2006 to 2012. PAN’s policies are centrist, conservative and strongly

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associated with the Catholic Church and free enterprise. But the PAN electoral
together, as Klesner claims, it was a
strategy to ‘harvest the discontent of voters with one-party rule’ that allowed PAN to
succeed at the ballot box.
Together, this created an environment where the two
differences on foreign and security policy. Rather, both have attempted to act as ‘catch-all’ parties, with their main point of
differentiation being appeals to either change or continuity.

A highly concentrated media complements the Mexican party system, with 92 percent of Mexico’s television stations owned by two companies: Televisa and TV
Azteca. Outside these major outlets, there exists a convention of self-censorship in
the print media due to threats of violence and repercussion by several domestic
actors, most notably from cartels. Additionally, Mexican media owner Carlos Slim
Helu is the world’s wealthiest individual. He has obtained a large amount of his vast
fortune from his holdings in América Móvil and its subsidiaries. América Móvil is
the largest provider of telecommunications in South America, with approximately
250 million subscribers across eighteen countries.
Slim has also been linked to
takeover attempts on Univision Communications (valued at approximately USD$20
billion), which deliver Spanish language broadcasts to the US, although he is limited
to a 25 percent share under American foreign ownership laws.

Hence, Slim’s holdings also exert influence outside of Mexico, with a specific
emphasis on the US. Of note is his interest in the New York Times, which is currently
the second largest holding. His current stake is 8 percent, and as of 2016 was seeking

44 “Left, Right or Center? Mexican Political Brand Names Explained,” LA Times Blogs - World Now, February
political-outlook.html.
45 Joseph L. Klesner, “Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico,” Latin American Politics and
46 Ibid.
47 “Mexico’s Media under Scrutiny in Documentary - Latimes.com,” accessed July 30, 2013,
48 “Mexico Journalists Face ‘Self-Censorship, Exile or Certain Death,’” Text, last modified January 23, 2009,
or/2583070.
50 “América Móvil Today,” América Móvil, accessed June 24, 2016,
to double this. According to the New York Times, ‘his vast resources often translate into less-than-critical coverage’. Indeed, Slim’s vast power is partly addressed in the ‘Pacto por Mexico’, the bipartisan reforms that sought to reduce his potential for influence via constitutional reform. Nonetheless, Slim maintains a politically neutral position, in line with the corporatist thinking that has traditionally dominated Mexican politics.

At the same time, the Mexican media has faced few overt censorship attempts under Mexico’s highly centralised political system, even during the growth of the Internet. Rather, censorship by intimidation and violence is the norm, often enforced by non-governmental actors. This coercive power was demonstrated when the day after the Zetas cartel leader Miguel Morales was arrested, no local newspaper printed the story for fear of reprisals. Much of the data on cartels comes from sites such as Blog del Narco, whose writer has been forced into exile in Spain. Even in the digital realm, uncredited authors have been targeted, because the Zetas are believed to have infiltrated law enforcement, and have access to online surveillance tools.

For example, a supposedly anonymous writer for the website Nuevo Laredo en Vivo, Marisol Macias Castañeda, was found decapitated with her head left next to a keyboard – with a note stating ‘I’m here because of my (online) reports’.

This means that although Mexico has no formal censorship, with freedom of speech enshrined in the Constitution, it struggles in press freedom rankings, coming in at 149 out of 180 in the 2016 Reporters Without Borders index. In fact, a 2015

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) report ranked Mexico as the eighth most dangerous country for journalists, ahead of Pakistan and Russia. At the same time, the lack of governmental control means that populist and sensationalist discourses are the norm, especially within the print media. This creates a challenge for elites when they are rewired to shape debates to meet external security realities.

**Applying the framework**

This initial survey of Mexico’s security environment has demonstrated that despite a similar geographical setting to Australia and Turkey, which sits between two larger political blocs, Mexico’s geopolitical position differs substantially. Central to this difference is its proximity to the US. At this point, and as with the first two cases, I have identified and contextualised the core security threats to Mexico. Consequently, this section applies the neoclassical realist framework outlined in the first chapter. As before, I identify how elites: (1) deflect problematic issues away from debates; (2) dilute issues that have managed to penetrate debates; and (3) prefer to inflate benign threats.

**Deflection**

The use of deflection within Mexico’s domestic discourses on foreign and security policy varies from the first two cases as its domestic population has an arguably less-informed understanding of its place in international affairs. For example, a 2010 survey, taken at the height of the drug war, showed that Mexicans’ main knowledge of international affairs was about the UN and the US President. The same 2010 survey found only 6 percent of respondents could identify Mexico’s then-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa Cantellano. A similar poll from CIDE found that 42 percent of Mexicans have ‘little or no interest in international affairs’. This means that public knowledge of Mexico’s security and foreign policy challenges is limited. In fact, Mexico had the least interest in international politics of any of the Latin American countries surveyed, despite its centrality to the US and its role in NAFTA. As David Shirk notes, this has led to a situation where ‘Mexicans are...”

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62 Ibid., 39.
64 Ibid.
uninformed about national or international politics, and are not willing to invest resources, assume responsibilities, or carry out international actions that imply costs or larger commitments’. 

The evidence also suggests that low knowledge of foreign policy and security issues is not an educational problem, given that Mexico’s schooling standards are relatively high (it has higher school retention rates than Turkey, and a similar literacy rate). Similarly, access to information is not an obstacle, although Mexico’s Internet penetration rate is low at 57.4 percent (as of 2015), similar to that of Turkey. A central question, then, is whether this deflection of political knowledge is a response to its systemic position, or the result of other factors.

A survey of the party system helps illuminate why international issues do not resonate deeply with domestic audiences. Notably, Mexico’s domestic politics lacks a clear left-right political cleavage prominent in similar sized emerging economies. Hence, in Mexico, the main parties—PAN, PDR and PRI—are loosely affiliated with the centre-right, the centre, and the centre-left respectively, rather than a clear left and right. This precedent stems from the dominance of the PRI during the twentieth century, which relied on a corporatist style of governance, and acted as a body that delegated political power to a wide range of loyal groups across both the left and right, rather than dividing political interests based on ideological differences. This included spaces for peasant groups (such as the National Peasant Confederation), workers, and economic elites, working together in what George W. Grayson described as a political ‘gyroscope’. 

This has led to a lack of wide ideological divisions in Mexican politics and a dearth of party affiliation, where less than half of voters identified with any party in 2000, even though that election resulted in the end of seventy-one years of PRI rule. In 2010 David Vidal et al noted that party identification has remained relative low, and that voting is viewed within a clientelistic lens, with a vote seen as currency for

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68 Dent, Encyclopedia of Modern Mexico, 74.
protest rather than an expression of deeper ideological beliefs. For the purposes of understanding deflection, this serves as one example of how the major parties have deflected the wider ideological divides apparent in other Latin American states, thereby preventing the emergence of the ‘wrong left’ and its associated security problems. Overall, it is the narrowness of the political spectrum that permits the easy deflection of issues outside of the centre and deemed harmful to the national interest.

Even when electoral changes occur, deflection is visible because so-called ‘concertacíones’ are a frequent feature of Mexican politics. This is where cross-party collaboration has been normalised during times of political crisis or minority government. Although commonly interpreted through an economic lens, in this case they can be expanded to demonstrate their role in security. At the simplest level, concertacíones have their basis in ‘non-ideological consensus’, removing the power of smaller interest groups, and delegating elements of the political structure to groups based on loyalty. One outcome is that political cooperation is common, and since 1997, minority legislatures have further required cooperation between PAN and the PRI.

A specific example of deflection by PAN and PRI occurred during overt electoral fraud during the 1988 election. In this instance, an alliance known as the National Democratic Front (FDN), consisting of splinter groups from the PRI and a loose coalition of smaller centre and centre-left parties, contested the election. The coalition also included radical socialist parties, which were perceived as problematic to the broader Mexican isolationist stance, including the Popular Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers’ Party, and the Socialist Mexican Party.

Established elites became concerned because in the lead-up to the election polling showed that FDN candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was likely to win the

Presidency.\textsuperscript{76} From a foreign and security policy position, this was problematic, as the PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari’s policy positions were closely aligned to the administration of Ronald Reagan’s drug war strategy. In contrast, the more radical FDN threatened to contest the wider US approach to security matters in the region.\textsuperscript{77} Another security problem (for existing elites) was Cárdenas’ opposition to Mexican membership of the GATT, which included changes to the laws on foreign ownership, allowing US companies to own property. This was also critical to the implementation of NAFTA, which the policies of FDN were likely to derail.\textsuperscript{78} Thus, the prospect of a Cárdenas victory posed substantial changes to Mexico’s security outlook by aligning it ideologically with the wider Latin American left.

In this instance, deflection was apparent in the behaviour of the two ‘major’ parties’ approach to electoral fraud that delivered the PRI the Presidency. On Election Day the tallying computer crashed and blatant voting rigging was reported in regional electorates.\textsuperscript{79} Ballots were burned soon after in order to remove evidence of the assumed fraud.\textsuperscript{80} PAN, the traditional opposition, did not protest the result, helping restore a semblance of legitimacy despite the fraudulent count.\textsuperscript{81} As Beatriz Magalona has correctly noted, there were two reasons for the lack of protest from PAN. First, the dangers of confronting the government were too high, and the PRI was willing to use force to prevent a FDN Presidency.\textsuperscript{82} Second, the PRI gave PAN ‘significant side payments’ to remove the fraud narrative from their political discourse, in the form of policy influence in the legislative arena.\textsuperscript{83} Magalona’s conclusion was that PAN deflected the fraud narrative because the ‘left-wing

\textsuperscript{77} Michael Werner, *Concise Encyclopedia of Mexico* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 227.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 227–228.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Frances Hagopian, Scott P. Mainwaring, and Beatriz Magaloni, eds., “Demise of Mexico’s One-Party Regime,” in *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 131.
alternative was a worse choice than tolerating the PAN’s collusion with the autocratic regime’.

This demonstrates how Mexican elites—from two major parties at least—were willing to make domestic concessions and had refused to exploit conditions that may have resulted in short-term political capital, but that would have had substantial implications for state security. In short, the election of a president linked to the Trotskyist left during the late 1980s was viewed as a bigger threat to the national interest than electoral fraud. Hence, the elite within the two centre parties made the decision that a ‘tainted’ democracy was preferably to one infused by leftist radicalism, which would have potentially invited US interference.

In this context, clear two-level games were being played. Mexico was fearful of inviting further US influence because of increasing political violence and internal instability. Domestically, the ruling PRI was pulling the emerging radical factions back to the centre of the debate, even if it meant losing power as a result. The overall message was that domestic power for its own sake was less desirable than overall stability and a reduction in threats. In short, a Mexico that antagonised the US was one where all domestic players came out at a disadvantage, as did Mexico’s security prospects as a whole.

Deflection via electoral fraud also made sense when assessing Mexico’s place in the regional order of the time. For example, in January 1994, NAFTA went into effect. NAFTA included coercive elements concerning US critical interests in the region, especially in respect to oil, natural gas, and manufacturing. As Paul Krugman pointed out at the time, ‘NAFTA is essentially a foreign-policy rather than an economic issue’. His argument was that the US gained little from the economic side of NAFTA. Instead, the main benefits came from allowing the US a way to ensure Mexican domestic stability, making it in essence a security project.

Though they are subtler, similar patterns of deflection have emerged in recent years under President Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI, where a number of tripartisan measures—between the PRI, PAN and PRD—have passed, including a bill to limit

telecommunications ownership by Carlos Slim.\textsuperscript{86} One concern was that Slim’s power was too great, with his companies totalling 7 percent of Mexico’s annual economic output.\textsuperscript{87} While the majority of parliamentary discourse about Slim focused on his monopoly on telecoms and accusations of overcharging, a core focus of the reforms was to diversify the media, including the establishment of two new television stations.\textsuperscript{88} These concerns were raised during the 2016 US Presidential election campaign, when then-Presidential candidate Donald Trump routinely invoked Slim as someone who was attempting to undermine democratic processes by publishing material in the \textit{New York Times} critical of Trump’s bid for power.\textsuperscript{89}

Attempts to counter Slim were part of the larger tripartisan effort ‘Pacto por Mexico’ (Pact for Mexico) referred to earlier, which consisted of ninety-five points of agreement between the three major parties.\textsuperscript{90} Other reforms included the restructuring of PEMEX to attract investment, and, from a security position, a reorganization of the military’s role in domestic policing.\textsuperscript{91} This last reform was to involve the creation of a National Gendarmerie—essentially a police force with military capabilities—and was aimed at strengthening internal security. Hence the tripartisan agreement highlighted how for domestic politicians, internal security was increasingly viewed as an important part of Mexico’s overall security position.

The corollary is that within Mexico, the two (and often three) largest parties tend to agree on a number of key areas linked to security: energy security (via liberalisation of PEMEX), economic liberalisation, a reduction in media monopolies, domestic policing modernisation, and general policy towards the US in respect to military and security affairs.\textsuperscript{92} Consequently, within the framework articulated in this thesis, bi-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Héctor Aguilar Camín and Jorge G. Castañeda, “Mexico’s Age of Agreement: A Mandate for Reform,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 91 (2012): 28.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
and tri-partisanship allows contentious issues within this sphere to be deflected away from the centrality of debates, with the higher security function of reducing the chance of US interference.

Overall, this supports the argument that the foreign policy and security elite in Mexico act in unison on matters critical to the national interest, and are hesitant to politicise matters such as US military and economic issues that could resonate with the public in problematic ways. Hence, deflection helps explain how what should be a contentious issue in Mexican domestic narratives is largely ignored. Michael Hoopes makes this type of claim, with respect to the most recent administration that that ‘it’s not clear yet what President Peña Nieto is doing differently [from his predecessor]’.

Elsewhere, Vanda Felbab-Brown has claimed that Peña Nieto has ‘essentially the same operational design as the previous Felipe Calderón [of the PRI’s] administration’. Consequently, Mexican foreign and security policy, at least outwardly, seems highly consistent.

Dilution

While deflection can be viewed as a way for security and foreign policy elites to move the most problematic discourses away from the centre of public debates, the issue of leftist politics has remained within Mexico, and its exploitation by political entrepreneurs has consistently threatened Mexico’s security position. Dilution is therefore a useful way to understand how elements that are beyond deflection are brought back to the centre, where they can be controlled.

A traditional economic reading suggests that the conditions in Mexico should have made the state vulnerable to leftist messages, especially during the height of the Cold War. For instance, in 1968, GPD per capita in Mexico was USD$600 compared to USD$4,491 in the US. This figure was similar to other developing states in the region, including Chile, where the emergence of the left resulted in the US funding a military coup to topple the democratically elected leader Salvador Allende on

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95 The World Bank, “GDP (Current US$).”
September 11, 1973. While less extreme, similar disparities have persisted. In 2010, for instance, residents of the Southern state of Chiapas had a GDP per capita of approximately 15 percent of those living in the Federal District (Mexico City). And while leftist movements have emerged, especially during the 1960s under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, these have largely been contained within the educated middle class of Mexico City. One strategy Díaz Ordaz used to counter dissent of this type was to differentiate between the Mexican revolution (‘our revolution’) and that of the international provocateurs, which he framed as an attempt by external actors to undermine the Mexican nationalist project.

Jorge Castañeda Gutman (writing in his academic rather than governmental capacity) has argued the answer lies in the concept of the ‘two lefts’. Here, Mexico responded to the ideological conundrum of the emergence and acceptance of a pragmatic ‘right left’, and a problematic ‘wrong left’. The ‘right left’ engaged economically and diplomatically with the wider international community in a way favourable to Washington’s interests. In contrast, the ‘wrong left’, typified by leaders such as Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, was nationalistic, anti-liberal, and antagonised the US. According to Castañeda the ‘wrong’ left have revelled in the notion that ‘taunting the United States trumps promoting their countries’ real interests in the world’. Raúl Madrid covers similar territory, renaming them as the ‘liberal’ left and the ‘interventionist’ left, with the interventionist type relying on ‘highly personalist movements’. Dilution has therefore occurred by narrowing the domestic political agenda, and is visible where elites have taken issues that cannot fully be deflected, and have repurposed them in the centre.

This helps provide a solid explanation for the lack of a genuine Marxist presence in Mexico. It also helps explain how elites have been successful at diluting debates that have gained traction in societies elsewhere in the region. Under this reading,

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
Mexican elites have been acutely aware of the security implications of courting or allowing the propagation of the ‘wrong left’. For example, in Mexico, there were consistent fears that the Cuban revolution would act as a template for political entrepreneurs. Indeed, Renata Keller has claimed that state officials received intelligence that in the decade after the Cuban revolution, noting that ‘leftist groups and individuals were ready and able to jeopardise their hold over the country’. Consequently, the response of elites was to enmesh ‘revolutionary’ leftist politics by emphasising Mexican nationalism and revolutionary exceptionalism instead of the broader goals of regional leftist movements.

Another specific example here was the dilution of the radical elements of the FDN following the fraud at the 1988 election, described earlier in this chapter, and its incorporation (and dilution) into a new party: the PRD. In short, the PRD diluted the most problematic Trotskyite elements of the party. Key players, including Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Francisco Arellano-Belloc, moderated their messages under the newly formed PRD, and removed the influence of smaller radical parties, leading to a more centrist message. In policy terms this meant that Cárdenas—as the PDR candidate—centred himself on many positions. So, unlike the anti-Western stance of the FDN, he instead switched policy positions and pledged to uphold all international agreements if elected, including NAFTA and those with the IMF, as part of an agreement with the three major parties.104

Established actors also experience dilution when rogue actors are pulled back to the centre should their messages promote discourses problematic to security. One notable example of the dilution of PAN policy was the short-lived ‘Castañeda Doctrine’. Named after the Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2003, this involved a retreat from the isolationism of the Estrada doctrine. Indeed, Castañeda’s wider career is indicative of dilution. Initially he was a member of the communist party and the radical left but his subsequent political career consisted of a sharp trajectory from the left-wing PRD to the centre-right PRI.

104 Norman Caulfield, NAFTA and Labor in North America (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 57–58.
105 Jerome R. Corsi, The Late Great USA: NAFTA, the North American Union, and the Threat of a Coming Merger with Mexico and Canada (Simon and Schuster, 2009), 38.
Castañeda embarked on an internationalist activist agenda as part of an attempt to break from the PRI’s foreign policy and security norms after eighty years of rule, including the pursuit of a temporary seat on UNSC.\(^\text{106}\) Castañeda also implemented reforms to NAFTA under the ‘NAFTA plus’ strategy\(^\text{107}\) and began bilateral agreements with Israel, the EU and Japan.\(^\text{108}\) Regionally, the Northern Triangle Free Trade agreement was also signed in June 2000, allowing free trade with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.\(^\text{109}\) According to Pamela Starr, Castañeda’s goal was to formulate an assertive foreign policy that would allow Mexico to ‘reclaim its rightful role in world affairs as the ninth-largest economy in the world, as the geographic, cultural, and economic bridge between North and South America, and as an aspirant to First World middle-power status’.\(^\text{110}\)

But elsewhere, Castañeda antagonised Cuba to appease the US in an attempt to promote Mexico’s human rights credentials. This included criticism of Cuba’s human rights record and the suggestion that Mexico should offer refuge for Cuban dissidents.\(^\text{111}\) Havana reacted furiously, and the criticism gained traction within Mexico and foreign and security policy circles, where Castañeda was accused of becoming a US lackey.\(^\text{112}\) Opposition PRD member Matri Batres claimed the new Castañeda doctrine was part of Mexico ‘attack[ing] the weak and obey[ing] the strong’.\(^\text{113}\)

At the same time, Castañeda’s assertive approach also upset the US, which had expected Mexico to support its wider aims in the war against terror following the 9/11 attacks. In particular, George W. Bush was upset by Castañeda’s continued defence of territorial absolutism concerning Iraq. He claimed that ‘the exercise of


\(^{111}\) Michele Zebich-Knos and Heather Nora Nicol, *Foreign Policy Toward Cuba: Isolation or Engagement?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 98.

\(^{112}\) Ibid.

sovereignty cannot be used as an excuse to justify any violation of rights’. Elsewhere, the Puebla-Panama Plan, which sought to promote integration and development between Mexico and Central America and Colombia, failed too. Ultimately Mexico retreated to its traditional foreign policy, which appeased the US after barely a year of assertiveness.

Many of Castañeda’s reforms were quietly rolled back. Castañeda himself was removed from his post after two years, and was replaced by Luis Ernesto Derbez. Derbez’s foreign and security approach dropped many of the ideational policy facets in a return to a pragmatic and economically-focussed agenda. A useful interpretation of this is that Castañeda’s attempts to pursue an ideational agenda within a ‘traditional’ middle powers foreign policy failed. He was, as Rathbun suggested, ‘punished by the system’ as neoclassical realism has predicted. Even though the motive was to increase Mexico’s position in international affairs, it harmed Mexico’s security position by prioritising impractical and ill-thought policy transformations. As a result, Castañeda’s tenure is broadly perceived as a failure, since his attempts to broaden and diversify Mexican security and foreign policy interests were diluted by wider consensus within the political elite.

In the extended context, dilution of Castañeda’s policies towards Cuba is part of a long pattern where Mexico has not challenged Havana, despite its centrality to US security policy (and therefore wider regional security dynamics) in the region. Instead the pattern has been for quiet support, which appeased Mexican sympathies for Cuba’s plight without politicising them. In fact, Cuban engagement was an outlier policy within the region and Mexico was the only state in Central America between 1964 and 1970 to maintain diplomatic and air connections with Cuba. Hence, a core reason for Mexico’s overall engagement with Castro (and US toleration of the relationship) was that it helped to dilute debates about communism.

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114 Leiken, “End of an Affair?, 90.”
116 Rathbun, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism.”
118 Keller, “A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption,” 100.
and prevented radical leftist groups from being mobilised in the civic debates.\textsuperscript{119} As Renata Keller explains:

\begin{quote}
‘Mexican leaders decided to defend Castro primarily because they were worried about leftist groups and individuals in their own country and believed that they could use their policy toward Cuba to minimise the domestic leftist threat’.\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Furthermore, close Cuban-Mexican cooperation was permitted and even encouraged by Washington because of concerns that a hard line on communism might lead to civil unrest.\textsuperscript{121} The result was that in 1967 an informal understanding between the US and Mexico emerged, whereby Mexico would act as a back channel for Cuban-US relations. Again, as Keller observed:

\begin{quote}
‘Cutting relations with Cuba could potentially unite the disparate leftist groups and individuals in opposition to the government’s foreign policy, whereas maintaining relations could win political capital for the regime and help shore up its revolutionary image. Adolfo Lópex Mateos and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz crafted their country’s lukewarm defence of Castro with these considerations in mind, thus creating a foreign policy for domestic consumption’.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

For the purposes of this thesis, Mexico’s acceptance of Cuba has helped it play two simultaneous political games: it diluted the well-established cause of Cuba and its centrality to the Latin American left away from the centre of public concerns. It simultaneously gave Mexico an important role in the US’s regional security strategy. This type of role was visible after Mexico assisted the CIA by allowing its agent, Carrillo Colón, to work within the Mexican embassy in Havana.\textsuperscript{123} According to Eric Zolov, this created a system where ‘both the media and Washington learned to accept Mexico’s “defiance”’ of the United States because it was a reflection of domestic political considerations, and a “politically expedient aspect of the bilateral

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 101.\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 114.\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.\textsuperscript{123} Kate Doyle, “Double Dealing: Mexico’s Foreign Policy Toward Cuba,” The National Security Archive, George Washington University, 167, last modified March 2, 2003, accessed February 4, 2016, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB83/.
Consequently, the Cuban-Mexican relationship, when viewed through the lens of dilution, helps us to understand why those who seek to exploit the relationship are reined in. It allowed a potentially problematic issue to be controlled by the centre, with the addition payoff of hedging against US concerns by providing intelligence and back channels to Havana for Washington.125

Yet despite the overall pattern of Mexican foreign and security policy being conservative and centrist, political actors do sometimes gain traction outside of the established political channels. This was demonstrated in Mexico by the events immediately following the accession of NAFTA and the resultant Zapatista uprising in Chiapas State, where groups were incensed by the removal of Article Twenty-Seven from the constitution, which protected the land of indigenous peoples.126 The movement itself was the result of years of failed social and economic policies in Chiapas and attempts to privatise communal farms (ejidos), which are central to the indigenous people’s autonomy and welfare.127

The Zapatistas movement is informative not only for its political outcome but because it was an early example of the Internet enabling a group to amplify its messages outside of state borders, giving it much greater reach than indigenous protests of the past. In short, it meant such groups could ‘escape’ borders and inflate messages quickly, via what Harry M. Cleaver calls an ‘alternative political fabric’.128 For Ronfeldt et al. it allowed just ‘two-hundred individuals with vague demands’ to become media savvy, and exploit new transnational ‘issues networks’ by permitting increasing access to information.129 Controlling these messages was problematic, not only because of the nascent nature of the Internet, but also because they could exploit an anti-censorship norm under Article Six of the Mexican constitution, which protects freedom of speech.

125 A comprehensive overview of these as they existed between each President is found in William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana* (UNC Press Books, 2015).
127 An overview of the events leading up to 1994 is found in George Allen Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quarantiello, *Basta!: Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Food First Books, 2005).
129 David Ronfeldt et al., *The Zapatista “Social Netwar” in Mexico* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1999), 20.
While substantial human rights concerns emerged about the treatment of the protesters after approximately three hundred deaths during skirmishes, the episode is also notable for the willingness of the central government to minimise the uprising’s impact. A chronology of events during 1994 helps illustrate this. The Zapatistas declared war on the first of January 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, resulting in two weeks of conflict. Soon after, Salinas was presented with thirty-four demands by the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation). Salinas’ envoy, Manuel Camacho Solís, eventually reached agreement on thirty-two of the thirty-four points on March 2, 1994. President Zedillo came to power in December 1994, and the San Andres Accords were signed, although never enacted. Fox also made considerable concessions to the Zapatista cause via the Commission for the Development of Indian Towns, although after the initial announcement progress was limited.

So, while most analyses of the actions in Chiapas are interpreted as a victory for the Zapatistas, using the framework presented in this thesis we can reinterpret this as an attempt by central elites to keep it off the political agenda: to dilute it. By mitigating this issue, elites managed to diffuse the problematic rhetorical parts of the movement with the potential to mobilise the radical left in the uncertain post-Cold War environment. This could have harmed the national interest and led the US to alter its threat perceptions of Mexico.

This trend of diluting rather than attacking and splintering rogue and vigilante movements is visible across other areas of Mexican policy too. For instance, the deteriorating internal security situation after 2006 led to a dramatic increase in vigilantism. These groups were known as Autodefensas or ‘rural defence groups’ and by late 2013, they were operating in over thirteen states (and in

133 Lupher, “Fox and EZLN.”
particular the states of Michoacán and Guerrero).\textsuperscript{136} Independent militia forces have a long history in Mexico, and often aid the government in problematic areas near borders.\textsuperscript{137} Despite being politically expedient and occasionally a useful tool to maintain law and order, these groups have often expanded beyond their initial remit, becoming vectors for organised crime and extortion. Since the 2010s they have also contributed, along with cartel activity, to the idea of Mexico as a failed state.\textsuperscript{138}

Dilution is apparent in this process whereby the central government has tolerated rogue groups to perform security work, up to a point at which there are reclaimed by the central government, and their most extreme activities curbed. Thus, the administration of Felipe Calderón was largely tolerant of both vigilante and Autodefensa groups, whereas Peña Nieto has tempered their worst behaviour by taking on their organisational structures, which usually consist of poorly trained and amateur personnel, and replacing the senior figures in these groups with those who have government and leadership experience.\textsuperscript{139} The overall treatment of rogue actors such as the Autodefensa groups can therefore be interpreted as a form of dilution, where many were pulled back into the political process rather than prosecuted. Importantly, this has occurred with little regard for legal process. For instance, Michael Hoopes stated that ‘vigilante groups in the violence-prone state of Michoacán [were] gain[ing] official approval by the government’.\textsuperscript{140} This can be combined with widespread evidence that many of these groups were involved in extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses, including against government forces, which stood in direct conflict with Mexico’s public foreign and security policy posture.\textsuperscript{141}

This type of response has also occurred concerning the broader drug war, during periods of the so-called ‘Pax Narcotica’. This existed under the PRI, and was, according to Adam Morton, a ‘compact between the traffickers loosely affiliated to the Sinaloan drug lords and the state-organised system of patronage and corporatism


\textsuperscript{137} Felbab-Brown, “The Rise of Militias in Mexico,” 175.


\textsuperscript{139} Magaloni and Razu, “Mexico in the Grip of Violence,” 61.

\textsuperscript{140} Hoopes, “The Mérida Initiative at 7 Years: Little Institutional Improvement Amidst Increased Militarization.”

\textsuperscript{141} Felbab-Brown, “The Rise of Militias in Mexico,” 177.
linked to the ruling PRI’. Moreover, while the US was aggressive in areas such as Colombia under the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, Mexico avoided US confrontation by simply demonstrating a will to fight drugs, rather than meeting any performance metrics. In essence, the central government diluted drug cartels and treated them as rogue actors, pulling them to the centre where they could shape their impact by engaging with them in limited ways. Indeed, it was only with the election of Calderón in 2005 that the Pax Narcotica policy was abandoned, with the effect that drug related violence escalated rapidly.

Even then, the strategy used after 2006—the so-called ‘kingpin’ strategy—involved a great deal of political theatre, as it created easily identifiable ‘successes’ that would appease audiences both domestically and abroad. The kingpin strategy had a dual purpose, acting as a public relations exercise for both the domestic and international audience (and especially in the US) to provide clear and visible examples of ‘action’. Here, the PAN administrations targeted high profile leaders (‘kingpins’) for arrest, in contrast to the détente between traffickers under the PRI throughout the 1990s. It focused on the arrest of prominent cartel leaders, and a focus on violent activities such as executions, torture and kidnapping as public safety campaign, rather than drug trafficking itself.

Later, in 2012, Peña Nieto initially criticised the kingpin strategy used by Fox and his successor Calderón, but quickly resumed the strategy due to its positive optics in the ‘war on drugs’. It led to the capture of key leaders, including the head of Los Zetas, Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales (widely known as Z40), and Sinaloa leader Joaquín ‘El Chapo’ Guzmán. Nonetheless, in 2013, Patrick Corcoran commented that the security landscape looked ‘strikingly similar to the way Felipe Calderón left it eight months ago’. Furthermore, critics of the kingpin strategy have suggested that the technique helped obfuscate the extent to which the cartels were embedded in Mexican security politics, and that this ultimately led to a wider and more diversified

142 Morton, “The War on Drugs in Mexico,” 1639.
143 Jorge Chabat, Combatting Drugs in Mexico under Calderon: The Inevitable War (Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas (CIDE), 2010), 3.
144 Once gains had been made there, the kingpin strategy was re-established, although Vanda Felbab-Brown argued this is a return to the non-strategic and opportunistic approach of Calderón. See Jonathan D. Rosen and Roberto Zepeda, Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking, and Violence in Mexico: The Transition from Felipe Calderón to Enrique Peña Nieto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 2.
145 Rena De La Pedraja, The United States and the Armed Forces of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, 2000-2014 (McFarland, 2014), 194.
set of criminal organisations. In fact, Don Winslow has argued that the Mexican government decided to ‘pick a winner’ in the drug war in order to give the central government some influence in their behaviour. Similarly, a NPR news investigation asked whether Mexico’s drug war was a ‘rigged’ fight. The BBC also alleged intelligence links between the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Mexican government and the Sinaloa Cartel, which provided information on rivals. In all versions of this story, the Sinaloa Cartel was deemed the preferable victor. Hence, the drug conflict, which peaked in 2011, began to decline in 2012 after the election of Peña Nieto. This occurred after he prioritised policing crimes that affected civilians and legitimate businesses, rather than the militarized approach of Calderón and Fox—despite the fact his policy left the core of the cartels organisational structures largely intact.

The removal of symbolic leaders demonstrated that the optics of the drug war are important, as it has been an issue that has threatened to penetrate US debates, and therefore wider US threat perceptions in respect to Mexico. This was apparent during the 2016 US election campaign when Donald Trump exploited crude stereotypes about Mexican immigrants as drug traffickers, and after his election issued an executive order to construct a US-Mexican border wall, despite critics claiming this would be both ineffectual and costly. Nonetheless, privately, Mexico has ranked highly in the concerns of US strategic planners: not because of immigration, but because of organised crime. This was demonstrated by the Joint Operating Environment (JOE) ‘Future Trends’ report, produced by the US Department of Defense in 2008, that stated that in the near future:


‘the growing assault by the drug cartels and their thugs on the Mexican government over the past several years reminds one that an unstable Mexico could represent a homeland security problem of immense proportions to the United States.’ 153

It continued:

‘In terms of worst-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico’. 154

This means that privately the US has been blunt about intervening in Mexico if it affects its national interest. For example, an earlier 1996 US military briefing paper—INSOM SCG 90-01—considered the deployment of troops in the face of Mexican instability. 155 Similarly, in 2011, US Under Secretary of the Army, Joseph Westphal, speaking about increasing narco violence, claimed that the cartels constituted an insurgency, and that he did not wish ‘to have to send [US troops] across the border’. 156

Overall, the evidence here suggests that dilution is important in the Mexican case because drawing actors to the centre seems the default response. In contrast, dilution in Australia can be interpreted as a ‘last resort’ to rein in rogue actors. Turkey provides a better comparison via its use of Kemalism, which demonstrates similarities to the role of Mexican nationalism. But both have had the duty of removing broad ideological positions and replacing them with a clear set of ‘boundaries’ in which to operate. Even here, though, the Turkish population’s acceptance of the role of the military has meant that crude dilution through banning and jailing actors has been a common occurrence. In contrast, Mexico has used the party system, corporatism and the embrace of actors outside the legal framework to dilute fringe discourses.

153 Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force, 34.
154 Ibid., 36.
Inflation

Inflation is more opaque in Mexico when compared to the other cases. Unlike Australia and Turkey, Mexico has less of a need to promote threats that are distant. This is because of its geopolitical position, where the US is a clear hegemon. Indeed, this leads to the paradox where one of the central inflated discourses with Mexico is about the US itself. This is problematic given it is also Mexico’s *de facto* security guarantor. As the prior section on deflection demonstrated, Mexican security and foreign policy elites have resorted to splitting discourses about the US into two arenas. One deals with ‘high’ security issues, which are largely handled privately by foreign and security policy elites, and the other occurs where broader antagonisms linked to the US’s treatment of Mexico are filtered into diffuse discourses. Inflation follows a similar theme because Mexican elites are unable to dilute or deflect all discourses about the US. Hence, there is a preference to inflate vague, benign and unfocused narratives concerning the US that are unlikely to be actualised and create existential problems.

In fact, the inflation of *some* US narratives is necessary because considerable anti-American (and some anti-European) sentiment still exists within Mexican society.\(^{157}\) This stems from the experience of Mexico losing territory in the nineteenth century to the US, leaving what Julia Sweig terms a ‘pocket of visceral anti-Americanism’.\(^{158}\) For Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane, this has created a ‘legacy of anti-Americanism’, as the result of US military actions in Mexico over the past one hundred and seventy years,\(^ {159}\) with the result being the ‘institutionalisation of historical memories of American wrongs’.\(^{160}\)

This is visible in the literature as far back as the 1950s where Norman Humphrey described how cultural rather than political differences dominated the inflated narratives about anti-Americanism. Politicians were publicly and ‘instinctively’ anti-gringo\(^ {161}\) at a cultural level, as demonstrated by the popularity of the narrative concept of *La Raza* (‘the race’). The differentiating point of *La Raza* was

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160 Ibid.
161 ‘Gringo’ is a term used, often pejoratively towards non-Hispanic people and foreigners.
popularised by the writer and philosopher José Vasconcelos, who identified Mexico as the centre and home to a unique mixed race, incorporating aboriginal, European and African peoples.\textsuperscript{162} This painted actors (cartoonishly) with predominantly European ancestry, and most specifically the US, as overly materialist and capitalistic.\textsuperscript{163} Hence, when \textit{La Raza} was invoked it was a way of protecting Mexican nationalism by avoiding the embrace of US culture.\textsuperscript{164} Importantly, it is in this space where much anti-Americanism persists, with few public contests on distinct political policies, and instead contests targeting symbolism and perceived attempts at cultural hegemony. Yet as Humphrey noted, in other areas including intellectual, educational and economic sectors, there is ‘amazing good will to the country’, informed by close proximity to the US.\textsuperscript{165}

We can see this dichotomy in the treatment of senior US officials in the region, whom have been subjected to trivial tabloid treatment by the Mexican media, but with little high-level scrutiny about the wider US strategic position. For example, during the 1980s Ronald Reagan appointed the actor John Gavin as Ambassador to Mexico. Mocking descriptions of him as a ‘gringo’ stereotype were not helped by the fact he was well known for advertising a popular brand of rum in Mexico.\textsuperscript{166} In one instance a newspaper decried him as a ‘pot-smoking gringo tourist who smuggled cocaine’.\textsuperscript{167}

Jeffrey Davidow was US Ambassador during the period of transition between the PRI and PAN during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Again, media scrutiny of his role focussed on sensationalism rather than policy. In one case Davidow remarked how a simple private joke overheard at Independence Day celebrations was reinterpreted as an insult to the Mexican fight for independence, with \textit{La Jornada} lamenting ‘the lack of respect that the U.S. gives a traditional speech by the weak

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\textsuperscript{162}The ‘Cosmic Race’ (La ‘Raza Cósmica’) Excludes Mexico’s African Heritage,’’ \textit{Geo-Mexico, the Geography of Mexico}, accessed November 15, 2016, http://geo-mexico.com/?p=4508.
\textsuperscript{163}Ibid.
\end{flushright}
president of a subordinate nation.’ Davidow later added that he was ‘a target for malicious reporters, hostile editors, and editorial cartoonists who greeted the advent of a six-foot, six-inch overweight gringo ambassador as a gift equal to a lifetime’s supply of free crayons’. This supplemented a wider narrative, in which Joseph Contreras has claimed the ‘mainstream press [has] continued to function as a vehicle for lingering anti-American sentiment’.

Yet the inflation of cultural aspects has meant that their existential impact on security is minimal. Furthermore, attempts to invoke anti-American sentiment are rarely actualised outside of broad caricatures and sensationalist hyperbole. From this position, Pamela K. Starr has argued that public mentions of foreign policy in Mexico are generally superficial and have ‘developed into a favoured tool for demonstrating the government’s revolutionary credentials’.

The split between public and private responses about anti-Americanism was also noted in Samuel Huntington’s original ‘Clash of Civilisations’ article. Within he described a 1991 conversation with a senior advisor to President Gortari, where the advisor

‘described at length to me all the changes the Salinas government was making. When he finished, I remarked: “That's most impressive. It seems to me that basically you want to change Mexico from a Latin American country into a North American country.” He looked at me with surprise and exclaimed: “Exactly! That's precisely what we are trying to do, but of course we could never say so publicly.”’

On the other hand, critics might argue that this type of inflation risked increasing the chance of US interference in the US. But this is not the case according to Mario Ojeda, who states that:

‘The United States recognises and accepts Mexico’s need to dissent from US policy in everything that is fundamental for Mexico, even if it is important but not fundamental for the United States. In exchange, Mexico cooperates in

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169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
everything that is fundamental or merely important for the United States, though not for Mexico. 

Consequently, these discourses provide an important function of splitting and redirecting problematic narratives ripe for exploitation within Mexico. Castañeda himself summarised this phenomenon:

‘Mexico’s nationalism can be defined through anti-Americanism, [and] creates a brutal national schizophrenia. […] On the one hand, the immense majority of this country’s population has a direct, personal, immediate interest in having a good relationship with the United States, and at the same time it is being asked to be anti-American’. 

The result is that Mexican society thrives on abstract nationalism designed to maintain cultural symbols rather than focusing on issues that actually affect the national interest. In the end, anti-Americanism is not about the US per se, and therefore not perceived as a threat by US security and foreign policy planners. It is simply a domestic discourse that functions to give constituents an outlet for grievances in a way that needs no existential response in foreign or security policy.

Aside from anti-Americanism, and despite Mexico’s isolationist norms, Mexicans have prioritised globally-focused problems that require deep engagement with the outside world as security threats. For instance, the 2010-2011 The Americas and the World report from CIDE (the last time this survey was published) showed global warming adjudged to be the number two security threat by Mexicans. For the sake of comparison, in a US poll taken in the same year by Gallup, global warming ranked eighth, behind issues like terrorism and federal debt. Meanwhile, the highest-ranking foreign policy objective according to the Mexican survey was drug

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175 Ibid.


The same survey revealed that Mexico also had the second-highest level of support for a generic international court (behind Ecuador) and broad support for globalisation and foreign investment. Some 43 percent viewed globalisation as good, 16 percent were neutral, and 28 percent saw globalisation as bad. For Aleman, this is the result of leaders ‘redeeming their domestic lacks by endorsing and defending noble causes in the international arena.’

In a related poll, 75 percent of respondents had a favourable view of the UN, and a majority (60 percent) favoured Mexican participation in peacekeeping missions. This occurred despite Mexico being severely restricted in its ability to send peacekeepers due to its constitutional. Indeed, Mexico’s total peacekeeping commitment under the Peña Nieto administration has been twelve soldiers deployed across three operations: in Western Sahara, Haiti and Lebanon.

Another technique that has emerged in Mexico since the 1980s that mirrors the Australian case is the inflation of security rhetoric about immigrants. In Mexico, this is focused on immigrants from Central America. Fear of immigrants is easily exploited in a country where the domestic population, overall, has few interactions with foreigners: some 75 percent of Mexicans have never travelled outside of the country, and 80 percent have no daily contact with foreigners of any type. Anti-immigrant sentiment usually targets Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalans immigrants.

From a security position, political exploitation of these people presents little risk of blowback for Mexico. El Salvador and Honduras share no direct border with Mexico. Honduras has a military budget of USD$200 million and a nominal GDP of USD$20 billion (compared to $11 billion and $1 trillion respectively for Mexico). Further South, El Salvador has a similar capability with a military budget of USD$150 million and a nominal GDP of USD$28 billion. Guatemala is slightly

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179 Ibid., 55,58.
180 Aleman, “Resistance from Within,” 660.
larger, given its shared border with Mexico and a GDP of USD$53 billion, but its military is underfunded with a 2015 budget of USD$274 million. Consequently, while the official discourse of elites ‘may appear surprisingly antiracist’, Mexican politics is infused within a coded framework that mirrors Australia’s treatment of immigrants of Eastern heritage, and Turkey’s treatment of the Kurds. For example, President Vicente Fox invoked subtle racism by claiming that ‘Mexican migrants do jobs “that not even blacks want to do”’. Teun Dijk also identified the undercurrent of racism inherent in Mexico during interviews with the upper middle class in Mexico City, who identified mestizos (those having indigenous heritage) as ‘superstitious’, “people who do not to work”, “lazy”, “savages”, “uncivilized people” and “backward”. Similar attitudes were visible during the release of stamps in 2005 that depicted the character ‘Memin Pinguin’, which fit many of the racist stereotypes of dark-skinned people seen in the US in the 1940s. In defending the stamps, Vincente Fox claimed they were a ‘celebration of Mexican culture’.

These sentiments assist in shifting discontent concerning security linked to cartels, especially in the South, to the indigenous people in poorer states such as Chiapas and Guerrero. The inflation of scapegoat groups makes sense (even if it is ethically dubious) when viewed in the context of internal crime as a core security issue. Here, crime and law and order was rated as a ‘very big problem’ problem by 81 percent of respondents top a 2013 Pew survey, compared to terrorism at 59 percent. Vilification of Central American people therefore provides a way to shift public security concerns into different domains, despite the fact that Mexican corruption and crime is primarily driven by domestic forces.

184 The World Bank, “Guatemala: Military Expenditure as % of GDP.”
This increasingly hostile view of immigrants correlates with the drug war, but contrasts with Mexico’s traditionally progressive approach to immigration and dissidents. For instance, in 1980, during the height of the Guatemalan conflict, Mexico took in 46,000 Guatemalans via ‘mass’ protections. Yet by 2013, the number of immigrants granted refugee status was only 300 out of 100,000.

Visible xenophobia has emerged in areas such as Lecheria, which sits at the start of the main train route, pejoratively termed ‘La Bestia’ or ‘the Beast’: a popular route for immigrants moving from the Southern border. A Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) report found various signs targeting immigrants, including one that read ‘if we catch you robbing or abusing people, we are going to lynch you’.

Most immigrants aspire to reach the US, but exploitation and gang activity along these routes means that success is now less likely. And although this only represents a small percentage of the population, it has resulted in it wide anti-immigration sentiment. A CIDE survey in 2011 showed that 60 percent of Mexican’s supported the idea of deporting all illegal immigrants, while 21 percent supported the idea of a wall on the southern Mexican border.

This has occurred despite Guatemalan labour being central to Mexico’s agricultural economy. In fact, it has meant that illegal immigration was tolerated until the 1980s, and even sometimes encouraged. Yet with the changing security environment during the Central American crisis, immigrants became a scapegoat when tackling security issues. For example, the director of the Migration service Diana Torre Acieniega was outspoken (and wrong) when she blamed all of Mexico’s social problems on refugees, leading to the expulsions of Guatemalans in 1981 and 1983. At the same time, inflation of the immigration threat occurred alongside the genuine security problems posed by sixty-eight incursions by Guatemalan ‘kabiles’

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192 Ibid.
195 Maria Cristina Garcia, Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 45.
196 Ibid., 49.
197 Ibid.
across the border from 1980 to 1983. In this instance, the central government was hesitant to blame the Guatemalan state directly for the incursions, and instead inflated the threat of immigration in order to permit the deportation of people who were deemed capable of mobilizing a leftist movement in the South.

There have been additional security motives for Mexico redirecting sentiment about immigration. One was that the state oil company PEMEX’s operations had discovered potential reserves in the 1980s of 1.5bn barrels in Chiapas. It also bordered the state of Veracruz that encompassed the Cantrell Oil Field. For a time it was delivering the second-biggest output in the world, with over 2 million barrels per day.

The removal of immigrants has therefore become a way of signalling to domestic audiences that something is being ‘done’. This included a second wave of deportations in 1990, when 126,000 immigrants were expelled from Mexico. More recently, the Southern Frontier Programme has had a similar motive. Under Peña Nieto Mexico deported 92,889 Central Americans between October 2014 and April 2015, a figure that was double the previous year. Yet many of the deportations are effectively empty gestures. Most Salvadorians deported just across Guatemala’s border have the knowledge they can easily return. Thus the policing figures are improved on paper, while the inflated risk of immigrants persists, with the same people being expelled and then returning. Another way that immigrants are exploited within domestic debates is by providing an easy target to internal security forces to demonstrate ‘action’. Here, authorities will frequently arrest immigrants falsely to boost crime clearance rates. Overall, the inflation of immigration provides a convenient way for Mexican elites to absolve themselves of serious domestic problems, while building an outsider narrative concerning weaker groups. Anti-Guatemalan, anti-Honduran and anti-Salvadorian sentiments are also issues that have little potential for blowback from North

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198 Ibid., 53.
200 Ibid.
202 Garcia, Seeking Refuge, 69.
America, because there is a general perception that Mexico is a target of racism—especially from the US—rather than an instigator of it itself.

Consequently, the inflation of immigration as a core threat to Mexico has an important security function since it melds together two threats, and provides convenient scapegoats with implications for elites. Of course, there are substantial human rights concerns that sit alongside this interpretation, and vulnerable immigrants have become part of a broader currency of violence between cartels and the state. This has resulted in several horrific massacres, including the August 2010 mass murder of seventy-two migrants. 204 And, problematically, the inability of illegal migrants to seek legal recourse and fear of deportation makes this position even more exploitable.

The overarching theme in the Mexican case therefore is that vague types of inflation are preferred. Notably, nationalism is inflated, and anti-American sentiment is unfocused. There is also evidence that Mexicans are largely uninterested in international topics, which contributes to these trends. According to *The Americas and the World 2010-2011* public opinion report, ‘in general, Mexicans pay little attention to questions related to national or global affairs’. 205 For example, 70 percent of Mexicans could name their local authority, a much higher figure than those who had ‘never heard of’ regional leaders including Cuban leader Raul Castro (44 percent) and former Brazilian President Lula da Silva (63 percent). 206 This suggests that deflection and dilution are preferred in the Mexican case, and that a lack of specifics and low information about international issues to reinforce these processes. This includes the inflation of an historical humiliation narrative about anti-Americanism, rather than a focus on ‘hard’ security challenges.

**Analysis and Implications**

As with the first two cases, the framework when applied to Mexico reveals interesting differences between public and private responses to security. In line with the findings of the previous two chapters, the account here suggests that Mexican foreign policy and security elites have reordered the way they present domestic

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discourses. Moreover, in the Mexican case, high levels of risk aversion about invoking issues concerning the US have resulted in a highly conservative approach to foreign and security policy, and one that is poorly communicated to domestic audiences. The upshot is that Mexican foreign policy is based on autarkic principles rather than internationalisation, and that this stems from a long ‘healing process’ whereby it is still recovering from the effects of the Mexican revolution and interventions from its Northern neighbour.\textsuperscript{207}

Another important factor has been Mexico’s strong nationalistic narratives, and how this has interfaced with leftist values that align more closely to a Latin American sphere of influence, rather than a North American orientation. But despite this rhetoric, there is little evidence to suggest elites have acted on these narratives privately. Hence, Mexican leaders have inflated benign issues such as anti-gringoism or globalist concepts with little scope for resolution, because they present very little risk of antagonising their main security competitor: the US.

However, one important difference with respect to the other two cases is Mexico’s domestic security situation, due to widespread corruption and crime. While Turkey has internal security problems, Mexico’s drug cartels have contributed to violence and deaths on a similar scale to conflicts in the Middle East, and which should have attracted substantial international attention. This is puzzling, as this topic should be exploitable by entrepreneurs within the US. In this sense, geography should increase the visibility of the drug war in the US, but here the opposite seems true.

Processes of deflection, dilution and inflation provide one explanation for this paradox, and the application of the framework above shows how Mexican elites have pragmatically engaged with criminal and vigilante elements as required, while also inflating vague concepts of nationalism to obscure the deep security problems facing the country. From this position, as David Mares has pointed out, there are increased risks for a middle power that sits between weak and powerful states.\textsuperscript{208} Thus, for Mexico, its middle power position puts it in the ‘firing line of a great power.’\textsuperscript{209} In short, superpower proximity seems to be a more important variable in the Mexican case than for either Turkey or Australia.

\textsuperscript{207} Aleman, “Resistance from Within,” 650.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
The thesis’ typology also provides explanations of why Mexican instability is viewed as a relatively benign issue by US domestic audiences. For example, in a 2014 Pew Research report of US public perception, Islamic extremism, cybersecurity, an Iranian nuclear program and North Korea’s nuclear program were viewed as the top global concerns to United States citizens.210 In contrast, Mexico did not rate a mention in the top ten foreign policy issues. The focus on the US here, at the expense of other regional security concerns may seem exaggerated, but it is important to restate that one of Mexico’s core security interests is to avoid antagonising Washington. In this respect, US attitudes towards Mexico are critical and revolve around two perceived threats: immigration and drugs.

From this position, Mexican attempts to mitigate problematic narratives emerging from the country seem to be working. The Mexican Drug War ranks as one of the most serious security challenges worldwide of the past decade. Ciudad Juarez was more violent than Baghdad for the second half of the 2000s, while over 100,000 drug war related deaths have occurred since 2006.211 At the height of the drug war, there were 11,753 conflict-related deaths a year, in contrast to 5,132 in Iraq.212 At each conflict’s respective peak (2006 in Iraq and 2008 in Mexico) there were 12,284 Mexican deaths213 and 29,113 deaths in Iraq related to conflict.214 This results in a problematic domestic environment, where Mexico ranks ninety-fifth out of 167 states in 2015 Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, below countries such as Egypt and Mali.215 Yet the Mexican drug war (at least until the election of Donald Trump in late 2016) was largely a peripheral issue to Americans when compared to the place of Middle Eastern terrorism in domestic debates. The conclusion is that Mexico’s elites have successfully blurred debates harmful to the national interest.

211 Breslow, “The Staggering Death Toll of Mexico’s Drug War.”
From a theoretical perspective, this chapter has also shown the effects of Mexico political centrism and rich executive powers. Here, the semi-authoritarian nature of the presidency allows decisive decision making that maximises power because leaders are not beholden to their internal audiences. They do not need to ‘sell’ their message as they can more easily mobilise the assets of the state in line with foreign policy objectives. This has historically been beneficial to the US as the concentration of power and corporations within a few small elite Mexican cliques meant that the US could use its considerable economic influence to manipulate foreign policy without needing to resort to more extreme forms of interventionism as experienced elsewhere.

As a result, the framework presented in this thesis provides a number of useful answers. It helps explain why Mexican political culture is dominated by several anti-American narratives built around unfair treatment, yet also explains why these have little impact on Mexico’s security and foreign policy, which remains non-interventionist and isolationist. It also explains the pragmatic security responses within Mexico about contentious issues such as the drug war, Autodefensas and the Zapatistas uprisings. Substantial concessions to these groups across different administrations demonstrates that elites have had few ethical or moral qualms in engaging groups outside of normal political processes as required, especially if they view them as problematic to Mexico’s wider security position.

It also explains Mexico’s ability to maintain good relations with US antagonists, including Cuba, while also successfully navigating a set of issues that have caused security problems for other smaller states in the region, such as Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. Finally, it explains paradoxical public opinion towards security and foreign policy issues, despite the deep problems within Mexican society that in many states would be ripe for exploitation. Despite ongoing violence and only moderate economic gains, some 48 percent of Mexican respondents agreed with the government’s performance on foreign and security policy issues (with 39 percent against) in Las Americas y el Mundo 2010. Overall, this suggests that regardless of political will, Mexican foreign policy is subservient to the external security environment, which is centred on the US. Indeed, given Mexico’s increasing

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216 González et al., “México, Las Américas Y El Mundo 2010,” 76.
pluralism, the only real way to ‘sell’ change to an audience is through the inflation, dilution and deflation of specific and problematic issues.

In this context, Mexico has a more restricted set of discursive tools available to it than Australia or Turkey. Again, we can attribute this to proximity. Proximity to the US offers many obstacles to pursuing an independent foreign and security policy detached from Washington’s core objectives. Of course, the same can be said for Australia, as it has followed US security policy closely for nearly seventy years. But Australia’s isolation, both geographically and culturally provides a façade of independence while presenting little challenge to US interests. Conversely, Mexico’s proximity to the US and its cultural differences mean that troublesome domestic narratives can be exploited within both the US and Mexico. One prominent example is the treatment of Mexico as a populist tool by President Trump, whose election campaign invoked hollow stereotypes of Mexicans as ‘bad hombres’\(^\text{217}\) and suggested a 20 percent tariff on Mexican goods.\(^\text{218}\) These proclamations can have a severe existential threat to Mexico’s national interest, and their exploitation by Trump is a stark demonstration of the vulnerability of Mexican security to rogue discourses.

**Chapter Conclusion and Implications for Middle Power study**

This final case has examined how Mexican security and foreign policy elites have managed their difficult place in international affairs. As with the previous cases, there is evidence that domestic elites are acutely aware of how rhetoric can affect security outcomes, and when problematic discourses arise, they are either deflected or diluted. Elsewhere, themes, such as vague anti-Americanism and unjustified concerns about immigration are conveniently inflated in ways that do not intersect with Mexico’s core security concerns. Furthermore, the Mexican case demonstrates that despite Mexico’s large size, and middle power credentials, it is largely a passive actor in international relations.

This has wider implications for the study of Mexico in a middle power context as it addresses and contests the emphasis on scholarship grounded in international


political economy and domestic level variables. As mentioned on page sixty-eight, a study by Mariano Bertucci found that only 0.5 percent of US-Mexican scholarship used structural factors as a way to understand Mexican security.\textsuperscript{219} As a result, the research here provides a novel structural interpretation of how Mexico manages its position as a middle power. Furthermore, this chapter challenges the dominant normative and institutional approaches to middle powers such as Mexico, which \textit{is} widely theorised, and continues to be, including recent work by J. Mo and Mo Jongryn\textsuperscript{220} and Jorge A. Schiavon and Diego Domínguez.\textsuperscript{221}

Consequently, the neoclassical realist position advanced here provides a new account of Mexico’s approach to international affairs through a middle power lens, where the primary reason for Mexico’s security passivity is the presence of the US and the weak potential for the formation of a credible sub-regional balancing coalition against the US. Attempts at balancing have emerged, but these are problematic for Mexico as its geography would place it at the vanguard of any such effort. The result is a foreign and security policy that appeases the leftist states of Latin America, while never presenting an existential threat to the US.

\textsuperscript{220} J. Mo and Mo Jongryn, MIKTA, Middle Powers, and New Dynamics of Global Governance: The G20’s Evolving Agenda (Springer, 2014).
\textsuperscript{221} Jorge A. Schiavon and Diego Domínguez, “Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA): Middle, Regional, and Constructive Powers Providing Global Governance,” \textit{Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies} 3, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 495–504.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The general hypothesis presented at the beginning of this thesis—that common behaviours and responses are visible within middle powers in pivotal positions—has been tested over the last three chapters. This final chapter takes the analysis from the cases presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five. In summarising my findings I show how they generate a theory about middle powers in pivotal positions. I also discuss the limitations of the framework and suggests future directions for research.

At this point, it is useful to restate the research question, which is:

**How can we explain and reconcile the differences between foreign and security policy responses to security challenges and public discourse concerning those challenges in pivotal middle powers?**

My simple answer is that middle powers act largely in accordance with structural pressures. But, in order to meet these pressures, elites rearrange domestic discourses to deliver pragmatic foreign and security policy. And since middle powers have little agency in respect to the wider security positions, it is better to describe pivotal middle powers as status quo states that are reactive rather than proactive in international affairs.

**Theory Generation Revisited**

At the beginning of this thesis, I provided seven points, as outlined by Stephen Van Evera on what a theory should be, and what it should achieve.¹ These were:

1. Explanatory power
2. Parsimony
3. Satisfaction
4. Clear framing
5. The theory is falsifiable
6. Explains important phenomena
7. Prescriptive richness

Revisiting these questions after the case chapter helps to conclude this thesis and provide context to the findings.

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First, this thesis has demonstrated *explanatory power*. In the Turkish case, it provided an explanation for changes in Turkey’s foreign and security policy and the correlating domestic responses, which is an issue that has vexed recent scholarship. In the Australian case, the thesis demonstrated that there is consistency in foreign policy and that changes in the external environment are the catalyst for changing discourses on security, rather than the other way around. Mexico’s consistency in foreign and security policy since the early twentieth century was also explained by a highly centralised political system that attempts to pull rogue voices to the centre of debates in order to avoid changes to foreign and security policy that could antagonise its neighbour, the US. In each case, harmful ideas were managed by elites and those privy to state security matters to minimise the effect of rogue discourses impacting on—and intervening—in foreign and security policy making.

These findings provide the thesis with exploratory range and power. As laid out in Chapter Two, it has demonstrated at a theoretical level that when the intervening variable (external security pressures) changes the independent variable (foreign and security policy), the dependent variable (domestic discourse) follows. Hence, at the simplest level it allows for casual inference between great power activities and how middle powers, who have weaker material positions, respond. And, as the thesis has shown, when great power security dynamics have changed, these pivotal middle powers have changed their foreign and security policies to suit. This creates the burden of selling these changes to domestic audiences by using a combination of deflection, dilution and inflation. This explains how the pivotal middle powers of Australia, Turkey and Mexico have maintained their security positions, despite occupying problematic geographical positions.

Within this wider set of explanations, the thesis also provides a highly granular set of explanations of how pivotal middle powers achieve this by giving examples of elites reordering discourses in order to ameliorate security issues. Furthermore, it has also explained why middle powers must be careful of the impact of their rhetoric, as this can quickly become the focus of ideational entrepreneurs. Here, deflection and dilution are critical ways of removing problematic discourses from the public agenda.

Inside each case, certain examples stood out as being particularly instructive of these tendencies. In the Australian case, I demonstrated how the Chinese media will use
Canberra as a proxy for grievances about their treatment by the West. In response, Australian elites have rarely invoked China in recent domestic political debates. Likewise, in Turkey it was apparent that elites have quickly changed their positions on topics such as Israel and Russia as changing security dynamics have demanded it. This is also why the discourse about Kemalism has been replaced by a new Turkish nationalism that once again embraces Islam as a political tool. Consequently, the account here has explained how the resurgence of political Islam is not driven by ideational factors or the agency of elites, but is instead the result of Ankara adjusting to the realities of the new security environment. Finally, the thesis has explained why Mexico has rarely been assertive in international affairs, and why its discursive antagonism towards the US has not been actualised. In this instance it is the result of careful management of discourses concerning the left of the domestic political spectrum.

The account here also presented a parsimonious way of understanding events in each of the three cases. By breaking down the study into a typology with fewer variables, it has arguably provided a usefully nuanced overview of the way that pivotal middle powers behave. Critics may argue that this is too reductionist, and that it invites the cherry picking of examples. Yet it is this type of reduction that allows parsimony, and is consistent with Van Evera’s argument that parsimonious theories are valuable because they use ‘few variables simply arranged to explain [their] effects’. Indeed, as the literature review suggested, the middle power literature faces the opposite problem: the wide scope of positions and ontologies makes it hard to analyse cases within widely accepted frameworks. For example, one area where this parsimony adds value is in the finding that pivotal middle powers respond in generalised ways across three different governmental systems, ranging from a full democracy (Australia) to a proto-authoritarian government (Turkey).

The findings here provide a satisfactory outcome under Van Evera’s criteria, as it satisfies our ‘curiosity’ about the phenomena identified. In this context, I have provided a way of explaining the paradoxes between domestic discourses and foreign and security practice across multiple levels of analysis, leaving little ‘mystery’ on behalf of the reader. This was achieved by process tracing different

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2 Ibid., 19.
3 Ibid.
phenomena through the three cases, from their place in global politics, through to the actions of small political actors with little power, but which nonetheless have the potential to harm the national interest. More importantly, I have done this within the area of middle power, where many accounts are arguably ‘unsatisfying’. Thus, while accounts of middlepowerdom are, as David Cooper describes, often ‘parochial’\textsuperscript{4}, the account here provides satisfaction by incorporating a range of cases and by inferring causation at multiple political levels: international, state and domestic.

Theoretical satisfaction stems from three important findings. First, the differences between the security and foreign practice of middle powers and what their domestic constituents prioritise occurs because elites rearrange discourses that they see as problematic. Domestic populism is rarely aligned with the realities of international security, and therefore management of ideational factors is central to the delivery of pragmatic foreign and security policy. Thus, in all three cases, problematic security discourses are deflected away from the centre of debates. If smaller actors exploit those discourses successfully, they are diluted. Finally, established actors inflate discourses that are not central to security to allow a set of safer issues for inevitable debates to occur on.

Second, theoretical satisfaction was found in the assertion that middle powers are equally concerned with maintaining the status quo, rather than expanding their influence (as the ideational literature suggests). Hence, in the Australian case, there is little evidence to suggest that Australia is expansionist in any material form. Even in the ideational middle power space, Australian diplomacy is frequently framed as signalling designed to appease its alliance partners. And, as Chapter Two demonstrated, many middle power initiatives claimed by Australia are underwritten by great power support, and usually only succeed when aligned with great power interests. For Turkey, similar conclusions can be made, with the evidence in this thesis suggesting that Turkey’s ‘pivot’ to the East facilitates the maintenance of a status quo, rather than expansionism. Indeed, the account here has argued that rhetoric used by the government is simply a way to facilitate necessary changes in Turkey’s foreign and security policy. These have been regulated by a set of deeply embedded secular norms under Kemalism that required change to adjust to the new security dynamics that emerged after the Cold War. In contrast, Mexico’s security

\textsuperscript{4} Cooper, “Challenging Contemporary Notions of Middle Power Influence,” 320.
environment is much less dramatic, and no radical shifts in its foreign and security policy have been required. But a simple, and satisfying answer can be found in its proximity to the US, where no credible attempts to balance against the US have emerged. This means that despite some changing discourses and internal security issues, Mexican foreign and security policy has remained remarkably consistent. Attempts to change it, as occurred in 2000 and 2001 after the change of government to PAN and the emergence of the Castañeda Doctrine, were quickly diluted.

Finally, and arguably the most ‘satisfying’ finding is that the changing structure of the international system is the most important intervening variable in pivotal middle powers and their foreign and security policies. For instance, Australian foreign and security policy was largely indistinguishable from that of the UK until the Second World War and the US since the 1940s and until the early 2000s. With the rise of China, Australia has engaged with Beijing as would be expected: economically and diplomatically in a way that hedges against the US and provides a level of redundancy should the US revise its role in the region. Importantly, domestic rhetoric has played no central role in driving this policy. Rather, Australia is responding exactly as expected under a structural reading of international politics. Consequently, this thesis’ value comes from adding domestic level variables, and from demonstrating how political elites have used certain responses to contain domestic sentiment and then sell change as required.

Similarly, great power politics have shaped Turkish foreign policy, rather than domestic agency, despite a plethora of literature claiming the agency of Atatürk and Erdoğan have driven Ankara’s approach. Hence, its position as a US ally was (and continues to be) not ideational, but pragmatic. And, in common with Australia, Turkey is hedging against full commitment to the US and NATO by engaging actors within the Middle East and to the North. Furthermore, domestic discourses have shifted to topics like Kemalism not because of the agency of elites, but because the legacy of Atatürk’s isolationism now constrains the ability of the foreign and security policy elite to respond to the new security environment. Thus, the resurgence of political Islam in Turkey is not a causal factor, but rather a consequence of the changing security environment in which Turkey sits. The typology here explains how elites in Ankara have achieved this transition in foreign
and security policy at the domestic level: by deflecting, diluting and inflating specific issues to align them with the realities of their security environment.

Finally, Mexico, unlike the other cases, has had no need to substantially change its security policy over the past century, and remains a strong US ally. Importantly, Mexico’s domestic population has many historical grievances against the US that could be exploited, but these are managed by elites through deflection, dilution and inflation. The Mexican case therefore provides satisfaction by demonstrating how consistency in foreign and security policy occurs despite many domestic incentives to act counter-intuitively to the national interest. This leads to dilution enjoying primacy in the Mexican case and this provides an alternative explanation of why centrism dominates the Mexico’s political institutions, in contrast to the wide left-right schisms found in other Latin American states to the South.

The thesis also provides clear framing. The combination of the neoclassical realist framework with a typology facilitates this, and the analysis has taken place through a consistent basis over each case. In Van Evera’s formulation, this means the thesis contains a ‘statement of the antecedent conditions that enable its conditions and govern its impact.’ Thus the examples have been framed within a set of specific systemic conditions, where either change or continuity could be expected in foreign policy. For Australia and Mexico, continuity has been dominant, and correlated with external security environments, resulting in domestic continuity on foreign and security policy. In contrast, clear framing of the changes in Turkey’s security environment provide a clear context to the changes in domestic discourses. In other words, the contextual section of each chapter framed the antecedent conditions, and made their use appropriate and in context.

Clear framing also means that the thesis is falsifiable. This is central to generating useful theory, and was identified in Chapter Two as a problem in existing middle power research, as well as approaches using critical positions. In this context, positivists such as John Mearsheimer have argued that critical theorists see ‘endless interpretations of the world around them’ and ‘deny the possibility of objective

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knowledge’. In contrast, the account here allows for the thesis to be tested should differing data and trajectories present themselves in the future.

More specifically, the outcomes presented here are falsifiable when assessed over the short-term. For example, the analysis of Mexican foreign and security policy using only 2000-2002, or Turkish foreign policy from 2011-2013 can result in alternative conclusions. Nonetheless, when viewed over longer periods, as this thesis has done, the general trend is that pivotal middle powers behave as would be expected: they gradually reorganise their domestic discourses in ways that enables elites to address issues that can harm their position within the regional security order.

At the same time, the thesis remains falsifiable across longer time frames. Indeed, the framework is likely to be challenged and either confirmed or debunked by a new, richer set of data emerging given the uncertain security environment at the beginning of 2017. Notably, Donald Trump has challenged Australia’s traditional alliance with problematic rhetoric. Should this persist, there is also the potential for Australia to seek out new allies or modify the extent to which it relies on its US partner. In this instance, if the thesis holds, we should see attempts to reorder rhetoric to facilitate this change in the international order, where leaders in the centre deflect and dilute problematic rhetoric while inflating less problematic narratives. From this position, the thesis is falsifiable if there is a trend over the coming years where elites in pivotal middle powers fail to enact pragmatic foreign and security policy in the national interest, despite the emergence of new discursive challenges. This might be demonstrated, for instance, by the new focus on ‘fake news’ by the Trump administration. Even so, if falsified in the future, the thesis will still provide an important contribution to the literature allowing scholars to add value by addressing any problems with the theory.

Perhaps most significantly, this thesis explains important phenomena. It has explained the phenomenon whereby elites respond paradoxically to security challenges, with their public positions often in contrast to their private policy responses. Consequently, it explains why they inflate superfluous debates: to obscure

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issues more pertinent to security planners. In Australia, the most prominent example has been the use of xenophobia towards Middle Eastern people, which redirects attention away from other problematic targets, most notably China. In Turkey, this has occurred via the inflation of first the Kurds as a threat, and now Gülenism, as the strategic priorities of Turkey’s elites have changed. Finally, in Mexico, the thesis has revealed phenomena whereby anti-American and anti-immigrant sentiment has been contained and redirected into more benign areas.

This leads to the final attribute: *prescriptive richness*. I argue the thesis has achieved this objective. Prescriptive richness allows policy makers to use the outputs of this thesis and use them to remedy security challenges. This has been particularly beneficial in the Australian setting, where the notion of middle power activism is embedded within the foreign policy community. It can also be seen to a lesser extent in Mexico, which is increasingly embarking down the route of traditional ‘middle power diplomacy’, but has at times antagonised the US by doing so. What this thesis provides is a counter argument to prescriptions based on liberal positions, where deep institutional engagement is viewed as central to security. Importantly, this pessimistic view of middle powers’ security positions gives their policy makers the tools to see behind the theatre of public security narratives. For example, there are many discussions about the immigration debate harming Australia’s international reputation, yet this thesis has demonstrated this type of behaviour (and, indeed responses) were actually common across all the cases, and therefore by no means unique. This does not excuse the more immediate harm and problems posed by xenophobia, but it does provide wider context about the behaviour of elites towards the issue. Hence, by providing this new assessment, driven by theory, I hope to

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temper the rush to inflate and isolate these variables in policy prescriptions without exploring their wider context.

This also informs one more pessimistic conclusion at the centre of this thesis: pivotal middle powers ultimately have little control over their fates. Furthermore, attempts to assert influence beyond their material capabilities often result in punishment when broader systemic forces come into play. This is visible in the Turkish case where assertive action on Israel and Russia from Turkish elites has ended in a softening in rhetoric when it became apparent that pursuing antagonisms with those states was counterproductive. As each respective chapter demonstrated, Turkish elites have let attacks dissipate when a pushback occurred. Likewise, in the Mexican case, attempts at pursuing an assertive agenda, such as that by Jorge Castañeda as foreign minister of Mexico in the early 2000s, were constrained. The takeaway is that middle power positions are constantly contingent on the actions of great powers. Pivotal middle powers thus reject contentious foreign and security policy: instead they are loyal to their security guarantors to engender reciprocity against future threats. This also means, that in contrast to a great deal of the ideational middle power literature, the impact of pivotal middle powers on the international system is likely to continue to be minimal.

Limitations of the Thesis

While this research shows promise, several lingering questions require further research to adequately address. One area that requires further research is the limits of agency in elite decision-making. This is typified by the ‘Hitler’ problem, where an individual’s actions can send a nation’s security one way via their own decision making. International relations theory still struggles with the broad question of agency versus structure, but the rise of Recip Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey and the election of Donald Trump in the US present interesting challenges about the extent of agency. While this thesis has argued that Erdoğan has acted largely within the constraints of structural limitations and his behaviour is the result of exploiting international opportunities, this is potentially falsifiable. Indeed, it is feasible that Erdoğan’s personal ambition could harm state security over the longer-term. Both Schweller and Rathbun have addressed the related question of overbalancing and

10 To Schweller, the problem of dictatorships versus structure is (partly) solved by assuming that leaders, such as Hitler, ‘let’ rather than ‘make’ things happen. See Schweller, Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest, 7.
overstretch leading to negative outcomes\textsuperscript{11}, but future research on this area with respect to middle powers would be highly informative, as the additional ‘permissions’ required by middle powers should result in more rational and accurate assessments of power as per the arguments presented above.

Identifying acts of discourse and assigning weight to them also remains a challenge for both the positivist and critical approaches to international relations, and quantifying and measuring discourse remains a contested activity. The ambiguity of language, ideas, and their socially effectiveness remains disputed not only in the study on international relations, but also across the study of journalism, communications and sociology. Nonetheless, the account here remains robust as it can encapsulate future advances in this arena. For example, while this thesis focuses on paradoxes between public and private discourses, the same framework could be used in quantitative and qualitative content and discursive analysis (or alternatively, highly critical interpretations of security), and still provide rich descriptions. For example, articles such as Jason Ackleson’s ‘Constructing security on the U.S.-Mexico border’, which concentrates on the use of rhetoric ‘scripts’ and the problems of perception of risks and dangers could be assessed within a wider context and within this framework.\textsuperscript{12}

Similarly, newer research on Turkey would be of benefit. This includes articles such as ‘Political orientations, ideological self-categorizations, party preferences, and moral foundations of young Turkish voters’ by Onurcan Yılmaz et al., who argue that left-right classifications are unsuited to Turkey, and that what constitutes ‘liberal’ is fluid.\textsuperscript{13} In this instance, the thesis presented here can assist the understanding of positions implemented and enabled by the centre: Turkey’s political cleavages have been informed by their security environment and have formed around security challenges. Finally, there are many research articles on Australian foreign and security policy that could be synthesised with the arguments presented here. It could help explain, for example, the hesitancy of Australia to fulfil its obligations to the ‘Bali Process’ concerning people smuggling, as highlighted by

\textsuperscript{11} Rathbun, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism”; Schweller, \textit{Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power}.
\textsuperscript{13} Onurcan Yılmaz et al., “Political Orientations, Ideological Self-Categorizations, Party Preferences, and Moral Foundations of Young Turkish Voters,” \textit{Turkish Studies} 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 544–566.
Melissa Curley and Kahlia Vandyk.\textsuperscript{14} So, while their conclusion is grounded in a policy-level assessment, the thesis here can help understand the barriers and role of discourses about immigration within both Australia and Indonesia, and how they relate to (and intervene with) the strategic agenda of Canberra within a wider strategic and security context.

\textit{Implications of the research: Middle Powers}

The framework here could also be applied to a range of states claimed as middle powers. A list might include Iran, Canada, South African, Singapore, Kenya and South Korea for both single and comparative analysis. Iran is an excellent future case, being highly diverse, and surrounded by intense security pressures. In addition, in the Iranian example, the leadership has arguably acted in a way that has successfully maintained state security (even if its methods are unpalatable to the West). Iran has experienced intense threats from the Soviets, Salafi extremism, a strong (at the time) Iraq and the US. At the same time, it has successfully repelled these advances through a combination of pragmatic statecraft and inflated religious narratives.

Elsewhere, the framework would benefit from a detailed case on Canada, which shares several security commonalities with Mexico in the context of its position next to the US. A cursory look at its domestic politics reveals general consistency in foreign policy across administrations.\textsuperscript{15} In the same way that Mexico maintains anti-US sentiment while also drawing its security from the North, so too does Canada in the North. For example, it differentiates itself on populist issues such as climate change and its pursuit of middle power activism. Even on contentious issues such as Iraq, Canada publicly did not provide military assistance, although it provided ‘moral’ support.\textsuperscript{16} But, leaked documents have shown that Canada’s activist rhetoric does not always align with its private outlook, and that Ottawa was prepared to


support the US in Iraq through alternative channels in order to remain in favour with the US military.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Implications of the research: Neoclassical Realism}

Finally, this thesis has attempted to broaden the value of neoclassical realism as a research program in international relations. Currently, much of the neoclassical realist literature focuses on great power politics, but its value in a middle power setting is less clear. The account here could help advance the theory’s usefulness across a wider range of settings. Indeed, it is my claim that the evidence presents here provides better scope to describe the actions of states where ideational factors are usually given primacy. The framework here gives analysts an alternative and rigid framework, to reassess these cases and view them from a different perspective.

\textbf{Conclusion}

With the evidence presented and analysed, this thesis has explained the difference between responses to security challenges and domestic discourse concerning those challenges in pivotal middle powers

Throughout this thesis I have reconciled several differing perspectives with the hope of addressing gaps in the existing literature. I have drawn strongly on the realist tradition, combined with an extension of neorealist research programs in the form of neoclassical realism. I have claimed that while neoclassical realism currently describes the international/domestic nexus in great powers, its descriptive value is less valuable in a middle power setting. Consequently, a middle power framework outlined here, that builds on the neoclassical realist research program, allows for an assessment of the international-domestic nexus in middle powers that sit in pivotal positions.

Interestingly, global security dynamics have changed substantially during the writing of this project. Some of these have been incorporated (such as the recent moves in Turkey spurred on by the emergence of IS and Russian revisionism), while others have not been fully played out (like the role of the Palmer party in Australian politics, the re-emergence of One Nation, Russia’s use of so-called ‘hybrid’ techniques to disrupt the order of adversaries’ discourse, and, most prominently, the

election of Donald Trump in the US and his Jacksonian approach to foreign policy). But, importantly, the main findings of the thesis are not contradicted by these events. In fact, in some ways they have they are enhanced. Notably, the revisionism of Russian policy and the emergence of IS have resulted in changes to the rhetoric of Turkey’s elites, even while its fundamental security position has remained constant. Similarly, Australia has experienced four different Prime Ministers during the writing of this thesis, yet Australian foreign and security policy remains, for the most part, unchanged. Mexico’s discourses are the most challenging, given the aggressive rhetoric from President Trump about the construction of a Mexican Wall. But even here, President Peña Nieto’s responses have been measured, in contrast to those of former Mexican President’s Vicente Fox, who crudely stated on Twitter that ‘Mexico is not paying for that #FuckingWall’.

In fact, the next few years will arguably be critical for Mexican foreign and security policy. Domestic responses to Trump will be challenging for Mexican elites to manage, and the framework here should allow scholars to identify links between the domestic discourses about international political topics and their treatment by foreign and security policy elites. In other words, it could potentially explain the limits of inflation, deflection and dilution. With that said, Mexico is already accelerating an FTA with Europe, while Turkey and Mexico have also sped up talks concerning an FTA, in an effort to diversify and interact with other middle powers. These moves already suggest that Mexico is looking to hedge against the US in a way similar to Turkey and Australia, despite its proximity to the US, as a new post-American order becomes a possibility.

In final conclusion, then, the argument here has permitted a rich explanation of: (a) the disconnect between domestic ideas and the foreign and security policy of that state; (b) how problematic discourse can harm a middle power’s wider security position; and (c) demonstrated the way that domestic actors that threaten to amplify security threats through poor discourse are handled. Consequently, the ability to provide rich analysis about such questions is this thesis’ contribution to knowledge.

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