

DOKUZ EYLÜL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAM
MASTER'S THESIS

**TÜRKİYE- NATO RELATIONS AND TURKISH
COMMITMENT TO THE TRANSATLANTIC
ALLIANCE DURING THE COLD WAR**

Mahmut Esat BOZKURT

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Zehra Nilüfer KARACASULU

İZMİR- 2024

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YÜKSEK LİSANS
TEZ ONAY SAYFASI

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JÜRİ ÜYELERİ

<u>Ünvanı, Adı, Soyadı</u>	<u>Üniversitesi</u>	<u>İmza</u>
Prof. Dr. Zehra Nilüfer KARACASULU	- Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi	
Doç. Dr. İrem Aşkar KARAKIR	- Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi	
Prof. Dr. Sedef EYLEMER	- İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi	

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Prof. Dr. Zehra Nilüfer KARACASULU
Müdür

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this master's thesis titled as "Türkiye- NATO Relations and Turkish Commitment to the Transatlantic Alliance During the Cold War" has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that all materials benefited in this thesis consist of the mentioned resources in the reference list. I verify all these with my honor.

Date

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Mahmut Esat BOZKURT

Signature

ABSTRACT

Master's Thesis

Türkiye- NATO Relations and Turkish Commitment to the Transatlantic Alliance During the Cold War

Mahmut Esat BOZKURT

Dokuz Eylül University

Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

International Relations Program

The thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye-NATO relations. The study, particularly, evaluates Türkiye's alliance behavior, its insistence on balancing with the Western bloc, and its evolving commitment during the Cold War. The US has arguably had a strong influence on relations throughout the process. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Türkiye's relationship with NATO parallels, to some extent, its relationship with the US.

Despite some crisis moments in their relations, Türkiye has been a valuable partner for the Western Alliance. Its participation in NATO's Southern Flank was important to the Alliance's strategies for dealing with security threats and maintaining regional stability. the Alliance is generally assumed to provide Türkiye with military support, technology transfer, and economic assistance. Yet, especially the Johnson Letter, the Cyprus issue, and the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation marked an important turning point in Türkiye's alliance behavior and bilateral relations.

The study assumes that a comprehensive analysis of relations requires an examination of both systemic and domestic factors. In this context, the thesis adopts the neoclassical realist theory. It first examines the structural factors, particularly the impact of bipolarity, the Cold War order, and evolving power dynamics. Second, the external threats and opportunities faced by Türkiye are examined. At the domestic level, leader images, ideological/political orientations,

strategic culture, national identity, some historical experiences, and the military's role are assessed.

In conclusion, this thesis emphasizes that Türkiye's NATO membership has been perceived as central to the country's security policy in the process. However, the evolving nature of the relationship also reveals Türkiye's periodic tendencies to pursue independent policies at certain times that are in line with its national interests. These fluctuating dynamics reflect the crisis moments and specific time frames, ultimately reinforcing Türkiye's long-term commitment to NATO. The study also emphasizes that NATO is not merely a military alliance but also an institution with broader political objectives. Therefore, Türkiye's accession to NATO has been shaped by security concerns and a prolonged search for identity and belonging. As a result, this study goes beyond a historical examination and illuminates the evolving nature of contemporary relations through theoretical approaches.

Keywords: Türkiye, NATO, US, Transatlantic Security, Cold War, Realism, Neoclassical Realism

ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Soğuk Savaş Döneminde Türkiye-NATO İlişkileri ve

Türkiye'nin Transatlantik İttifaka Bağlılığı

Mahmut Esat BOZKURT

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı

İngilizce Uluslararası İlişkiler Programı

Bu tez, Soğuk Savaş boyunca Türkiye-NATO ilişkilerinin kapsamlı bir analizini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma da, özellikle Türkiye'nin ittifak davranışları, Batı bloğu ile dengelenme konusundaki ısrarı ve süreç içerisinde ittifaka karşı değişen bağlılığı değerlendirilmiştir. Soğuk Savaş döneminde, Türkiye-NATO ilişkilerinin büyük ölçüde ABD'nin etkisi altında şekillendiği öne sürülmüştür. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin NATO ile ilişkisinin ABD ile olan ilişkisine paralel bir seyir izlediği de varsayılmaktadır.

Türkiye, ABD ve NATO için stratejik öneme sahip önemli bir partner olmuş, ancak ilişkilerde zaman zaman kriz dönemleri de yaşanmıştır. Türkiye'nin NATO'nun Güney Kanadı'na katılımı, İttifak'ın güvenlik tehditleriyle başa çıkma ve bölgesel istikrarı koruma stratejileri açısından kritik bir rol oynamıştır. Tez, İttifak'ın ve ABD ile kurulan stratejik ortaklığın Türkiye'ye sağladığı askeri destek, teknoloji transferi ve ekonomik yardımları da incelemektedir. Bununla birlikte, Johnson Mektubu, Kıbrıs meselesi ve 1974 Kıbrıs Barış Harekatı gibi olayların, Türkiye'nin ittifak davranışında ve NATO/ABD ile ilişkilerinde önemli dönüm noktaları olduğu vurgulanmaktadır.

Çalışma, ilişkilerin kapsamlı analizinin hem sistemik hem de iç faktörlerin incelenmesini gerektirdiği kabulüyle, neoklasik realist teoriyi analitik çerçeve olarak benimser. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle iki kutupluluğun etkisi, Soğuk Savaş dünya düzeninin genel özellikleri ve değişen güç dinamikleri gibi yapısal faktörler ele alınmıştır. Ardından, Türkiye'nin karşı karşıya olduğu

dış tehditler, fırsatlar ve stratejik çevre incelenmiştir. Yurtiçi düzeyde ise, lider imajları, ideolojik ve siyasi yönelimler, ülkenin stratejik kültürü, ulusal kimliği, tarihsel deneyimleri, ordunun rolü gibi temel müdahale değişkenleri analiz edilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'nin NATO üyeliği Soğuk Savaş döneminde ülkenin güvenlik politikalarının ana eksenini oluşturduğu belirtilir. İlişkilerin dinamik yapısı, Türkiye'nin zaman zaman kendi ulusal çıkarlarını önceliklendirerek daha bağımsız politikalar izleme eğilimlerini yansıtmaktadır. Kriz dönemleri ve belirli zaman dilimlerini kapsayan ilişkilerin bu inişli çıkışlı yapısı, uzun vadede Türkiye'nin Batı ve NATO'ya bağlılığının yeniden pekişmesiyle neticelenmiştir. Tez, NATO ittifakının yalnızca bir askeri ittifak olmanın ötesinde, siyasi amaçları da olan bir yapısı olduğunu ve Türkiye'nin NATO'ya katılımının sadece güvenlik endişeleriyle değil, aynı zamanda uzun süren bir aidiyet ve kimlik arayışının da etkisiyle şekillendiğini vurgulamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, tarihsel bir incelemenin ötesinde, teorik yaklaşımlarla günümüz ilişkilerinin dinamik yapısına da ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, NATO, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Transatlantik Güvenlik, Soğuk Savaş, Realizm, Neoklasik Realizm

TÜRKİYE-NATO RELATIONS AND TURKISH COMMITMENT TO THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE DURING THE COLD WAR

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ABBREVIATIONS

IR	International Relations
WW I	The First World War
WW II	The Second World War
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
CSS	Critical Security Studies
BoP	Balance of power
BoT	Balance of threat
IMF	International Monetary Fund
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IOs	International Organizations
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
MC	Military Committee
NAC	North Atlantic Council
LANDCOM	NATO's Land Forces Command
CoE-DAT	NATO Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
OSS	The Office of Strategic Services
OEEC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
MAD	Mutually assured destruction
DECA	Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement
IRBMs	Intermediate-range ballistic missiles
WB	World Bank

TBMM	Turkish Grand National Assembly
CHP	Republican People's Party
DP	Democrat Party
AP	Justice Party
YTP	New Türkiye Party
CKMP	Republican Villagers Nation Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
CGP	Republican Reliance Party
TİP	Workers' Party of Türkiye



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INTRODUCTION

The Cold War played a significant role in shaping international relations. The era is still crucial for understanding many contemporary phenomena in international politics.¹ The general characteristic of the period refers not only to the geopolitical tensions and power struggles between the two emerging superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. It also represented a broader ideological struggle in which the world was divided into two blocs, the "Western" and the "Eastern".² Thus, it was an expected outcome that nations would take sides in this duality of the bipolar order.

At the beginning of the Cold War, Türkiye with its own unique characteristics and geostrategic importance had already become the center of attention of the rising powers.³ In fact, in a short time, Türkiye started to reflect the spirit of the Cold War era, as the world was divided into East and West. Furthermore, concepts such as Easternness-Westernness and Westernization-modernization started to be debated in the country.⁴

It can be argued that these debates are still ongoing based on its foreign policy behavior. Concepts such as civilization, identity, and belonging have been debated for many years.⁵ This inherent characteristic is also likely to be one of the main determinants reflecting the relationship between Türkiye and the West in general. Given both the historical and contemporary context of turbulence, fluctuations, and periods of both stability and instability, this dynamic has shaped the country's overall interaction with the West. Over time, the evolving relationship has

¹ Georg Sørensen, Jørgen Møller and Robert Jackson, **Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches**, 8. ed, Oxford University Press, 2021; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas", **International Security**, Vol. 25, No: 3, 2001, (Power), p. 5.

² Eylem Yilmaz and Pinar Bilgin, "Constructing Türkiye's 'Western' Identity during the Cold War: Discourses of the Intellectuals of Statecraft", **International Journal**, Vol. 61, No: 1, 2005, p. 46.

³ Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The US, Türkiye, and NATO, 1945-1952", **The Journal of American History**, Vol. 71, No: 4, 1985, p. 813; Robert Cossaboom and Gary Leiser, "Adana Station 1943-45: Prelude to the Post-war American Military Presence in Türkiye", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 34, No: 1, 1998, pp. 73-74.

⁴ Ziya Öniş, "Türkiye in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity", **Middle East Journal**, Vol. 49, No: 1, 1995, pp. 48-49; Michael Shammas, "Between East & West: Drivers Behind Turkish Foreign Policy in a Multipolar World", **SSRN Electronic Journal**, 25.10.2019, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3475157>, (19.09.2024), pp. 1-9.

⁵ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, "Modernity, Identity and Türkiye's Foreign Policy", **Insight Türkiye**, Vol. 10, No: 1, 2008, pp. 55-56.

reflected not only geopolitical and strategic considerations but also, to some extent, deeper identity, cultural, and ideological tensions.⁶ In this context, the main aim of the thesis is to make a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye-NATO relations, which were shaped by external and systemic as well as domestic level variables.

Aim of the Thesis

This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War era when the country was actively positioned within the Western bloc. The thesis first seeks to understand Türkiye's alignment decision, given that it was a neutral country during WW II. It then seeks to explore why and how Türkiye chose to persistently align itself with NATO and the Western bloc. This raises another curiosity in understanding how the evolving nature of Türkiye's NATO/Western relations has been characterized by fluctuations, ups and downs, and how this dynamic has continued even today.⁷ The thesis also aims to provide a theoretical assessment of Türkiye's evolving commitment to the NATO throughout the Cold War. It adopts a neoclassical realist framework, based on its intention to provide a comprehensive approach. It focuses on two pivotal phases: first, Türkiye's initial insistence on joining NATO, and second, its evolving commitment to the transatlantic alliance during the Cold War era.

Significance of Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, the findings of the thesis provide historical insights that can inform the current and future geopolitical dynamics of Türkiye-NATO and its broader transatlantic relations. Given the continuity in the complex nature of the relationship, it is essential to examine its origins to comprehensively understand and illuminate the current dynamics of the

⁶ Tarık Oğuzlu, "Türkiye's Eroding Commitment to NATO: From Identity to Interests", **The Washington Quarterly**, Vol. 35, No: 3, 2012, (Eroding) pp. 160-161.

⁷ Gülnur Aybet, "The Evolution of NATO's Three Phases and Türkiye's Transatlantic Relationship", **PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 17, No: 1, 2012, pp. 19-20; Bruce R. Kuniholm, "Türkiye and the West", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 70, No: 2, 1991, (TR-West) pp. 34-36.

interactions, as the fluctuations, the difficulties are still relevant.⁸ Second, it will contribute to the literature on the practical application of the neoclassical realist approach in explaining states' alliance behavior. Finally, it is important because the thesis will provide a comprehensive examination of the origins of Türkiye-NATO relations by giving primary importance to the external and systemic factors and combining them with domestic factors such as national identity, political and ideological orientation of the state, and leaders.

The rationale for focusing the thesis on Türkiye's alliance behavior and examining it with complementary domestic factors is rooted in the country's national identity. This identity is largely shaped by the longstanding "Westernization-modernization" and "belonging" debates that have been ongoing even before the foundation of the country. It is also likely to reflect the complexity of bilateral relations. Finally, the most critical point this research claims to address is that the outcomes are not only for historical examination but also for understanding how these dynamics have persisted and continue in a constant manner even today.

Brief Literature Review

The thesis provides a brief literature review, with a particular focus on the doctoral and master studies conducted in Türkiye. The review is conducted over the archives of the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Each thesis will be summarized.

The thesis on the topic of "Türkiye's introduction to NATO and their effects" prepared by Abbas Balcı examines the process of Türkiye's accession to NATO and the effects of this decision on the country.⁹ Balcı argues that there was strategic harmony of interests particularly with the US. Eventually, the NATO membership led transformation in Turkish foreign policy.¹⁰ In particular, the study accounts for the factors that pushed Türkiye to become a member of NATO. Balcı's analysis is

⁸ Oğuzlu, Eroding, p. 163; Aybet, pp. 34-35; Tarik Oğuzlu, "Türkiye and NATO / Türkiye ve NATO", **Adam Academy Journal of Social Sciences**, Vol. 3, No: 1, 2013, (TRNA) pp. 7-8.

⁹ Abbas Balcı, **Türkiye's Introduction to NATO and Their Effects**, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Institute of Social Sciences, Ağrı, 2017, (NATO), pp. 1-159.

¹⁰ A. Balcı, NATO, p. 4.

primarily concerned with geopolitical and security issues, as well as the regional and global uncertainties that emerged in the aftermath of WW II. Balcı supports his arguments based on the general perspective in the literature about the Soviet Union's threats against Türkiye's security, territorial claims, and rights over the Turkish Straits. These eventually led Türkiye to seek security guarantees. In the main part, he emphasizes the diplomatic efforts and the challenges during the accession process. This includes Türkiye's contributions to NATO, such as its participation in the Korean War, which demonstrates its commitment to the alliance and consolidation of its position within NATO.¹¹ The thesis also addresses the implications of NATO membership on both domestic and foreign political outcomes in Türkiye, such as Atatürk's foreign policy principles, and shift to a pragmatic approach during the Democrat Party (DP) era.¹² However, a theoretical approach would have increased the strength of the study. In sum, the thesis provides a detailed historical overview of the factors that pushed Türkiye to align with the Western bloc.

Another thesis is prepared by Arif Zengin on the topic “Türkiye's NATO Membership and Subsequent Reflections on Turkish Domestic and Foreign Policy” The study examines Türkiye's accession to NATO until the present day The main question of the thesis is how NATO membership has shaped Türkiye's domestic environment and its foreign policy behavior.¹³ The thesis begins with a historical context of NATO's origins. It continues with the geopolitical tensions and their impact on Türkiye's NATO membership. Zengin states that the deterioration of Türkiye-USSR relations and the country's security concerns were the main reasons for its NATO accession.¹⁴ The study emphasizes the diplomatic efforts that led the country to obtain membership and concludes that both parties had similar strategic interests during this period.¹⁵ Also, it aims to analyze the impact of NATO on Türkiye's domestic and foreign policies. Zengin discusses several bilateral agreements signed with the US, most of which were secret and controversial. As a

¹¹ A. Balcı, NATO, p. 64.

¹² A. Balcı, NATO, pp. 6-19.

¹³ Arif Zengin, **Türkiye's NATO Membership and Subsequent Reflections on Turkish Domestic and Foreign Policy**, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Celal Bayar University Institute of Social Sciences, Manisa, 2016, p. 7.

¹⁴ Zengin, p. 10.

¹⁵ Zengin, p. 18.

result, Türkiye's military and economic dependence on the US has increased. Yet, the relationships were mostly based on mutual interests.¹⁶ He provides the implications for the domestic dimension of the country's political orientation toward a more Western stance. For example, a transition into a multiparty democracy. For the external dimension, he suggests Türkiye's strategic importance within NATO during the Cold War and how this positioning influenced its relations with neighboring countries and provided broader international alliances and options for Türkiye.¹⁷ The thesis concludes with an analysis of NATO's ongoing influence and importance on Turkish foreign policy orientation in the post-Cold War era.¹⁸ The thesis benefits from both primary and secondary sources. A notable critical point is, again, the lack of a broader theoretical framework that could provide a deeper assessment of the outcomes.

In his thesis named, “NATO and its Effects on Türkiye's Foreign Policy (1949-1974)” Çağdaş Yüksel examines the impact of NATO on Türkiye's foreign policy trajectory between 1949 and 1974. The study begins to examine the post-WW II order and discusses that the Cold War was a period largely shaped by the geopolitical tensions between the US and the Soviet Union.¹⁹ The study addresses the prevalent view that the perceived threats posed by the Soviet Union compelled Türkiye to seek security guarantees from the West, particularly through NATO.²⁰ It then investigates Türkiye's accession to NATO. Yüksel underlines the importance of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and the Korean War. The thesis also highlights the influence of NATO membership on Türkiye's political dynamics. As it facilitates the transition into a multiparty system, the country gains access to a broader range of foreign policy options.²¹ Yüksel provides detailed information on the geopolitical and strategic concerns that push Türkiye to move closer to the Western bloc during the Cold War era. For example, Türkiye's participation in regional alliances such as the Balkan Pact, the Baghdad Pact and CENTO. According

¹⁶ Zengin, p. 36.

¹⁷ Zengin, p. 133.

¹⁸ Zengin, p. 189.

¹⁹ Çağdaş Yüksel, **NATO and Its Effects on Türkiye's Foreign Policy (1949-1974)**, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Trakya University Institute of Social Sciences, Edirne, 2013, pp. 1-215.

²⁰ Yüksel, p.1.

²¹ Yüksel, p. 64.

to him these were crucial against Soviet influence in the region.²² Yüksel also discusses the importance of the superpowers of the time, the Soviet Union, and the US. Their bilateral relations with Türkiye were the main determinants in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy options. Overall, his study provides a comprehensive historical analysis of a particular period. Again, there is a lack of theoretical approach to assess the process and its implications. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable contributions to the literature on Türkiye-NATO relations, particularly regarding the influence of superpowers on the country's foreign policy and bilateral relations.

Ebru Keçeci's thesis, on the topic, “Analysis of Türkiye and NATO Relations After 2001 from a Neorealist Perspective” places particular emphasis on the dynamics of Türkiye's bilateral relations with NATO, as well as the influence of the Russian Federation. Although the thesis deals with the post-Cold War period due to its scope, The assessment of the issue within the neorealist framework makes a similar reference to both the subject and purpose of this thesis in terms of Türkiye's evolving alliance behavior and dynamics in the realist tradition. Keçeci's thesis adopts a neorealist framework in analyzing relations. It focuses on the transformation of NATO after 9/11 and its influence on Türkiye's relations.²³ The thesis contains the historical context of NATO and its shifting dynamics such as in relation to fighting against terror. For Keçeci, this global transformation has deeply influenced Turkish-NATO relations, with new challenges and parameters.²⁴ The study includes the post 9/11 period's historical context, like the Afghanistan mission along with further regional and global developments, such as the Syrian Civil War, the Libyan conflict, and the Eastern Mediterranean tensions. Then it illustrates how these cases and the geopolitical shifts have impacts on Türkiye's strategic decisions and its relations with NATO.²⁵ The thesis also discusses security concerns as the main factors that influence Türkiye's foreign policy choices. It also mentions the evolving dynamics of the relations, between Türkiye and Russia as a pragmatic approach to maintaining a

²² Yüksel, p. 100.

²³ Ebru Keçeci, **2001 Sonrası Türkiye ve NATO İlişkilerinin Neorealist Perspektiften İncelenmesi**, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Istanbul Ticaret University Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul, 2022, pp. 1-74.

²⁴ Keçeci, p. 1.

²⁵ Keçeci, pp. 37-44.

balance with NATO.²⁶ Overall, the study put emphasis on the neorealist approach to define geopolitical shifts in the post 9/11 period and their influence on Türkiye-NATO relations to understand the evolving nature of Türkiye's alliance behavior.²⁷

A review of the academic literature on the subject in Türkiye reveals that one of the most comprehensive studies is that of Zerrin Ayşe Bakan, named "A Quest for Security and Identity: Türkiye and the Enlargements of NATO and the EU". It provides a detailed examination of Türkiye's pursuit for security and identity in the post-Cold War, particularly analyzing its relations with NATO and the EU.²⁸ Although it focuses on the post-Cold War, the study provides a detailed exploration of Türkiye's pursuit of Western alignment in the country's security and identity struggles, which partly reflects the subject of this thesis. The main research questions of the study include changing nature of Turkish position in the post-Cold War era in relation to NATO and the EU. Her objective is to analyze the security and identity search of Turkey. The thesis presents a broad theoretical framework. It adopts Critical Security Studies (CSS) and Social Constructivism. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the security-identity nexus by applying this theoretical approach.²⁹ The thesis includes a historical overview of the relationship during the Cold War, with a particular focus on the key points and moments of transformations. The findings offer an analysis of security and identity in the post-Cold War context, in which identity construction and security concerns are mutually influential.³⁰ It argues that Türkiye's membership in NATO has brought profound military and economic benefits while at the same time imposing some constraints.³¹ Overall, the thesis highlights the critical role of identity and security in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy, its strategic decisions regarding NATO and EU relations, and the country's broader Western integration process. It offers valuable perspectives on the evolving dynamics of Türkiye's relationships with NATO and the EU. The thesis concludes that the post-Cold War era has introduced new challenges and opportunities for

²⁶ Keçeci, p. 48.

²⁷ Keçeci, p. 57.

²⁸ Zerrin Ayşe Bakan, **A Quest for Security and Identity: Türkiye and the Enlargements of NATO and the EU**, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), University of Manchester School of Social Sciences, Manchester, 2007, pp. 1-324.

²⁹ Bakan, p. 19.

³⁰ Bakan, pp. 21-49.

³¹ Bakan, p. 257.

Türkiye. She argues that redefining the country's security concerns, and identity formation processes is essential to navigate these changes. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of mutual interests and shared values for positive interactions.³²

In addition, there are other theses which address the transformation of NATO and the recent shifts in Türkiye's foreign policy. Most of these studies evaluate the post-Cold War dynamics and Türkiye's relations with NATO, generally focusing on the new missions imposed on NATO and their implications for the relationship, as well as the shifting nature of Türkiye's foreign policy and its implications for the complex and evolving nature of Western relations.

This review of the literature reveals that Türkiye's decision to ally with NATO and its alliance behavior during the Cold War are primarily explained by three key factors: security threats from the Soviet Union, mutual strategic interests, especially with the US, and financial aid.³³ Moreover, the desire for modernization in domestic politics was also seen as an important factor in Türkiye's relationship with NATO.³⁴ Zerrin Ayşe Bakan's study, particularly, highlights the effects of Türkiye's NATO membership on security and the search for identity; she proposes Türkiye's Western identity and modernization goals have been one of the main dynamics.

Statement of the Problem: Research Questions

In line with the primary objective of the thesis, this study has addressed the following main research questions:

- Given its neutral status in WW II, why and how did Türkiye decide to align with NATO and the Western bloc?
- What factors explain Türkiye's persistent efforts and determination to join NATO despite its initial rejection?
- Given the ongoing complexity of the relationship, how have the commitments of both parties evolved during the Cold War, with particular attention to Türkiye's alliance commitment?

³² Bakan, p. 258.

³³ A. Balcı, NATO, p. 9.; Zengin, p. 10.

³⁴ A. Balcı, NATO, pp. 6, 19.

- What factors most effectively explain the complexity and evolving commitments in the typical characteristics of relations between Türkiye and the transatlantic alliance during the Cold War?

- Given the interaction of numerous factors shaping the typical characteristics and complexities of the relationship, how do theoretical dynamics explain this relationship and Türkiye's alliance behavior?

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The thesis adopts neoclassical realism to analyze Türkiye's NATO relations and its alliance behavior during the Cold War period. The details of the theory and related concepts will be discussed throughout the thesis, but here is a brief overview to clarify why this approach was adopted. Neoclassical realism is viewed as a synthesis of the neorealist and classical realist traditions.³⁵ It considers systemic factors such as power distribution, polarity, external threats and opportunities, and unit-level factors such as leader images, perceptions, strategic culture, ideology, national identity, domestic institutions, etc.³⁶ Therefore, the approach allows for a more detailed understanding of the complexities of the relationship, as well as Türkiye's alliance behavior in a comprehensive integrity of a theoretical assessment.

The thesis is conducted using desk research methodology, as a method of collecting and analyzing literature from secondary sources. It adopts a qualitative research methodology. The primary approach here is to provide historical context as a process-tracing method during Türkiye-NATO relations along with the key events, then conclude these variables and data set with a comprehensive theoretical assessment from a neoclassical framework. Both the historical analysis and the theoretical assessment involve the review of secondary sources. These include official documents, reports, journal articles and books.

³⁵ Nicholas Ross Smith, "Can Neoclassical Realism Become a Genuine Theory of International Relations?", **The Journal of Politics**, Vol. 80, No: 2, 2018, pp. 742, 743, 746.

³⁶ Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities", **International Studies Review**, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2015, pp. 636-637; Elias Götz, "Neoclassical Realist Theories, Intervening Variables, and Paradigmatic Boundaries", **Foreign Policy Analysis**, Vol. 17, No: 2, 2021, pp. 1-2.

Considering the wide scope of the historical and theoretical perspectives of the thesis, it may create a limitation as it is also hard to achieve lots of past events, documents, and accurate data. Furthermore, the inclusion of a multitude of domestic variables introduces additional constraints to the analysis, especially given the many data sets with many different periods.

Research Structure

The structure of the thesis consists of an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is a detailed explanation of the realist tradition and its various sub-schools. These include classical realism, neorealism, and finally neoclassical realism. Overall, this section will outline the core principles of the theories and the value they offer to any evaluation in general. The second section presents the key concepts of realism. These concepts are the international system and anarchy, the distribution of power, polarity and stability, alliance dynamics, and two sub-theories: balance of power (BoP) and balance of threat (BoT). The last section will provide the adoption of the theoretical framework of the thesis. It clarifies why the thesis decided to adopt the neoclassical realist approach.

Chapter two provides a historical context for understanding the origins of the Cold War era, the establishment of NATO, and Türkiye's accession to the transatlantic organization. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section reviews the post-war period and summarizes the origins of the Cold War. It begins with a general view of the world after WW II. It then discusses the post-war order, with the emergence of rising superpowers, the US, and the USSR. The section partly explains the shift in global power distribution and the emergence of a new bipolar world order. It then gives a brief history of the Cold War, with its background and key moments. The second section examines the origins and early development of NATO. It put particular emphasis on how and why NATO was created, its *raison d'être* and its structure. The section concludes with a final critique of the dominant role of the US within NATO during the Cold War. The last section explores the historical process of Türkiye's accession to NATO. It provides a general overview of the challenges and strategic dynamics. A particular emphasis is also placed on key

events such as the security challenges, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Korean War. The section concludes with an analysis of the US's dominant role and its strategic interests with Türkiye's accession, while most of the other members are skeptical.

Chapter three provides a process-tracing model for the general course of relations. It is particularly important for neoclassical realist analysis.³⁷ The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section examines Türkiye's strategic importance to the transatlantic alliance. It discusses the country's general contributions to the Alliance, with specific emphasis on its unique and geostrategic location, the importance of military bases, facilities, and defense installations to be deployed for the security of NATO's southern flank. The second focuses on the opposite of the first. It explores Türkiye's strategic interests within the transatlantic alliance. In the context of national defense and security interests, economic development and financial aid, and the country's pursuit of a Western identity. The last section reviews the crisis moments in the relations during the Cold War that had a profound impact on overall interactions and reciprocal commitments. It includes the periods of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Johnson Letter, the Cyprus Issue, and the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation.

Chapter four provides a theoretical assessment of Türkiye's alliance behavior and its relations with NATO. In this context, the alliance behavior is discussed in two phases: First, Türkiye's persistent decision to align with NATO. Second, its evolving commitment to the transatlantic alliance during the Cold War. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section assesses the systemic and external factors that have influenced Türkiye's alliance behavior. It begins by describing the international system and explaining the distribution of power within it. Then it draws inferences regarding the structural imperatives imposed on Türkiye as a medium-sized power and examines how anticipated outcomes can be derived from these pressures and constraints. The subsequent part of the structural factors builds upon the neoclassical realist framework by analyzing the role of structural modifiers and the clarity of external threats and benefits in shaping Türkiye's strategic decisions

³⁷ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 115, 131-132.

within the broader context of the Cold War. Finally, it draws inferences about the strategic environment of the country and their implications for its alliance behavior. The second section of the study examines the domestic intervening variables as complementary factors. It places particular emphasis on the role of leader images, ideological-political orientations, and the strategic culture, which are inherent in the country's national identity and historical experiences. The last section presents a final assessment of the thesis by summarizing the findings and interpretations discussed in this chapter. In this context, all relevant variables will be compiled, with the dependent variable identified as the outcome. Given the multidimensional and complex nature of the variables, the assessment will be organized into a table format for clarity.

Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the overall evaluation of the thesis, synthesizing the key findings and interpretations. It discusses the contributions and limitations of the study, offers recommendations for future research, and concludes with final remarks.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will examine three main strands of realism in IR theory: classical realism, neorealism, and neoclassical realism. Each will be discussed with varying levels of detail, depending on its relevance and significance to the thesis. While neorealism is emphasized due to its focus on systemic influences on state behavior, the primary theoretical framework will be neoclassical realism.

The chapter will explore how these different realist traditions contribute to understanding state behavior by integrating both systemic and domestic-level factors. Additionally, key concepts within the realist tradition will be reviewed. Finally, the chapter outlines the rationale for adopting a neoclassical realist framework.

1.1. REALISM

The theory of realism has been the dominant paradigm in the discipline of IR for several decades.³⁸ It is frequently regarded as a theoretical framework that emerged in opposition to its counterparts, idealism, or liberalism. In contrast to liberalism, the realist tradition emphasizes the competitive and conflictual nature of international politics. While liberalism is characterized by an optimistic view, realism is often assumed to be a pessimistic approach to international affairs.³⁹

Although the theory of realism in IR became dominant after the 1930s, the concept of realism has its roots in political thought. The ideas and writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes are considered to have pioneered the emergence of realist theory.⁴⁰ The concept of realism provides a framework for understanding the international system itself, as well as the motivation and behavior

³⁸ Jack Donnelly, **Realism and International Relations**, 1. ed, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2000, p. 1; Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", **Foreign Policy**, No: 110, 1998, (One World) p. 31; William C. Wohlforth, "Realism", **The Oxford Handbook of International Relations**, 1. Ed., (Ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal), Oxford University Press, 2009, (Realism) pp. 131-132.

³⁹ Sørensen et al., pp. 40-43; Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories", **Foreign Policy**, No: 145, 2004, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁰ W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, "Political Realism in International Relations", **The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy**, Ed. Edward N. Zalta, 24.05.2017, <https://philpapers.org/archive/KORPRI-4.pdf>, (30.10.2024), pp. 2, 14-15.

of the states that comprise it. The international system is conceptualized as a set of units operating within an anarchic environment.⁴¹ There are several realist perspectives and sub-theories in international politics, each with different interpretations from different branches of realism. Realist theories place significant emphasis on the concepts of power, self-interest, and security, which they posit as key factors influencing interactions between states. They assume that the state is a primary actor in international politics.⁴²

Realism, in general, asserts that the international arena is anarchic, with no supreme authority governing interactions between states. In such a system, states are regarded as primary and rational units, driven primarily by a desire to ensure their security, survival, and national interests.⁴³ Realism generally represents a power-oriented approach, which discusses how interactions between the states are determined by national power and capabilities.

The core principles of realism can be considered as follows:

- a. State-centrism: States are the primary and rational actors in IR.
- b. Anarchy: The international system lacks central authority and imposes constraints on states as an ordering principle, such as balancing behavior.
- c. Egoism: States prioritize their survival, which drives them to constantly seek their interests and maximize their gains.
- d. Power-oriented politics: States prioritize power and security, often leading to arms races and conflicts, security dilemmas, etc.⁴⁴

Realist tradition gained a prominent place in literature as a reaction to the breakdown of international order after the First WW. It became a dominant theoretical approach throughout the Cold War.⁴⁵ The collapse of cooperation between the great powers after WW II and the intensely competitive and confrontational climate of the Cold War between the two superpowers contributed to the development of realist theory for a more accurate interpretation of the

⁴¹ Walt, *One World*, pp. 31-32.

⁴² Donnelly, p. 7.

⁴³ John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", **International Security**, Vol. 19, No: 3, 1994, (Institutions) pp. 9-10; Donnelly, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Wohlforth, *Realism*, p. 133; Donnelly, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Donnelly, p. 1; Walt, *One World*, p. 31.

phenomena.⁴⁶ This was partly because, as Walt discusses, realism provided simple but powerful explanations for war, alliances, imperialism, obstacles to cooperation, and other international phenomena of the era, and partly because its emphasis on competition matched the key features of the American-Soviet conflict.⁴⁷

Realism is not a monolithic theory; rather, realist traditions have evolved throughout the Cold War and its aftermath.⁴⁸ They also tend to be best at predicting change at different levels of analysis. There are generally four levels of analysis in IR: individual, group (social, organizational, and bureaucratic context), state, and international.⁴⁹ While classical realism is concerned with the state level, neorealism operates at the international level, and neo-classical realism at both levels.⁵⁰

The variants of realism are as follows:

- a. Classical Realism
- b. Neo-Realism (defensive and offensive)
- c. Neo-Classical Realism⁵¹

The following part of the chapter will briefly review these realist traditions.

1.1.1. Classical Realism

“Classical realism” emerged in the 1940s with major shifts in international politics, particularly after WW II. The school was represented and inspired by prominent theorists such as Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and E.H. Carr.⁵² Classical realism emerged as a response to the optimism of schools like utopianism, idealism, and liberalism. It stands in contrast to the liberal perspective on IR.⁵³

Although it focused on the general principles of its future derivatives of the realist tradition, The most apparent distinguishing characteristic of classical realism

⁴⁶ Wohlforth, Realism, pp. 136-137.

⁴⁷ Walt, One World, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁸ Wohlforth, Realism, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Carmen Gebhard, “One World, Many Actors: Levels of Analysis in International Relations”, **E-International Relations**, 28.12.2016, <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/12/28/one-world-many-actors/>, (15.11.2024).

⁵⁰ Sørensen et al., p. 99.

⁵¹ Sørensen et al., pp. 67-99.

⁵² Wohlforth, Realism, p. 132.

⁵³ Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 1, 6; Colin Elman and Michael Jensen (Ed.), **The Realism Reader**, 1. ed., Routledge, New York, 2014, p. 33.

is its particular emphasis on human nature, which is inherently self-centered and power-seeking.⁵⁴ Accordingly, the level of analysis in the classical realist tradition includes the individual level as an explanatory determinant of state behavior. Classical realism places a strong emphasis on human nature and individual-level analysis, while structural realism views the anarchic structure of the international system as the primary determinant of state behavior.⁵⁵

Classical realists such as Morgenthau and Niebuhr argue that states, like human beings, have an inherent desire for power and dominance. They discuss how this imperfect tendency of human nature is an important factor behind wars and conflicts.⁵⁶ The theory also addresses systemic analysis, particularly the distribution of power within the international system. According to S. Walt, Morgenthau emphasized the importance of classical concepts such as multipolarity and the BoP. He considered the bipolar rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union to be particularly dangerous.⁵⁷

In addition, E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau emphasized the primacy of states in IR. They define states as self-interested and rational actors that are primarily motivated by the pursuit of power and security.⁵⁸ Overall, classical realism argues that states prioritize security and power above all else. They consistently seek to maximize these assets to ensure their survival and dominance, along with additional considerations of human nature.⁵⁹

Many classical realists were also highly critical of idealist and liberal approaches to IR. Indeed, one of the fundamental tenets of classical realism was to challenge these idealistic and optimistic perspectives, which they believed did not reflect the reality of the political dynamics of the world at that time.⁶⁰

The core principles of classical realism are as follows:

- a. States are the primary and rational actors in IR.

⁵⁴ Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 3-4; Wohlforth, Realism, p. 133.

⁵⁵ Wohlforth, Realism, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁶ Elman and Jensen, pp. 12, 33.

⁵⁷ Walt, One World, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 30-33.

⁵⁹ Wohlforth, Realism, p. 133; Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁰ Sørensen et al., p. 43.

b. The international system is characterized by a lack of central authority, with constraints imposed on states as an ordering principle, such as balancing behavior.

c. Power is the basic currency in IR, and states constantly seek to maximize it.

d. Human nature is inherently competitive and self-interested, and this determines the behavior of states, their interactions, etc.⁶¹

Hans J. Morgenthau made a significant contribution to the early development of a detailed theoretical framework for realism. He argued that the science of IR is rooted in the analysis of real events and the correct application of meaningful laws. According to him, theory should be realistic, independent, insightful, and consistent with empirical reality.⁶²

His famous six principles of political realism can be summarized as follows:

- a. *Politics, like societies in general, is governed by objective laws and has its roots in human nature.*
- b. *The interests are defined in terms of power. We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interests defined as power.*
- c. *The forms and nature of state power vary with time, place, and context, but 'the concept of interest remains constant. Power can include anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man.*
- d. *Universal moral principles must be filtered through the specific circumstances of time and place.*
- e. *Moral aspirations are unique to a particular nation; there is no universally agreed-upon set of moral principles.*
- f. *Politics is a distinct field from other disciplines such as economics, law, and ethics.*⁶³

Morgenthau argues that states are political entities that pursue specific interests, and they are defined by power. He divides the history of modern political thought into two main schools: "realism" and "others," which differ fundamentally in their views on the nature of man, society, and politics.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Korab-Karpowicz, p. 4; Wohlforth, Realism, p. 133; Sørensen et al., pp. 42-43, 78.

⁶² Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 19-23; Sørensen et al., pp. 76-79.

⁶³ Hans J. Morgenthau, "A realist theory of international politics", **The Realism Reader**, (Ed. Colin Elman and Michael Jensen), 1. ed., Routledge, New York, 2014, (Realist), pp. 53-59; Jonathan Cristol, "Morgenthau vs. Morgenthau? 'The Six Principles of Political Realism' in Context", **American Foreign Policy Interests**, Vol. 31, No: 4, 2009, pp. 238-244.

⁶⁴ Sørensen et al., pp. 76-79.

Despite criticism for its overly pessimistic view and limitations, classical realism has remained an influential perspective in the study of IR. It offers a reliable theoretical framework for understanding a world often shaped by power competition and intense struggle.⁶⁵ Importantly, it also contributed to the evolution of the realist tradition. It paved the way for structural realism and neoclassical realism, which will be explored in the following sections.

1.1.2. Neorealism

Neorealism derived from classical realism and gained prominence in the field of IR, especially during the Cold War era.⁶⁶ Kenneth Waltz, mostly assumed as a defensive realist, attempted to adapt the core concepts of classical realism using the language and methods of modern social science.⁶⁷ He emphasized neorealism's distinctive focus on adopting a more scientific and systematic approach. Other prominent neorealists include Robert Gilpin, Robert Jervis, John Mearsheimer, and Stephen Walt.⁶⁸

The fundamental difference between classical and structural realism, which also highlights K. Waltz's rationale for theorizing his structural approach, lies in two significant aspects: their methodology and level of analysis.⁶⁹ Neorealism seeks to understand interactions among states through a more structural analysis rather than a behavioral approach by emphasizing the international system itself and the distribution of power within it.⁷⁰ Waltz focuses on systemic pressures and constraints to determine expected and fixed outcomes, rather than focusing on individual leaders or unit-level factors to explain state behavior or a foreign policy choice.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Sørensen et al., p. 43.

⁶⁶ Sørensen et al., pp. 82-83; Donnelly, pp. 16-18.

⁶⁷ Steven E. Lobell, "Structural Realism/Offensive and Defensive Realism", **Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies**, 22.12.2017, Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.304>, (28.10.2024), pp. 1-2.

⁶⁸ Walt, *One World*, p. 31; Wohlforth, *Realism*, pp. 138-139.

⁶⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "3. Structural Realism", **International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity**, 5. Ed, (Ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020, (STR), pp. 51-52.

⁷⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory", **Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 44, No: 1, 1990, (Realist Thought), p. 33.

⁷¹ Waltz, *Realist Thought*, p. 37.

Waltz's theory identifies the units based on three core principles: "the ordering principles of the system; the character of the units in the system; the distribution of the capabilities of the units in the system."⁷²

He further noted that the only ordering principle of international affairs is anarchy and the absence of international authority, which can be considered the only causal explanation of state behavior, but if the conditions are identical, the expected behavior, the outcome, would be also similar for states in Waltz's assumption.⁷³ Therefore, Waltz defines his approach as a theory of international politics, not a theory of foreign policy; he mostly uses the concept of power distribution to define the characteristics of the system to make inferences about the outcomes of such a system. For example, the stability of the system is caused by the distribution of power, whether it is more prone to war or peace.⁷⁴ To illustrate, Waltz describes the bipolar system as the most peaceful distribution of power. In bipolar systems, the two dominant powers are identified, their responsibilities are well-defined, and the leaders are experienced in managing foreign policy crises. This clarity and predictability reduce the risk of miscalculation and conflict. However, Waltz also argues that while multipolar systems are more stable, they are also more prone to war, whereas bipolar systems are less stable and less prone to direct conflict.⁷⁵

Neorealist tradition generally posits that the root cause of wars and conflicts lies in the inherent anarchy of the international system. Lack of central authority, states exist in a constant state of potential insecurity.⁷⁶ This also refers to a famous scenario known as the security dilemma, where one nation's efforts to enhance its security may inadvertently be perceived as a threat by others. For example, if country A increases its military strength, country B might respond accordingly. This eventually leads to an escalating arms race and heightened tensions, even when country A's initial measures are purely defensive.⁷⁷

⁷² Kenneth N. Waltz, "Political structures", **The Realism Reader**, 1. Ed., (Ed. Colin Elman and Michael A. Jensen), Routledge, New York, 2014, (Political) p. 105.

⁷³ Waltz, *Realist Thought*, p. 29-30.

⁷⁴ Wohlforth, *Realism*, pp. 137-138.

⁷⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics", **International Security**, Vol. 18, No: 2, 1993, (Emerging), pp. 44-45.

⁷⁶ Mearsheimer, *STR*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁷ Robert Jervis, "Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?", **Journal of Cold War Studies**, Vol. 3, No: 1, 2001, (Dilemma) pp. 36-37.

Some of the core principles of the realist tradition also remained coherent in Waltz's structural assumptions. The most important of these are as follows:

- a. The international system lacks central authority to govern (international anarchy)
- b. States are the key actors in this system
- c. States prioritize their self-interest
- d. The core concepts of neorealism include anarchy, the BoP, and the pursuit of national interests.⁷⁸

The concept of power is a particularly important aspect of the neorealist tradition, but the question of how much power is enough highlights another divergence with the emergence of two further variants of neorealist perspectives:

The first is defensive realism, including Waltz, which is wary of accumulating too much power in one place; they claim that this may trigger balancing behavior as a counteraction by other states in the system. Their core assumption is that states are security maximizers, and their primary motivation is the need to survive in the anarchic environment of the self-help system by adhering to the balance of power mechanism.⁷⁹

On the other hand, offensive realists, like Mearsheimer, argue for the maximization of power. They believe that states are motivated to seek hegemony and dominate the system to ensure their survival. For Mearsheimer, this dominance is the most effective means of ensuring survival because all states have some offensive capability and are uncertain about each other's intentions. Thus, the organizing principle of anarchy is that fear drives states to engage in power-maximizing behavior, regardless of cultural differences or regime types.⁸⁰

Consequently, despite various criticisms of its limitations, including its static and partly fixed view, neorealism continues to be a fundamental IR theory. Its solid explanation of the outcomes caused by the international system and the distribution of power provided a significant influence on the study of international politics. The framework established by Kenneth Waltz continues to be one of the most influential

⁷⁸ Sørensen et al., pp. 83, 100; Donnelly, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁹ Lobell, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 55-56; Lobell, pp. 3-4.

theoretical approaches in the field. Its power-oriented perspective and emphasis on systemic pressures and constraints are still one of the strongest explanations of many phenomena in global politics. However, it is important to acknowledge that neorealism does not account for all factors influencing state behavior, such as domestic politics and non-state actors, which aligns with its self-identification as a structural theory. It is also particularly important because it provided a basis for other variants of the realist tradition, such as neoclassical realism, which will be used as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

1.1.3. Neoclassical Realism

Neoclassical realism is considered the third generation of the realist school, especially given the intensity of the criticism that neorealism is insufficient to explain developments after the Cold War era.⁸¹ In fact, this third generation, in a way, combines the previous two in an attempt to clarify the phenomena in the newly emerging world in a more comprehensive way, considering the foreign policy behavior of states and their choices.

The theory is regarded as a synthesis of the neorealist and classical realist traditions.⁸² Because it considers both structural factors such as the distribution of power, polarity, and anarchic structure of the system, and unit-level factors such as leader images, their perceptions, strategic culture, ideology, national identity, domestic institutions, etc.⁸³ The term "neoclassical realism" was introduced by Gideon Rose. Other notable neoclassical realists include Randall Schweller, William Wohlforth, Fareed Zakaria, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin Ripsman, and Steven Lobell.⁸⁴ Collectively, these scholars have made significant contributions to the development of neoclassical realism as an influential theoretical approach in IR.

As noted above, neorealism concludes that different states will develop similar patterns of behavior based on systemic pressures and constraints.

⁸¹ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", **World Politics**, Vol. 51, No: 1, 1998, pp. 145-147.

⁸² N. R. Smith, p. 746.

⁸³ Sørensen et al., p. 93.

⁸⁴ Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (ed.), **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, 1. ed, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 5-6.

Neoclassical realism emerged as a response to the perceived limitations and/or areas that neorealism did not attempt to explain.⁸⁵ While the neorealist tradition was effective in explaining international political outcomes, it was inadequate in explaining a particular state's foreign policy choices, especially over a certain period.

Thus, the primary aim of neoclassical realism is to address this gap while building upon the foundations established by Kenneth Waltz.⁸⁶ It generally recognizes systemic variables as the principal drivers of state behavior while incorporating both structural/external and domestic variables. It incorporates domestic-level factors as intervening variables within the neorealist framework.⁸⁷ This suggests that the structure of the international system and the relative distribution of power are the primary determinants of state behavior. However, domestic-level variables serve as a filter and influence how states ultimately respond to the pressures and constraints imposed by the international system.⁸⁸

Moreover, the theory has recently expanded its scope to function as both a "theory of foreign policy" and a "theory of international politics." Traditionally, the former has sought to explain why a particular state makes certain foreign policy choices by emphasizing an in-depth analysis of the state's behavior, particularly over a certain period.⁸⁹ For instance, it examines the reasons behind a country's decision to align with one power or engage in conflict with another during the Cold War. Meanwhile, as a theory of international politics, it also seeks to analyze key dynamics within the international system, such as the tendency toward a balance of power and the relative stability of bipolar systems. This includes exploring why states naturally form alliances and why the bipolar system is more stable.

This development is largely credited to Randall Schweller, Neoclassical realism has traditionally focused on explaining why countries make specific foreign policy choices. However, Schweller suggests that it has broader potential. He argues that it can also explain further outcomes by addressing both the behaviors of states

⁸⁵ Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism", **Security Studies**, Vol. 17, No: 2, 2008, pp. 304, 311.

⁸⁶ Gustav Meibauer et al., "Forum: Rethinking Neoclassical Realism at Theory's End", **International Studies Review**, Vol. 23, No: 1, 2021, pp. 277-278.

⁸⁷ Rose, p. 146.

⁸⁸ Rose, p. 150.

⁸⁹ Gustav Meibauer, "Neorealism, Neoclassical Realism and the Problem(s) of History", **International Relations**, Vol. 37, No: 2, 2023, (History) pp. 354, 360.

and the broader dynamics that shape the international order.⁹⁰ The tables below provide an analytical and systematic framework for the analysis of neoclassical realism:

Table 1: Analytical Framework of Neoclassical Realism: Key Variables

Independent Variable	Intervening Variable	Dependent Variable
Systemic/External Factors	Domestic-level factors (leader images, strategic culture)	Foreign Policy Behavior/Choices

Source: Adapted from Götz, p. 3, with Modifications by the Author.

Table 2: Systematic Categorization of the NCR Framework: Variables and Components

Variables	Components
Independent Variable	Systemic & External Factors: distribution of power, polarity, external threats and opportunities, etc.
	↓
Domestic Intervening Variables	State Leadership and Elites: Individual Characters, perceptions, images, ideological orientations psychology, etc.
	State Capacity & Domestic Institutions: Bureaucratic efficiency, military strength, economic resources, etc.
	Domestic Political Landscape: Public opinion, interest groups, the influence of societal actors.
	Strategic Culture: Inherited in national and cultural heritage. E.g. national identity and historical experiences.
	↓
Dependent Variable	Primary Focus: Foreign Policy Behavior and choices, mostly influential in the short term. (e.g., alliance formation, military interventions, diplomacy)
	Potential Application (proposed by Schweller): Broader IR Political Outcomes (e.g., war & peace, cooperation & conflict, global governance) or long-term grand strategies of states mostly influential by structural and systemic factors.

Source: Prepared by the Author. Benefitted from Ripsman et al., p. 81

⁹⁰ Randall L. Schweller, “The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism”, **Progress in International Relations Theory**, (Ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman), The MIT Press, 2003, (Progressiveness) pp. 318-322.

Neoclassical realism embraces the traditional structural view of realism as the primary driver of all its interpretations. Concepts such as international structure, the relative distribution of power, anarchy, and polarity all have similar and primary concerns in their theoretical account.⁹¹ They examine the conceptualization of the international system, like Kenneth Waltz's structural realist approach.

However, the point where the neoclassical realists differ is that, as we discussed above, they claim that the outcomes, such as a foreign policy decision or state behavior, cannot be determined by systemic factors alone. These outcomes must also be filtered through domestic variables.⁹² As Rose stated: "They... argue that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening levels at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical."⁹³ Another distinctive feature of neoclassical realism is its extension of two additional considerations for the international system. The first is the clarity of the signals and information that the system provides to states since the approach considers perceptions. This suggests that leaders may interpret the system, its benefits, and its threats either accurately or inaccurately.⁹⁴

In their influential study Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell present a comprehensive framework for neoclassical realist research. They outline the key concepts, assumptions, and methodologies for the theory. To assess the degree of systemic clarity, they identify three specific indicators: "the level at which threats and opportunities are identified; whether the system provides appropriate information about the timing of threats and opportunities; whether or not optimal policy options are presented."⁹⁵ They argue that the greater the clarity of these conditions, the greater the determination of the system's influence on foreign policy behavior. However, they also emphasize that such clarity is rarely present in the system.⁹⁶

According to Ripsman et al., the second consideration is the condition of the state's strategic environment. This refers to the urgency (time) and size (scope) of the threats and opportunities that any state faces. If these are high, the state's strategic

⁹¹ Schweller, *Progressiveness*, pp. 316-318.

⁹² Foulon, pp. 636-637.

⁹³ Rose, p. 146.

⁹⁴ Götz, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Ripsman et al., p. 46.

⁹⁶ Ripsman et al., pp. 49-52.

environment is restrictive, and if they are low, it means that a state faces a permissive strategic environment. Scholars argue that the international system generally has low clarity and states have a restrictive strategic environment, which gives more opportunities for unit-level and subunit-level variables to influence foreign policy.⁹⁷ This application is particularly important for analyzing the short-term behavior of states or specific foreign policy choices within a given time of period. Especially in times of crisis, when the potential threats and benefits are more obvious and influential for a certain period.⁹⁸

As discussed above, the most distinctive feature of neoclassical realism is its emphasis on domestic factors in assessing a state's foreign policy choices. These factors include national identity, leadership perceptions, bureaucratic politics, strategic culture, historical experiences, and even public opinion. However, most scholars agree that systemic factors remain the dominant and primary influences on a state's foreign policy.⁹⁹ Among domestic-level factors, the perception or image of leaders or elites is particularly important, as neoclassical realists contend that leaders are not always equipped with the ability to accurately identify systemic factors.¹⁰⁰

Neoclassical realists, like Zakaria, assert that statesmen are the key actors, and their perceptions are vital. He also contains another internal factor as “the limitation of national power”. It determines how public opinion and interest groups influence a state's capacity to maximize resource extraction from its society.¹⁰¹ Wohlforth also emphasizes the importance of perceptions and shows why neoclassical realism is a necessary extension, as illustrated by the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. He argues that these superpowers perceived their actual capabilities differently, and this led to divergent outcomes, with many different implications for international politics.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ripsman et al., pp. 52-53.

⁹⁸ Meibauer, History, pp. 358-359; Foulon, pp. 651-652.

⁹⁹ Norrin M. Ripsman, “Neoclassical Realism”, **Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies**, Oxford University Press, 22.12.2017, <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-36>, (17.10.2024), pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Jervis, **Perception and Misperception in International Politics**, Princeton University Press, 1976, (Perception) pp. 18-19, 28-31.

¹⁰¹ Rose, pp. 160-162.

¹⁰² William C. Wohlforth, “Realism and the End of the Cold War”, **International Security**, Vol. 19, No: 3, 1994, (End of the CW) pp. 96-98.

Ripsman et al. again provides a detailed framework for researchers about the key intervening variables used in neoclassical realist analyses. Accordingly, they mention four main domestic intervening variables. These are as follows:

- a. The leader's images and perceptions illustrate the impact of the cognitive dimension of executives on the decision-making process.*
- b. Strategic culture, which can be considered in a broader sense, refers to the deep-rooted beliefs in the nation, identities, worldview, socio-cultural dynamics, ideological orientation, common cultural structure and expectations of society, etc.*
- c. State-society relations, which include the characteristics of interactions between the central institutions of the state and various economic and social groups.*
- d. Domestic institutions are the first and foremost formal institutions in the organizational structure of the state. It includes the influence of bureaucracy on decision-making. Probably the most difficult to assess, as the level of influence and effectiveness varies, and reliable information is difficult to obtain in any research.*¹⁰³

Regarding the limitations of neorealist studies, Ripsman identifies four key approaches that are prominently addressed in neoclassical realist studies as follows:

- a. Leaders may not accurately perceive systemic stimuli.*
- b. The international system may not always provide clear signals.*
- c. Leaders may make irrational decisions even when they accurately perceive threats and opportunities.*
- d. States may not always be able to mobilize the resources to get approval from society and respond effectively to structural imperatives.*¹⁰⁴

The theory also has been subject to discussions regarding its limitations in terms of time and scope in explanatory power. While some scholars argue that neoclassical realism is more effective at explaining state decisions in the short term, such as during crises, others suggest that it is equally capable of addressing structural principles and concepts, such as grand strategies, over the medium or long term. They contend that the limitations of its dependent variables, the outcomes, are not inherently restrictive.¹⁰⁵

Scholars also evaluate the effectiveness and extent of domestic variables. Leader images, for example, are most influential in the short term and during crises. Strategic culture effectively explains both short-term and long-term decision-making

¹⁰³ Ripsman et al., pp. 59-76.

¹⁰⁴ Ripsman, *Neoclassical Realism*, pp. 3-6.

¹⁰⁵ Rathbun, pp. 307, 311, 317.; Ripsman et al., p. 81.

mechanisms. In contrast, state-society relations and domestic institutions are less effective for short-term policy analysis but highly effective in the long term.¹⁰⁶ Within the neoclassical realist framework, systemic, cognitive, and domestic factors interact in complex ways to shape outcomes. It's not a simple, straightforward process. This process is far from straightforward, as the relative influence of each factor varies depending on the specific case and historical context at certain times.

As a final thought, although scholars discuss neoclassical realism as a complex and distinctive theory, its primary emphasis on structural approaches suggests that it could also be seen as a modified version of neorealism or as an approach that examines phenomena more deeply from a complementary perspective. Another consideration is that the ad hoc nature of its analysis is not an inaccurate evaluation, but neither is it a negative aspect. On the contrary, this approach is particularly useful in situations characterized by fluctuating circumstances, such as Türkiye's relations with the West, NATO, or the US. Systemic pressures do not always produce consistent stimuli for states, nor can they affect different states under varying conditions with fixed and consistent behaviors. In this way, neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive explanatory value especially for the specific foreign policy decisions particularly within a certain period.

1.2. KEY CONCEPTS IN REALISM

As previously stated, realist theories typically utilize the international system as a framework for understanding a range of issues in international politics, including alliance behavior, stability, the recurrence of war, and conflicts. This section will present a review of the principal concepts associated with realism.

1.2.1. International System and Anarchy

The international system is fundamentally a network of units, encompassing the structure of interactions and relationships between these units on a global scale. It includes the roles and interactions of state and non-state actors, as well as

¹⁰⁶ Ripsman et al., pp. 58-76.

international organizations (IOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁰⁷

For Gaddis, an international system exists when two conditions are met: “First, interconnections must be visible between the parts of the system. Thus, if any changes occur in one place, they can produce changes in other parts as well. Second, the collective behavior of the system is influenced by the expectations and priorities of the individual units.”¹⁰⁸

In this conceptual framework, states formulate their foreign policies, strategies, and decisions within the inherent aspects of this complex external structure. Both potential threats and opportunities arise within the system. This structure is a critical factor for states in terms of their interactions, trends, and prevailing norms that guide IR.¹⁰⁹

Realism views the state as the primary and rational unit in the international system. Neorealism neglects the influence of other units, such as NGOs, MNCs, or terrorist organizations. Neoclassical realism does not deny its importance, but like all realist traditions, it emphasizes a state-centric approach.¹¹⁰ Lobell et al. define the neoclassical conception of the international system as state-centric, since states, especially the great powers, remain the most politically consequential actors.¹¹¹

The structural impact of the international system in shaping world politics has been facilitated by Waltz's pioneering theoretical approaches. Waltz posits that a system consists of a structure and interacting parts. He argues that political structures are characterized by their ordering principles, such as anarchy or hierarchy, the nature of their units, and the distribution of capabilities.¹¹² Waltz characterizes the principles of the international system as an anarchic structure that imposes expected

¹⁰⁷ Alan G. Stolberg, “Chapter 10 The International System in the 21st Century”, **U. S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues**, (Ed. J. Boone Bartholomees), Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012, p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System”, **International Security**, Vol. 10, No: 4, 1986, (Long Peace), p. 102.

¹⁰⁹ Stolberg, p. 139.

¹¹⁰ Sørensen et al., p. 50; Mearsheimer, STR, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Lobell et al., p. 24.

¹¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979, (Theory of IP) pp. 81-88; J. G. Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis”, **World Politics**, Vol. 35, No: 2, 1983, p. 264.

constraints on states to act similarly, such as prioritizing survival in these circumstances.¹¹³

Waltz's approach is significant as it reveals potential outcomes and demonstrates how pressures change as systems evolve. It highlights which pressures persist and explores the possibilities presented by systems with different structures. However, Waltz's focus on anarchy is the only ordering principle.¹¹⁴ His theory does not explain specifically the behavior and responses of states to systemic pressures and constraints. He considers such attempts to be reductionist theories.¹¹⁵

1.2.2. Distribution of Power

The concept of power has been defined in various ways in the field of IR. Specifically, material definitions of state power emphasize economic and military capabilities, as is characteristic of the realist tradition. Other definitions of power emphasize the ability to structure and constitute the character of social interactions among individuals.¹¹⁶ Even among the three main branches of modern realist theory—classical realism, structural realism, and neoclassical realism, there is disagreement about how best to define and measure power. Scholars also tend to classify state power into categories such as small, medium, regional, great, and hegemonic.¹¹⁷

Jack Levy defines a great power as a state that possesses substantial military, economic, and political capabilities, marked by considerable influence and status within the international system. He identifies several indicators to verify a nation's status as a great power. Accordingly, the following criteria are outlined:

- a. Possess a high level of power capabilities.*
- b. Shapes and participates effectively in international organizations, conferences, and negotiations.*
- c. Maintains strong diplomatic relations with other countries.*

¹¹³ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 118-128.

¹¹⁴ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 81-82.

¹¹⁵ Ruggie, pp. 284-285.

¹¹⁶ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics", **International Organization**, Vol. 59, No: 1, 2005, pp. 39-40.

¹¹⁷ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 97-100; Brian C. Schmidt, "Competing Realist Conceptions of Power", **Millennium: Journal of International Studies**, Vol. 33, No: 3, 2005, pp. 525-528.

*d. Significantly impacts global issues & decision-making process.*¹¹⁸

Realist tradition places significant emphasis on the role of great powers in international politics. Accordingly, they have the capacity to shape the structure of the international system and decide which issues are prioritized in the realm of international politics.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the power-oriented approach sets the potential limits of states and what they can achieve based on their capabilities. A rational state should be aware of the limitations of its foreign policy ambitions. Given the inherent differences in power capabilities among countries, it is to be expected that their foreign policy interests will diverge.¹²⁰

Neoclassical realists, like other realist traditions, use different measures of a state's material capabilities by considering a range of tangible and intangible factors. Ripsman et al. clarify that tangible factors include GDP, defense expenditure, military capabilities, population size and demographics, natural resources, and territorial extent. Intangible factors include national morale, the caliber of leadership, diplomatic effectiveness, etc. They consider power to attain objectives, rather than an end, they make a clear distinction between "power" and "influence."¹²¹

The relative distribution of power basically determines how power is allocated in the international system. Scholars utilize the concept of polarity to describe this distribution.¹²² It essentially characterizes the positioning of great powers within the system. Waltz defines the distribution of capabilities as a causal variable in his well-known BoP theory. The polarity of the system simply describes the amount of great power within it, and most of the causal work in Waltz's theory refers to this conception of power distribution.¹²³

For Lobell et al., Waltz's theory generates two probabilistic predictions. First, it suggests that across different types of international systems, i.e., bipolarity and multipolarity, balances of power will recurrently form. Second, it posits that states

¹¹⁸ Jack S. Levy, "Alliance Formation and War Behavior: An Analysis of the Great Powers, 1495-1975", **The Journal of Conflict Resolution**, Vol. 25, No: 4, 1981, p. 585.

¹¹⁹ Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 51-53.

¹²⁰ James E. Goodby, "The Survival Strategies of Small Nations", **Survival**, Vol. 56, No: 5, 2014, pp. 31-39; Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 97-98.

¹²¹ Ripsman et al., pp. 43-44.

¹²² Waltz, Theory of IP, p. 131; William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World", **International Security**, Vol. 24, No: 1, 1999, (Unipolar) pp. 9-13.

¹²³ Waltz, Realist Thought, pp. 21-24.

will emulate the successful practices of others. Structural constraints, particularly the relative distribution of power in the system, determine international politics.¹²⁴

1.2.3. Polarity and Stability

Neoclassical realism uses the term "polarity" to refer to the number of great powers that exist within a system at any given time, like structural realism.¹²⁵ The term "unipolarity" is used by scholars to describe a system in which a single state meets all the above criteria, as opposed to systems in which two states (bipolarity) or three or more states (multipolarity) meet these conditions.¹²⁶

Ripsman et al. clarify neoclassical realism's conception of polarity as determined by the relative distribution of capabilities among the major states in the system, rather than the prevailing patterns of alignment or alliance blocs among the great powers. In this regard, neoclassical realists diverge from classical realists, who consider polarity primarily in behavioral terms.¹²⁷

Scholars generally categorize systems into three types: unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity. Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer discuss that bipolar systems tend to be more stable.¹²⁸ Contrary, scholars such as John Ikenberry and William Wohlforth argue that unipolar systems offer greater stability.¹²⁹ Waltz defines bipolarity as a system in which power is concentrated between two dominant states.¹³⁰ For example, during the Cold War, most Western democratic states that shared similar values aligned with the US, while many Eastern communist states aligned with the Soviet Union. Mearsheimer adds another perspective:

Balancing is considered more efficient in bipolar systems because each great power must confront the other directly since there are no other great powers to balance or join a balancing coalition. Lesser powers may be useful allies, but

¹²⁴ Lobell et al., pp. 17-21.

¹²⁵ Ripsman et al., p. 45.

¹²⁶ Wohlforth, Unipolar, pp. 10-13.

¹²⁷ Ripsman et al., p. 45.

¹²⁸ Waltz, Political, p. 45; Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 58-60.

¹²⁹ G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno and William C. Wohlforth, "Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences", **World Politics**, Vol. 61, No: 1, 2009, pp. 1-27; Wohlforth, Unipolar, p. 24.

¹³⁰ Kenneth Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World", **Daedalus**, Vol. 93, No: 3, 1964, (Bipolar) pp. 881-886.

*they do not determine the overall Balance of Power. In multipolarity, however, threatened states may prefer to back-pass to other threatened states.*¹³¹

Gaddis discusses that alliances in the bipolar system tend to be more stable as the fear of being alone against the opposing pole keeps them together. The prevailing characterization of the post-WW II international system is that of bipolarity.¹³² Although neither the USSR nor the US was able to achieve complete dominance, there was a distinct gap between the two superpowers and their closest competitors. Ultimately, the end of the Cold War marked the transition to a unipolar era. The US remained the sole superpower throughout the 1990s and 2000s. However, the debate about the most suitable characterization of the current international system continues.

1.2.4. Alliance Dynamics and Balancing Act

The term "alliance" is defined as a formal agreement between two or more states with common interests. Alliances are mainly formed in a defensive manner, obligating the allies to join forces in the event of an attack by another state or coalition.¹³³ The realist tradition generally considers that alliances are primarily formed in response to external threats, as states seek to enhance their security and protect their interests in an anarchic international system. Structural realists typically argue that states form alliances to balance power and deter potential aggressors.¹³⁴

Stephen Walt defines an alliance as: "a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states."¹³⁵ Realist scholars offer varying explanations for alliances. Some adopt an offensive perspective, contending that states aim to maximize their power to achieve dominance. In contrast, defensive realists argue that states prioritize security and maximizing power to deter threats.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Mearsheimer, STR, p. 59.

¹³² Gaddis, Long Peace, p. 104.

¹³³ David G. Haglund, "Alliance," **The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica**, 25.10.2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/alliance-politics>, (17.11.2024).

¹³⁴ Dan Reiter, "Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past", **World Politics**, Vol. 46, No: 4, 1994, pp. 499-502.

¹³⁵ Stephen M. Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, Cornell University Press, 1990, (The Origins) p. 12.

¹³⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, "Alliances in Theory and Practice", **Alliance Policy in the Cold War**, (Ed. Arnold Wolfers), Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1959, (Alliances), p. 191; Mearsheimer, STR, p. 52.

Hans. J. Morgenthau describes alliances as a necessary part of the BoP system in which multiple states compete. For him, states will always compete and seek to increase their power.¹³⁷ Why states form or join alliances is not a matter of “principle” but of benefits, whether the nation is strong enough to survive the international system on its own, or whether the benefits of forming an alliance outweigh the cost. Even in cases where countries have had common interests, such as the UK and the US in maintaining a European balance of power, they have not necessarily formed alliances to institutionalize these common goals.¹³⁸

BoP theorists such as Waltz also address the role of alliances by specifying the distinction between ad hoc alliances and permanent alliances. Ad hoc alliances are formed for a specific purpose over a certain period and for the specific objective of counterbalancing an apparent shift in power distribution.¹³⁹ They are necessary to check an aggressive state if it becomes dominant and poses a threat to others in the system. Permanent alliances, on the other hand, are regarded as a potential source of instability by many realists, as they can give rise to imbalances within the international system, leading to the formation of counter-alliances, misperceptions, and misunderstandings among the various units within the system.¹⁴⁰

Stephen Walt's "The Origins of Alliances" is a highly regarded and valuable source on the formation of alliances and relevant state behavior. Walt posits that alliances are formed primarily through balancing and bandwagoning behavior by states in response to the threat posed by one or more growing states resulting from the relative distribution of power in the system.¹⁴¹ To support this argument, he employs a variety of variables, including power, proximity, historical evidence, and ideologies.

Morgenthau characterizes the "Atlantic Alliance" as a political entity based on shared interests. It was reinforced by factors such as the US's nuclear monopoly, the economic fragility of European countries, and the unpredictable nature of Soviet

¹³⁷ Morgenthau, *Alliances*, p. 185.

¹³⁸ Morgenthau, *Alliances*, pp. 186-188.

¹³⁹ Waltz, *Theory of IP*, pp. 98-125.

¹⁴⁰ Waltz, *Theory of IP*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁴¹ Walt, *The Origins*, p. 17.

policies. This created a perception of common threat.¹⁴² Eventually, Western European countries were faced with a critical choice: either to accept the growing Soviet threat or to align themselves with the US through the transatlantic alliance.

Furthermore, Waltz responded to his mispredictions that NATO would collapse at the end of the Cold War. He presented a historical analysis that illustrates how international institutions have been subordinated to national interests. It can be argued that NATO no longer serves the original purpose of a treaty of guarantee or the alliance.¹⁴³ Instead, it appears to be functioning in a way that allows the US to maintain and extend its influence over the foreign and military policies of European states. To illustrate, NATO was founded as an alliance based on a core principle agreed upon by all its members. Alliance members collectively ensured their protection against any form of military aggression from the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁴ This collective effort was at the core of NATO's existence and has remained the organization's primary objective. All NATO members share a common goal: to protect their independence without engaging in active combat to achieve it. Even if the potential and actual enemies have changed over time.

There is also a long-standing debate in IR literature about whether alliances stabilize the system and contribute to peace or destabilize it and lead to war.¹⁴⁵ For example, in the Cold War, NATO played an important role in deterring aggression and maintaining stability among its member states through collective defense measures. However, a counterexample to this argument can be seen in the case of the Triple Entente before WW I, which ultimately led to the outbreak of global war.¹⁴⁶

The prevailing argument regarding the stability of alliances is that they reduce uncertainty in the international system and thus minimize the possibility of war.¹⁴⁷ This argument is predominant among realists and balance-of-power theorists, who suggest that alliances play a crucial role in maintaining stability and preventing

¹⁴² Morgenthau, *Alliances*, pp. 191-198.

¹⁴³ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security* Vol.: 25, No.: 1, 2000, (STR after CW) pp. 5-41.

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence S. Kaplan, "Origins of NATO: 1948--1949", *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 34, No: 11, 2019, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Levy, p. 581.

¹⁴⁶ Walt, *The Origins*, pp. 25-31.

¹⁴⁷ Morgenthau, *Alliances*, pp. 205-208.

conflict between states by maintaining a BoP in the international system.¹⁴⁸ They refer to the formation of alliances to prevent any single nation from becoming too powerful and dominating others.

It is also widely believed that alliances can have both positive and negative consequences. While some argue that alliances are essential for maintaining peace, others contend that alliances can lead to conflicts. Scholars discuss that alliances are destabilizing instruments and discuss that they tend to form counter-alliances. This, in turn, can lead to further mistrust and tensions, which could ultimately result in arms races, further polarization, and war. These arguments are largely based on the experience of the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁹

Consequently, the alliance-war relationship is not a crucial aspect of this thesis. While alliances may have played a role in exacerbating tensions, it is important to recognize that they were not the root cause of the conflicts. A state's alliance behavior, i.e., why states decide to form or join alliances, generally refers to the balancing act. This act may include alignment decision, bandwagoning, and the rate of a state's commitment to the alliances are all examples and subjects of alliance behavior. Additionally, a few sub-theories have been developed by realist scholars to explain the alliance behavior of states, such as the BoP and the BoT, which will be explored in the following section.

1.2.4.1. Balance of Power

A common understanding of 'the balancing act' in the realist tradition reflects the decision of states to align themselves to counter any potential aggressor in the system. It is important to note that the thesis uses the term "alignment" in a similar manner to a state's balancing act.¹⁵⁰ Waltz assumes that the "self-help" nature of the system, an inherent aspect of anarchy, leaves states without a higher authority to appeal to in the event of a threat. To counter these potential risks, states can enhance their relative capabilities to each other either through "internal balancing," which involves self-strengthening measures such as increasing economic capacity, military

¹⁴⁸ Levy, p. 582.

¹⁴⁹ Levy, pp. 582-583.

¹⁵⁰ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 125-128.

size, and developing better military technologies, or through "external efforts," which involves alignment and realignment with other states.¹⁵¹

Walt, on the other hand, contends that states confronted with overwhelming external threats have two basic options: first, to balance the threat by forming alliances with other states, or second, to bandwagon by joining forces with the aggressor.¹⁵² 3 Additionally, Mearsheimer proposes buck-passing as a third method. Buck-passing, or avoiding direct confrontation with a threat, is another potential strategy for states facing external threats.¹⁵³

Waltz's theory posits that while the Balance of Power (BoP) does not predict the actions of states in specific situations, it does explain the outcomes of collective behavior as systemic constraints that lead states to act similarly and expect outcomes.¹⁵⁴ The BoP theory describes how states seek to balance the relative distribution of power in the international system to prevent a single state from becoming overwhelmingly more powerful than the others.¹⁵⁵ States seek to counter the threat posed by such a situation. If one state becomes so powerful as to disrupt the BoP in the system, other states, especially those near its borders, will seek to form or join alliances for defensive purposes.¹⁵⁶ The goal is to establish a deterrent effect against the threat element by maintaining the BoP within the system. The realist tradition generally believes that such deterrence creates a more stable environment in the system than a single state being the hegemon.

For Waltz, the anarchic order is an essential precondition for the BoP. Accordingly, the theory begins with the assumption that states are unitary actors who seek their own preservation at a minimum or who drive for universal dominance at a maximum.¹⁵⁷ Schweller presents a challenge to Waltz's conception of the BoP, which implies that the BoP results from anarchy and the desire for self-preservation.

¹⁵¹ Waltz, *Theory of IP*, pp. 111, 118-121.

¹⁵² Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", **International security**, Vol. 9, No: 4, 1985, (BoWP) p. 4.

¹⁵³ Mearsheimer, *STR*, pp. 55, 59.

¹⁵⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power", **The Realism Reader**, 1. Ed., (Ed. Colin Elman and Michael A. Jensen), Routledge, New York, 2014, (Anarchic) pp. 117-120.

¹⁵⁵ Daniel H. Nexon, "The Balance of Power in the Balance", **World Politics**, Vol. 61, No: 2, 2009, p. 335.

¹⁵⁶ Mearsheimer, *STR*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁵⁷ Waltz, *Theory of IP*, p. 118.

However, Schweller argues that these factors are insufficient on their own; if there had never been a threat in such a system, there would be no need for balance. He suggests that the behavior of states is better explained by their internal character and interests rather than by the nature of the system.¹⁵⁸

Waltz's, on the other hand, argues that BoP theory does not predict specific state actions. To illustrate, he proposes that states generally prefer balancing to bandwagoning. This is because their primary objective is to maintain their position within the system rather than to maximize their power. For him, BoP theories is inadequate to explain state behavior and choice.¹⁵⁹

1.2.4.2. Balance of Threat

Stephen Walt developed his famous theory, 'Balance of Threat' (BoT) in "The Origins of Alliances," which is a highly valuable source, particularly in understanding the alignment decisions of states and alliance formation.¹⁶⁰ It highlights the factors that influence states' alliance behavior by answering the questions of why states choose to align and how they decide with whom to align. Furthermore, a state's perception of how alliances are formed influences its strategic approach. Walt argues that "the literature on alliances has tended to focus on balance of power theory and claims it says only who seeks alignment, not who allies with whom."¹⁶¹ This is particularly important because it is directly relevant to the main research question of this thesis.' His exploration of alliance behavior begins with an examination of how states respond to external threats. He proposes that balancing occurs when states form alliances 'against the prevailing threat'. Conversely, bandwagoning occurs when a state allies 'with the source of the threat'.¹⁶² He then suggests that balancing is a more common tendency than bandwagoning, and in this

¹⁵⁸ Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?", **Security Studies**, Vol. 5, No: 3, 1996, pp. 90-121.

¹⁵⁹ Waltz, Theory of IP, p. 126.

¹⁶⁰ Walt, The Origins, pp. 1-321

¹⁶¹ Walt, The Origins, p. 9.

¹⁶² Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World", **World Politics**, Vol. 61, No: 1, 2009, (Unipolar) pp. 86-89.

way states are likely to be more secure as aggressors are faced with united resistance.¹⁶³

Moreover, Walt presents four key explanatory variables in his attempt to explain how the level of threat could be assessed as the greatest within the system. These variables are as follows:

- a. *Aggregate strength or power (size, population, latent power, and economic capabilities*
- b. *Proximity (in relation to the source of danger).*
- c. *Offensive capabilities*
- d. *Offensive and/or hostile intentions.*¹⁶⁴

In Walt's BoT theory, the threat assessment and distribution of power in terms of balancing or bandwagoning are identified as the most powerful explanatory factors in understanding state alliance behavior. Additionally, he proposes two other explanatory variables as motives for alignment action, rather than the classical view of power distribution. These are:

- a. Ideology (a less efficacious factor than threat and the balancing/bandwagoning approach)
- b. Foreign aid and penetration (the least effective factor).¹⁶⁵

Walt clarifies that these two motives are, respectively, less powerful as a cause of alignment behavior. Therefore, the concepts of balancing or bandwagoning regarding the threat assessment approach can be seen as the root cause of the alliance behavior in his theory.

Consequently, the BoT posits that states decide to form or join alliances to balance against the greatest threat they perceive. Walt discusses that his theory represents an effort to refine the BoP theory; as it implies that aggregate power, while significant, is not the only element of threat. A threat consists of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions. And it clarifies the state that poses the greatest threat may not be the most powerful in the system.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Stephen M. Walt, *Unipolar*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁴ Walt, *The Origins*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁵ Walt, *The Origins*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Walt, *BoWP*, pp. 9, 36.

1.3. APPLICATION OF NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

There is a long-standing and widespread discussion among IR scholars about the stability of the structures in international systems: whether unipolarity, bipolarity, or multipolarity in the system causes more stability. However, since the main subject of this thesis is NATO-Türkiye relations, it will focus on the factors and impacts of the international system, such as alliances, BoP theories, balancing, and alignment behavior of states; thus, the following sections will clarify these concepts, and the thesis will not focus on the stability factors of polarity discussion. The aim is to cover the factors behind NATO's *raison d'être*, the nature of its relationship with Türkiye, and to analyze Türkiye's decision to align with NATO and its level of commitment.

It is crucial to understand why states form alliances and why they join them. It reflects the main logic of the BoP theory. This concept is also one of the most important aspects of the thesis, as it reflects the primary research question along with the other balancing theories and approaches discussed in this section. To illustrate the importance of a concept in the adoption of thesis analysis, it will be considered that Türkiye's inability to increase its strength through internal efforts forced the nation to seek external support to counter the escalating Soviet threat. As Waltz's theory posits, this is one of the external factors that explains Türkiye's decision to join NATO, which will be analyzed in detail in the third chapter.

Consequently, the thesis will extend the scope in a neoclassical realist understanding considering the factors as ideology and perception of benefits on the domestic level along with the systemic and external variables. For example, the Soviet Union was not the most powerful nation during the Cold War, yet the Western European countries along with transatlantic nations came together to counter the perceived threat posed by the USSR. The mere aggregate power approach of the BoP is inadequate to explain this since the US is merely way more powerful than the Soviet Union. Thus, it was not an attempt to balance power but rather to balance the threat posed by the Soviet Union to the greater Atlantic zone and its desired liberal world order.

Similar to Türkiye's decision on joining NATO, the mere aggregate power approach of the BoP does not answer why Türkiye is aligned with the Western bloc, which in past fought to obtain its independence in its establishment, and is not aligned with the Soviet Union in an attempt to balance the most powerful one-if one consider the threat with the powerful nation in the system- of the US and rather it aligned with the side of western bloc. This is logical considering both the perception of threats and benefits are the explanatory variables of state behavior in neoclassical realist understanding.



CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGIN OF THE COLD WAR, NATO, AND TÜRKİYE’S ACCESSION TO THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE

This chapter presents a review of the post-war period and briefly summarizes the history of the Cold War. The first section provides an overview of the post-war world and the new order that emerged in its aftermath. It discusses the shift in power distribution among major global powers, particularly the rise of the US and the Soviet Union as great powers. It primarily aims to understand the post-war international order and system. Secondly, a brief history of the Cold War will be presented. The aim here is to analyze the economic, political, and ideological challenges of the period to understand the origins of NATO and its organizational structure. Finally, the chapter will explore Türkiye's accession to the transatlantic alliance and examine the historical context that led to its membership in NATO along with the reasons behind this decision for both Türkiye and the alliance.

2.1. THE POST-WORLD WAR ORDER AND A SHORT HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR

The post-war order and the origins of NATO can be interpreted in the context of growing tension, mistrust, and enduring power struggles between the US-led Western bloc and the Soviet-led Eastern bloc. It is essential to understand the global context, the distribution of power, and the post-war international order to gain a deeper understanding of NATO's origins and objectives. This section provides a brief overview of these significant developments and the major systemic changes that shaped the path to NATO's creation.

2.1.1. The Post-WWII Global Landscape and the New Order

The world order and international system are constantly evolving due to continuous shifts in the balance of power and ideologies throughout history. For

instance, before the hegemony of the US, British dominance prevailed for centuries.¹⁶⁷ The post-WW II era introduced a bipolar order characterized by a competitive struggle for the global influence of two emerging superpowers. The two victorious states, The US and the Soviet Union emerged as the dominant global powers.¹⁶⁸ This shift in the BoP indicated a new era in the international system.

Given the higher death toll and greater material loss, scholars generally characterize the post-WWII world as even more disastrous than the first one. Technological developments, particularly aerial bombardments caused catastrophic damage to factories, roads, railways, and houses in many European cities.¹⁶⁹ This economic collapse revealed the need for a major global reconstruction, but the collapsed economies of the European countries were unable to deal with the costs of this destruction. In the immediate post-war period, there was not only an extensive shortage of industrial raw materials but also a severe food scarcity. Germany was relatively the most affected country.¹⁷⁰ To illustrate the situation in Europe, crude steel production had reached nearly 24 million tons in 1939 and fell to almost zero by the end of the war. Communications, transportation, and supplies regressed to similar levels to those of the 19th century.¹⁷¹ Great Britain, the former great power, also suffered extensive damage during the war and accumulated large debts to supplier countries, despite receiving large amounts of material from the US. The cost of the war to the country was almost 25% of its total wealth.¹⁷²

The US, on the other hand, emerged as one of the world's dominant economic powers, accounting for almost half of the world's gross product in 1945-46. Its trade surplus expanded enormously during this period. The victorious position of the US led to a high-level international commitment, mostly with unilateral transfers

¹⁶⁷ Joseph S. Nye, "Is the American Century Over?", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 130, No: 3, 2015, pp. 393-394; Nicholas Crafts, "Forging Ahead and Falling Behind: The Rise and Relative Decline of the First Industrial Nation", **Journal of Economic Per.**, Vol. 12, No: 2, 1998, pp. 207-208.

¹⁶⁸ Wohlforth, Unipolar, p. 22.

¹⁶⁹ John Mills, "Post-World War II", **Managing the World Economy**, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2000, p. 97.

¹⁷⁰ Mills, p. 97

¹⁷¹ Jeffry M. Diefendorf, "Urban Reconstruction in Europe After World War II", **Urban Studies**, Vol. 26, No: 1, 1989, p. 128; Mills, p. 97.

¹⁷² Alasdair Blair and Steven Curtis, **International Politics: An Introductory Guide**, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009 pp. 38-39; Mills, p.98.

abroad.¹⁷³ Moreover, the extensive devastation in Europe created an opportunity for the US to assume a leading role in the reconstruction of the region.¹⁷⁴ This shift in economic influence also transformed the global economy and the role of the US, particularly in shaping the post-war order. Americans played a central role in the creation of global institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB).¹⁷⁵ Ironically, the country also strengthened its economy in the post-war period by seizing the opportunity to reshape the international economic order for years to come. Marshall Aid, for example, played a crucial role in bridging the gap, not only by providing direct aid to recovering economies on advantageous terms but also by offering payments in dollars.¹⁷⁶ These payments enabled the recipient countries to buy American goods and services in turn. This resulted in a substantial increase in the US economy and a shift in the global balance of power.¹⁷⁷

Unlike the First World War, the Second did not end with the ratification of a peace treaty. Eventually, the new international organizations were established with the aim of creating a more stable international order. Additionally, the dollar became the world's reserve currency and was linked to gold convertibility.¹⁷⁸ These developments solidified the US position of global dominance. It can be argued that the US sought to establish a new world order by prioritizing its own interests in the reconstruction of war-torn nations, thereby securing its economic stability and achieving global dominance.

Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary H. Morgenthau sought to bring the Soviet Union into the Bretton Woods system, but Stalin chose not to participate in this new

¹⁷³ Robert Higgs, "Wartime Prosperity? A Reassessment of the U.S. Economy in the 1940s", **The Journal of Economic History**, Vol. 52, No: 1, 1992, pp. 41-60; Mills, p. 105.

¹⁷⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The World-System after the Cold War", **Journal of Peace Research**, Vol. 30, No: 1, 1993, pp. 1, 4; Maier, p. 620.

¹⁷⁵ Peter Kugler and Tobias Straumann, "International Monetary Regimes: The Bretton Woods System", **Handbook of the History of Money and Currency**, Ed. Stefano Battilossi, Youssef Cassis and Kazuhiko Yago, Springer, Singapore, 2018, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁶ Charles S. Maier, "The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Pol. after WW II", **International Organization**, Vol. 31, No: 4, 1977, pp. 607-608.

¹⁷⁷ Mills, p. 105-107; J. Bradford DeLong and Barry Eichengreen, "The Marshall Plan: History's Most Successful Structural Adjustment Program", **SSRN Scholarly Paper**, Rochester NY, 01.11.1991, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=226738>, (18.10.2024), pp. 2-4.

¹⁷⁸ Mills, p. 109-11; Blair and Curtis, pp. 46-47.

economic order.¹⁷⁹ In the post-war II period, the US was not the only emerging superpower. The Soviet Union, under the leadership of J. Stalin, also sought to assert a dominant role in the postwar order. As one of the victorious countries that defeated Nazi Germany through immense sacrifices, the Soviet Union pursued its own vision and ideological framework for shaping the postwar order and asserting leadership.¹⁸⁰

John Lewis Gaddis argued that the Western world, led by Roosevelt and Churchill, envisioned a postwar settlement that would prevent another conflict by avoiding the mistakes that led to WW II. Their goal was to promote international cooperation among nations.¹⁸¹ Stalin's vision, however, diverged from that of his Western counterparts. While he similarly sought a new postwar order, his priorities differed from those of the capitalist West. Instead, he sought a settlement that would reflect his own ideological orientation and address the security interests of the Soviet Union. At the same time, he saw the continuing rivalries among the capitalist nations as a potential strategic advantage, believing that such tensions could eventually lead to another conflict.¹⁸² This can be attributed to Stalin's past experiences and anxieties. For instance, he feared that if Germany regained its power, it would again pose a vital threat to the country's security.

A series of summits established the framework of the postwar world order, most notably the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. These meetings aimed to reconstruct Europe and a new global framework that would facilitate a peaceful settlement after the devastation of two world wars.¹⁸³ The importance of the Yalta Conference extends beyond the military situation of 1945 and must be considered alongside the subsequent Potsdam Conference. At Potsdam, the 'Big Three'—Churchill, Truman, and Stalin—played a central role in establishing a more definitive

¹⁷⁹ Robert Pollard, "Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War: Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, and American Rearmament, 1944-50", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 9, No: 3, 1985, p. 274.

¹⁸⁰ Norman M. Naimark, "Stalin and Europe in the Postwar Period, 1945-53: Issues and Problems", **Journal of Modern European History**, Vol. 2, No: 1, 2004, pp. 28-32; Mark Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy, and the Establishment of a Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe, 1941-1948", **Stalin and Europe**, Ed. Timothy Snyder and Ray Brandon, Oxford University Press, 2014, (Stalin) pp. 264-267.

¹⁸¹ John Lewis Gaddis, **The Cold War: a new history**, Penguin Press, New York, 2005, (History) pp. 26-27.

¹⁸² Naimark, pp. 28-57; Kramer, Stalin, p. 272.

¹⁸³ Robin Edmonds, "Yalta and Potsdam: Forty Years Afterwards", **International Affairs**, Vol. 62, No: 2, 1986, pp. 197-198.

division of Europe.¹⁸⁴ Together, these two conferences marked the end of an era, especially as the decisions made at Potsdam contributed to the ongoing disputes that eventually led to the division of Germany.¹⁸⁵ This situation was further reinforced by Moscow's refusal to collaborate with the West on the reconstruction of Germany. Western powers believed that rebuilding Europe's devastated economy would primarily be achieved by restoring Germany's economy to a self-sustainable level without further external support.¹⁸⁶

The US was eager to assume a leading role in this reconstruction. The primary motive behind the creation of a new world order was to establish the US as a dominant power that could shape the global economic and political landscape according to its interests. The Soviets, on the other hand, perceived a resurgent Germany as a potential security threat if allowed to fully regain its strength and independence with this motive, Stalin initially sought to extract resources from Germany to rebuild its devastated economy after the war.¹⁸⁷ These developments indicated that the bipolar division of Europe became more evident soon after the WW II. The polarization of Europe between the emerging superpowers, Soviet Union and the US, marked the official beginning of the Cold War.

Schlesinger argues that the end of WW II presented two distinct visions of world order. "The universalist" view was more idealistic, in which all nations shared a common interest in global affairs. In contrast, "the sphere of influence" view adopted a more pragmatic approach, in which each great power would have predominance and control over its area of particular interest. These areas should also be mutually recognized by each of them.¹⁸⁸ This approach assumes that a BoP in the international system would ensure the security of states.

Some Western scholars argued that the American tradition in the early postwar period was still Wilsonian. Thus, the US sought to promote universalist approach to establish a new world order, prioritizing IOs based on common interests

¹⁸⁴ Edmonds, pp. 198-200.

¹⁸⁵ Edmonds, p. 211-212.

¹⁸⁶ Edmonds, pp. 204-207; Blair and Curtis, p. 46.

¹⁸⁷ Kramer, Stalin, pp. 270-271.

¹⁸⁸ Arthur Schlesinger, "Origins of the Cold War", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 46, No: 1, 1967, pp. 26-27.

and collective security among nations in global affairs.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the trajectory of events in Europe remained unchanged. George Kennan argued after the war for a clear recognition of Europe's division into distinct spheres of influence.¹⁹⁰ The Soviet Union did not want to give back the territories it had won during the war but sought to establish its sphere of influence in the region by supporting governments based on communist ideology.¹⁹¹ In response, the US sought to establish its own sphere of influence based on Western liberal values. The perceived threat of the Soviet Union, coupled with the expansionist policies, eventually led both great powers to adopt a sphere of influence strategy. Consequently, the rivalry between these two emerging powers paved the way for the division of Europe into two opposing blocs.

The end of the Second World War resulted in the emergence of a bipolar order. Germany and Japan had been completely defeated, while Britain, France, and China had suffered considerable devastation. Although relatively weaker than the US, the Soviet Union held an important influence and maintained a strong military presence in Europe.¹⁹² Given these advances in world politics, the emergence of the Soviet Union and the US as the dominant powers in the postwar world was the most obvious example of a shift in the distribution of power within the international system. As a result, given these developments in international politics, the emergence of the dominant powers in the postwar world stands as the most evident example of polarization and ideological clashes shaping global influence. Eventually, a new world order was clearly needed to ensure stability and prevent future conflict. Organizations such as the UN and the World Bank were created to fulfill this objective. At the time, each pole proposed its own vision for a new world order.¹⁹³ This can also be interpreted as an attempt to achieve global dominance over others with limitless objectives. This division marked the beginning of an era of intense ideological competition and rivalry between the two superpowers. The following section provides a brief overview of the historical context of this era.

¹⁸⁹ Gaddis, *History*, pp. 20, 95; Schlesinger, p. 27.

¹⁹⁰ John O. Iatrides, "George F. Kennan and the Birth of Containment: The Greek Test Case", **World Policy Journal**, Vol. 22, No: 3, 2005, p. 131.

¹⁹¹ Schlesinger, p. 29.

¹⁹² Raymond L. Garthoff, "Why Did the Cold War Arise, and Why Did It End?", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 16, No: 2, 1992, p. 288.

¹⁹³ Garthoff, p. 288.

2.1.2. A Short History of the Cold War

This section presents a brief history of the decades-long power struggle between the US and the Soviet Union as the new emerging superpowers, particularly the early period leading up to the creation of NATO. The Cold War was a period of political and military tension between the US, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies that lasted from 1947 to 1991. The term "Cold War" reflects the lack of direct military confrontation between the two superpowers.¹⁹⁴ Instead, the conflicts were defined primarily by ideological and geopolitical competition and were fought largely on political, economic, and propaganda fronts. Each side pursued extensive goals and ambitions for global dominance. The ultimate objective was to assert themselves as the world's most dominant power over the other.¹⁹⁵ The wartime alliance dissolved following the defeat of Hitler's Germany, shortly after, the US and the Soviet Union became the dominant global powers. These emerging superpowers had their own agendas to expand or rebuild the post-war world to secure or position themselves as superior in the global power distribution.¹⁹⁶

Scholars emphasize two different approaches for the historical analysis of the Cold War.¹⁹⁷ First, the Orthodox tradition attributes the causes of the Cold War primarily to the aggressive and expansionist policies of the Soviet Union. This perspective emphasizes the ideological roots of the conflict, particularly the Soviet desire to spread communism. Consequently, post-war actions of the US aimed to counter Soviet aggression and prevent the further spread of communism.¹⁹⁸ Second, the revisionist perspective characterizes the postwar foreign policies of both the US and the Soviet Union as expansionist. Revisionist scholars argue that the US shares the same responsibility for escalating tensions during this period. For instance, initiatives like the Marshall Plan are viewed as the US's efforts to create foreign

¹⁹⁴ Supad Kumar Ghose and Anjan Kumar Nath, "The Origin of the Cold War: A Historiography," **IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science**, Vol. 26, Issue 3, Series 5, March 2021, pp. 14-18,

¹⁹⁵ Garthoff, p. 288.

¹⁹⁶ David Reynolds, "From World War to Cold War: The Wartime Alliance and Post-War Transitions, 1941–1947", **The Historical Journal**, Vol. 45, No: 1, 2002, pp. 211, 220.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Leigh, "Is There a Revisionist Thesis on the Origins of the Cold War?", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 89, No: 1, 1974, p. 101.

¹⁹⁸ Schlesinger, pp. 22-23.

markets and investment opportunities, thereby extending its sphere of influence.¹⁹⁹ To impose its global dominance, the US exerted its influence on the global stage by forming alliances and fostering economic dependence among other nations. This viewpoint is also supported by Marxist scholars, who more critically argue that the American public was persuaded to support these policies through narratives that portrayed communist powers as existential threats to the nation's survival.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, some scholars contend that the Soviet Union was relatively weak and incapable of posing a real threat to the Western world during this period. In contrast, the US emerged as the most powerful nation with proactive policies worldwide. From this perspective, the Soviet Union developed legitimate counter policies to address the expanding ambitions of the US.²⁰¹

John L. Gaddis, in his well-known book, "The Cold War: A New History", characterizes the Cold War as primarily resulting from the Soviet Union's expansionist and territorial ambitions. This interpretation clearly exemplifies the orthodox perspective. For him, At the end of WW II, the US advocated for the reconstruction of devastated Europe based on Wilsonian principles, which promoted national self-determination.²⁰² He describes the Soviet Union's actions as expansionist by emphasizing its annexation of Eastern European countries and its support for communist insurgencies around the world. Stalin's ideology was rooted in the concept of a global communist revolution, which he believed would inevitably result in the overthrow of capitalism. In contrast, for Gaddis the US was firmly committed to the principles of national self-determination and democracy, as articulated in Wilson's Fourteen Points.²⁰³

Overall, the orthodox interpretation can be criticized due to its one-sided perspective as it assigns sole responsibility for the Cold War's outbreak to the Soviet Union. This perspective narrowly emphasizes Soviet actions as the primary cause of escalating tensions in the post-war period. The two interpretations, also, diverge in their approaches to defining the Cold War's origin. While the Orthodox view

¹⁹⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 7, No: 3, 1983, (Revisionist) p. 172.

²⁰⁰ Gaddis, Revisionist, p. 173.

²⁰¹ Blair and Curtis, p. 57.

²⁰² Gaddis, History, p. 21.

²⁰³ Gaddis, History, p. 20.

attributes the conflict to Soviet aggressions, the Revisionist perspective contends that both the US and the Soviet Union had legitimate security concerns for their actions.

The literature traces the origins of the Cold War to the post-WW II division of Europe and the Soviet Union's establishment of left-wing governments in Eastern Europe.²⁰⁴ The US and its allies were concerned about the potential spread of Soviet influence into Western Europe, while the Soviet Union sought to secure control over Eastern Europe to protect itself from potential threats, particularly from Germany, and to advance the global spread of communism.²⁰⁵ Winston Churchill's speech in Missouri, delivered with President Truman at his side, marked the onset of the Cold War by clearly outlining the division of Europe. In his speech, Churchill stated:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of ancient states of central and eastern Europe...All these famous cities and the populations around them... are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow.²⁰⁶

It is important to explore the key events that shaped the course of the Cold War to analyze the period. These events illustrate how the competition for dominance performed in various regions ultimately resulted in proxy wars and widespread geopolitical tensions. Notable cases include the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, and the establishment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Each of these events exemplifies how Cold War rivalry was conducted on a global scale. Initially, the development of nuclear bombs also played an important role. The Anglo-Americans had secretly developed nuclear weapons and chose not to tell Stalin about the bomb until after the first successful test. Stalin believed that the balance had been destroyed by the US's initial nuclear monopoly.²⁰⁷ This temporarily gave the US a superiority in global power distribution. However, the Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic bomb in 1949 shattered assumptions about the exclusive

²⁰⁴ Thomas G. Paterson, "The Origins of the Cold War", **OAH Magazine of History**, Vol. 2, No: 1, 1986, p. 8; R. Harrison Wagner, "The Decision to Divide Germany and the Origins of the Cold War", **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 24, No: 2, 1980, p. 157.

²⁰⁵ J. B. Hoptner, "Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe Since 1945", **Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 8, No: 1, 1954, p. 105.

²⁰⁶ Gaddis, History, p. 94.

²⁰⁷ Gaddis, History, p. 24.

possession of nuclear capabilities by the US.²⁰⁸ This quickly restored the balance of terror. But, in turn, it triggered a prolonged arms race between the two superpowers.

Garthoff, in his study, evaluates that the Cold War era was always at risk of dangerous miscalculations, especially given the arrival of the nuclear age. The presence of nuclear weapons significantly heightened the tension of the era, posing a risk to the very existence of world civilization. This was one of the important reasons why the Cold War did not evolve into a hot one. However, there was an endless struggle and arms race between the two superpowers.²⁰⁹ The Cold War hit its highest point between 1948 and 1955. A series of events determined the course of this era.

By 1947–48, Britain unexpectedly announced that it could no longer afford the costs of supporting Greece and Türkiye and asked the US for their assistance.²¹⁰ The risk they considered was that without financial support from Britain, Greece and Türkiye could face severe economic consequences, and eventually these countries could be faced with a Soviet threat and potentially fall under Soviet influence. The US couldn't take such a risk, and thus, in a historic speech on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman outlined a key principle for the US. He said, "We should help countries that want to stay free but are being threatened by force. We need to support them so they can shape their own futures in their own way."²¹¹ This statement became the basis for the Truman Doctrine, shaping America's approach to global affairs after WW II.

Truman's vision for postwar reconstruction and a skeptical view of the Soviet Union were articulated in the Truman Doctrine. It eventually highlighted the need to prevent the spread of communism through the containment policy developed by G. Kenan to counter the Soviet Union.²¹² Subsequently, the Marshall Plan, implemented in 1948, aimed to rebuild war-torn Europe and stimulate economic recovery through military and financial assistance to those countries.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Gregg Herken, "'A Most Deadly Illusion': The Atomic Secret and American Nuclear Weapons Policy 1945-1950", **Pacific Historical Review**, Vol. 49 No: 1, 1980, p. 51.

²⁰⁹ Garthoff, p. 288.

²¹⁰ Gaddis, History, p. 31.

²¹¹ Truman Doctrine 1947, National Archives, 28.09.2021, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine>, (20.08.2024).

²¹² David S. McLellan, "Who Fathered Containment?: A Discussion", **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 17, No: 2, 1973, pp. 205-206.

²¹³ DeLong and Eichengreen, p. 13.

Stalin believed that the aid programs were an attempt by the US to establish its own hegemony in Europe and evaluated them as America's imperialistic ambitions. Thus, the Soviet Union did not accept any aid or permit its satellite states to do so, which would have strained its relationship with them. This provided an opportunity for the US to gain both a geopolitical and moral advantage in the emerging Cold War.²¹⁴ After WW II, Europe relied on US aid for food and essential goods; the Marshall Plan primarily aimed to restore financial stability and revive market forces. The post-war food shortages and the perceived Soviet threat were the key factors motivating US assistance to address Europe's immediate needs.²¹⁵

Overall, these developments revealed once again that Europe was facing a severe financial and structural crisis in meeting its essential needs. As the continent struggled to address these necessities, many European nations became reliant on substantial external assistance. Western Europe primarily received support from the US, while Eastern European countries turned to the Soviet Union.

Arguably, the declared goals of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were to aid in the reconstruction of post-war Europe; they were also influenced by certain political motives and strategic interests of the US. While these initiatives were presented as humanitarian efforts aimed at containing the spread of communism, they simultaneously functioned as tools for extending American dominance and opening new markets for US economic interests in Europe. Through financial and military aid, the US not only reinforced its status as a dominant global power but also enhanced its own security by promoting democratic principles in regions vulnerable to Soviet influence. Consequently, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were central to shaping the postwar world order, and they also solidified the position of the US as a dominant force in international politics.

Although the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild Western Europe both economically and politically, it deepened the East-West divide by making Eastern Europe dependent on Moscow and excluding it from the Western system. For Stalin, this development was a setback because it left the USSR without access to foreign capital by exacerbating the economic difficulties of the already struggling Soviet

²¹⁴ Gaddis, History, p. 32.

²¹⁵ DeLong and Eichengreen, pp. 43-44.

Union.²¹⁶ Moreover, Stalin gradually eliminated any resistance and potential influence in Eastern Europe as he refused all the Western offers for cooperation. Consequently, the West developed a “containment strategy” against the perceived communist threat. The three Western occupation zones in Germany were included in the recovery programs. This, in fact, referred to the official recognition of Germany's partition. In response, the Soviet government maintained its presence in the occupied zones of Germany, as well as it imposed a blockade on West Berlin and expanded its control over Eastern and Southeastern Europe. This strategy also led to a coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948.²¹⁷ According to Gaddis, “Whatever its purposes, Stalin’s blockade backfired badly since the Western allies improvised an airlift for the beleaguered city, thereby winning the emphatic gratitude of the Berliners, the respect of most Germans, and a global public relations triumph that made Stalin look both brutal and incompetent.”²¹⁸ These developments strengthened the ties between Western Europe and transatlantic allies, particularly the US. Notably, the events in Prague, combined with the Berlin blockade, underlined the value of US economic assistance and military protection to the West. Ultimately, this demonstration of Western resolve in response to the Soviet challenge was formalized with the establishment of NATO in April 1949.²¹⁹

Stalin, on the other hand, announced the establishment of the Cominform, in response to the Truman Doctrine. Cominform, or the Bureau of Communist Information, was established by the USSR in September 1947 as a counteraction to the influence of the US in Western Europe.²²⁰ With this move, Stalin hoped to unite the communist parties in Europe and strengthen the united front against Western imperialism.²²¹

Stalin achieved the territorial acquisitions and sphere of influence he had sought shortly after WW II. The Soviet Union’s borders were extended hundreds of kilometers westward. Eastern European countries gradually fell under Soviet

²¹⁶ Martin McCauley, **Origins of the Cold War 1941-1949**, 4. Ed, Routledge, London, 2015, pp. 116, 118.

²¹⁷ McCauley, p 17.

²¹⁸ Gaddis, History, p. 33.

²¹⁹ Gaddis, History, p. 34.

²²⁰ McCauley, p. 119.

²²¹ Gaddis, History, pp. 32-33; Wagner, p. 187.

influence as pro-Soviet communist regimes, backed by Stalin, rose to power.²²² In fact, Soviet expansionism had begun during the WW II. During this period, the Soviet Union annexed Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, parts of Finland, Romania, Poland, northeastern Germany, and eastern Czechoslovakia.²²³ Following the war, Soviet influence extended to other Eastern European countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.²²⁴

This expansion led Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak to state in 1948 that the USSR was the only great power that emerged from the war. Post-Germany, Soviet armies, and Communist infiltration forced Eastern European countries to fall under Soviet domination. The Soviet Union took advantage of the power vacuum left by the collapsing Nazi regime to extend its influence over Eastern Europe. This expansion continued in the post-war period, with the establishment of communist governments in countries like Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.²²⁵

In sum, the Soviet Union established a sphere of influence that extended to the very borders of Western Europe. Its blockade of Germany ultimately led to the division of Europe into two opposing blocs. This period marked a turning point in IR, as it formalized the Cold War through the emergence of two distinct power blocs: the Western Bloc, led by the US, and the Eastern Bloc, led by the Soviet Union. In response to the perceived Soviet threat, the Western Bloc initiated a broader counterstrategy, called the containment policy, aimed at curbing Soviet influence on the continent. This polarization is generally characterized by ideological differences, rivalries, decades of geopolitical tensions, power struggles, and the arms race between the two superpowers. This also had further implications for the rest of the world, as countries were forced to choose between sides in one of the two blocs.²²⁶

In 1949, the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong, took control of China. Around the same time, the Soviet- backed North Korean government launched an invasion of US-backed South Korea. The Korean War continued until 1953, with no

²²² Gaddis, History, p. 21.

²²³ McCauley, p. 50.

²²⁴ McCauley, p. 51.

²²⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Facts and Figures**, 11th ed., Nato Information Service, Brussels, 1989, (Facts and Figures) p. 5.

²²⁶ David Kinsella, "Nested Rivalries: Superpower Competition, Arms Transfers, and Regional Conflict, 1950–1990", **International Interactions**, Vol. 21, No: 2, 1995, pp. 109-110.

clear victory for either side.²²⁷ In 1955, West Germany became part of NATO. This also led to the creation of the Warsaw Pact.²²⁸ These developments made it evident that the Cold War had become a global issue, impacting countries worldwide. It fueled conflicts driven by the superpowers' ideological, geostrategic, and competitive interests across all regions.²²⁹ The high tensions of the Cold War persisted even after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. However, over time, the tensions gradually eased, particularly by the late 1960s with the onset of the *détente* period.²³⁰

Historians widely agree that the end of the Cold War began during the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev implemented a series of reforms that transformed the Soviet government. These changes undermined the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and led to their eventual collapse. As a result, democratic governments emerged in countries such as East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.²³¹ Eventually, the long-standing cold war era came to an end with the reunification of East and West Germany under NATO supervision. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and the Cold War era was completely over. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is also often considered a symbolic event that marked the end of the division in Europe.²³² 15 new and independent nations were formed from the ashes of the Soviet Union. This included Russia, which elected an anti-communist leader through a democratic process.²³³ Even though the Cold War officially ended, its effects on current global politics are still evident.

In conclusion, the most significant and ironic aspect of the period was the perception that the post-war policies of both the Soviet Union and the US posed a mutual threat to each other. On the part of the US, the Soviet Union's post-war policies are seen as expansionist. Likewise, the Soviets also believed the US post-war policies were aggressive and interventionist. Thus, the tension between the US

²²⁷ Gaddis, **History**, p. 50; McCauley, pp. 131-133.

²²⁸ R. T. Maddock, "The Warsaw Pact," **The Political Economy of the Arms Race**, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 1990, p. 99.

²²⁹ Garthoff, pp. 292-293.

²³⁰ Blair and Curtis, pp. 67-73.

²³¹ Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 1)", **Journal of Cold War Studies**, Vol. 5, No: 4, 2003, (Collapse), pp. 178-181.

²³² Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc", **The Journal of Modern History**, Vol. 83, No: 4, 2011, (Demise), p. 788.

²³³ Michael McFaul, "Political Transitions: Democracy and the Former Soviet Union.", **Harvard International Review**, Vol. 28, No: 1, 2006, pp. 40-46.

and the Soviet Union escalated rapidly. Both countries saw each other's policies as a direct threat to their national security. In this context, the US described the post-war actions of Stalin as Soviet expansionism and developed a counter-policy of containment in response. Its primary objective was to prevent the spread of communism and protect the interests of the US and its allies. This approach enabled the US to provide support and assistance to nations facing the Soviet threat through initiatives like the Marshall Plan and NATO. This strategy played a critical role in strengthening the economies and security of Western Europe and maintaining American dominance in the post- WW II era. the US decided to declare its interest in every country's postwar destiny, including Eastern European countries.²³⁴ In the next section the origins, structure and raison d'être of NATO will be examined.

2.2. A SHORT HISTORY OF NATO

At present, NATO has 32 members. In 1949, there were 12 founding members of the Alliance: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the US. The other member countries are Greece and Türkiye (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024).²³⁵

The devastation of WW II left Europe vulnerable. Key events, such as the Berlin Blockade and the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, intensified the West's perception of an imminent Soviet threat and fueled fears of communism spreading further into Western Europe. In this context, the US and the Soviet Union emerged as dominant powers, viewing one another as primary threats to their national security. The US, therefore, fostered the creation of NATO as a collective security initiative for the European states. The belief was that a unified defense organization would act

²³⁴ Schlesinger, p. 45.

²³⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "NATO Member Countries", **NATO**, 20.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm, (20.10.2024), (Member).

as a deterrent against Soviet aggression and help maintain stability in Western Europe.²³⁶

This section examines the origins and early development of NATO. It highlights the US' crucial role in leading and supporting European efforts to establish a collective defense system against the perceived Soviet threat. Importantly, it emphasizes the collaborative nature of NATO's formation that is rooted in shared security concerns and a collective aspiration for stability in the aftermath of WW II.

2.2.1. Creation of NATO

Discussions on the establishment of a Western European defense initiative began just after WW II. Since the US was the main initiator and supporter of the European re-construction process, its leadership of a potential European security project was inevitable. The discussions gained momentum as the actions of the Soviet Union during the process were perceived as a significant threat to the security of Western Europe. It also covered the possible involvement of the transatlantic nations in the initiative, namely the US and Canada, to prevent future conflicts and promote regional stability effectively.²³⁷

The Brussels Pact was the first attempt to create such a Western military alliance and aimed to establish a collective defense system among the Western European powers. However, it was soon realized and discussed among the members that a broader alliance was needed to counter the growing Soviet threat in Europe effectively. NATO originated from these initial discussions that followed America's acceptance of a military alliance with the Brussels Pact.²³⁸ This paved the way for an inevitable common security initiative for the European states under the Soviet threat. Therefore, soon after the Brussels pact, it was recognized that a stronger alliance between Western Europe and North America would be required to balance Soviet expansionism and its ongoing actions in Europe.²³⁹

²³⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "A Short History of NATO", **NATO**, 20.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm, (20.10.2024), (Short History).

²³⁷ Kaplan, Origins, p. 17.

²³⁸ Kaplan, Origins, p. 24.

²³⁹ Phil Williams, "The United States' Commitment to Western Europe: Strategic Ambiguity and Political Disintegration?", **International Affairs**, Vol. 59, No: 2, 1983, p. 200.

Many scholars in the literature assume that the first and foremost sign of the post-war order was the changing distribution of power. Accordingly, the US and the Soviet Union achieved superpower status in the new order. Thus, the US, which also led the reconstruction of Europe, brought the Western bloc together under its supremacy against the growing perception of the Soviet threat in Western Europe. Eventually, the Western countries established NATO in 1949, with the US playing a leading role due to its dominant economic and military power.²⁴⁰

Although it was originally a European initiative, NATO was established with the support and guidance of the US. As the post-war world's dominant power, the country offered leadership and resources to war-torn Europe. The alliance provided a collective defense mechanism that allowed the European countries to leverage US support and bolstered their security against a perceived Soviet threat.²⁴¹ Ultimately, scholars and historians widely agree that NATO's establishment resulted from various important factors, especially the European fear of Soviet expansion spreading even inside the Western countries, the growing perception of a common threat, and the strategic alignment of the US and European interests. It was a collaborative effort driven by a common desire for security and stability in the post-war world.²⁴²

It is important to examine NATO's foundation, fundamental principles, main objectives, and organizational structure to conceptualize and better understand the organization. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) was established after the NATO treaty was signed in 1949 by the 12 founding members. In addition, with a series of extensions, four other countries joined the Alliance. Shortly after the establishment, Greece and Türkiye were invited to join in 1951 and became formal members in 1952. Next, the Federal Republic of Germany's accession in 1955, followed by Spain's membership in 1982, all solidified the alliance during the Cold War period.²⁴³

Overall, the establishment of NATO in 1949 was a turning point in international politics. It was shaped by various factors which the study has already mentioned. Particularly, West Germany's inclusion to the alliance, encouraged the

²⁴⁰ Williams, p. 199.

²⁴¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, "NATO Expansion: A Realist's View", **Contemporary Security Policy**, Vol. 21, No: 2, 2000, (NATO expansion) pp. 23-24.

²⁴² Kaplan, Origins, pp. 11-12.

²⁴³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, p. 11.

Soviet Union to form the Warsaw Pact alliance in central and eastern Europe in 1955.²⁴⁴ It also played a significant role against the Soviet Union since the country marked the exact border of the Western bloc. As the Cold War nearly ended, almost 900,000 troops were stationed in various members of NATO.²⁴⁵

In fact, what caused the Cold War is similar as the factors that led to the emergence of NATO since the general characteristic of the post-war world and its geopolitics has been determined by the power struggle of the two superpowers. Therefore, any of the causes and outcomes of a phenomenon in international politics in this era have been determined by the effects of this bipolarity of the world.

In short, the US and Europe were strategically aligned and united against the perceived Soviet threat. This collaboration laid the foundation for many years of partnership in defense and security matters. Beyond offering merely a collective defense mechanism, NATO symbolized a new era of transatlantic cooperation. Since its establishment, the alliance has grown from 12 to more than 30 members and has endured for over 70 years without any withdrawals. Today, NATO continues to link North America and Europe; additionally, the organization, even in the early stages, helped to promote European integration in the political field.²⁴⁶

2.2.2. The Raison D'être and Structure of NATO

The general belief is that NATO was established purely in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Many believe that NATO is a military alliance formed by the West to counter the spread of communism and protect Western Europe from potential Soviet aggression. When its founding purpose and the basic principles of the alliance are examined, it would be a grave mistake to suggest that NATO is purely a military alliance. However, NATO had a broader agenda even at its foundation.

The alliance itself expresses its primary objectives in three ways. Accordingly, as already stated, the first objective of NATO is to deter Soviet

²⁴⁴ Walter C. Clemens, "The Soviet World Faces West: 1945–1970", *International Affairs*, Vol. 46, No: 3, 1970, p. 478.

²⁴⁵ Gaddis, *History*, p. 220.

²⁴⁶ Kaplan, *Origins*, p. 26.

expansionism. Second, to ensure European stability by forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent; and third, to encourage European political integration in the light of Western liberal values and democracy.²⁴⁷

In such an effort, NATO also played a crucial role in promoting the process of European integration, which ultimately culminated in the formation of the European Union. The transatlantic security alliance was designed not only to deter Soviet aggression but also to prevent the resurgence of European militarism. Furthermore, it sought to create a foundation for political integration in Europe, fostering stability and cooperation among its member states.²⁴⁸ This support of integration helped to create solidarity and shared values among its member countries. The collaboration not only strengthened their collective defense against potential threats but also paved the way for economic cooperation and the creation of a single market within the European Union. Furthermore, this is because the Cold War was mainly an ideological dispute. In this political projection, the alliance also responded to communist ideology by promoting Western values and democracy across the continent.²⁴⁹

NATO, from its foundation to the present day, has had several objectives that also addressed the *raison d'être* of the alliance. Due to the changing dynamics of international politics and the system, those tasks and objectives have changed over time. However, the transatlantic alliance has been driven by two central objectives since its foundation. These objectives are also clearly stated in the articles of the treaty itself. The first and primary task, formulated in Article 5, is centered on its member states' collective defense and security. This includes protecting their borders from external threats and maintaining a solid deterrence against them. Particularly during the early times, the alliance's founding commitment was focused on the unification and strengthening of military capabilities in the face of a potential invasion of Western Europe by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁴⁸ Anthony Forster and William Wallace, "What Is NATO For?", *Survival*, Vol. 43, No: 4, 2001, pp. 111-112.

²⁴⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History; Forster and Wallace, p. 119.

²⁵⁰ Kaplan, Origins, pp. 24-25.

The second fundamental purpose of NATO is, as stated in Articles 2 and Article 6, the consolidation of European integrity considering Western liberal values and the promotion of democracy. It aims to promote stability and cooperation among member states as well as with other IOs. This involves working together on various political, economic, and security issues to enhance regional and global stability by promoting Western values and democracy.²⁵¹ Treaty also clarifies some important principles that were not directly related to the threat of attack. Article 3 laid the foundation for cooperation between the Allies on military preparedness, and Article 2 gave them some flexibility to engage in non-military cooperation.²⁵²

The text of the treaty consists of 14 articles. Among those, the first five are arguably the most crucial. Accordingly:

- a. Article 1 defines the basic principles that member states must follow in their interactions to ensure global peace and security.*
- b. Article 2 defines the goals that member countries aim to achieve in their social and economic relationships with other nations, along with their corresponding responsibilities.*
- c. In Article 3, member countries confirm their commitment to maintaining and improving their individual and collective capacity to defend against attacks.*
- d. Article 4 addresses the possibility of a threat to the security, independence, or territorial integrity of any member country, providing for joint consultation whenever any member country perceives such a threat.*
- e. Article 5 is the core of the Treaty, in which member states agreed to consider an armed attack against any one of them in Europe or North America as an attack against all of them. This article obliges them to take all necessary actions to assist each other in the event of an armed attack.*²⁵³

The famous Article 5 of NATO is derived from Article 4 of the Brussels Pact. The former more clearly stated that an attack on one member would require the other members to provide “all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.” However, the US declined to accept this explicit commitment. Instead, Article 5 was formulated to state that an attack against one member “shall be considered an attack against them all.”²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. **NATO Handbook**, NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division, Brussels, 2006, (Handbook), pp. 371-372.

²⁵² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, p. 371.

²⁵³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, pp. 13-14.

²⁵⁴ Kaplan, Origins, p. 24.

Additionally, Article 6 specifies the geographic scope of the treaty as “an armed attack on the territory of any of the parties in Europe or North America.”²⁵⁵ Other articles commit the allies to strengthening democratic institutions, building collective military capability, consulting each other, and remaining open to inviting other European states to join.

Furthermore, Article 10 sets out how countries can join the alliance. it states that membership is open to any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area." However, even if the membership seems to be flexible for any country, the decision needs the consensus of all allies.²⁵⁶

Since its establishment, NATO has expanded through nine rounds of enlargement (in 1952, 1955, 1982, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2017, 2020, and 2023). The decision to invite a country into an alliance is made by the North Atlantic Council.²⁵⁷ It consists of ministerial representatives of each member state who meet twice a year. It is basically the political body of the organization where the decision-making process takes place to determine the general policies and strategies of the alliance. The Council is chaired by the NATO Secretary General, who is always selected as a European.²⁵⁸

NATO operates through a system of commands, designed for both peacetime and wartime scenarios. At its core is the Military Committee (MC), which comprises representatives from the military chiefs of member states. This committee controls two strategic commands: Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT).²⁵⁹ The ACO, led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), is always headed by an American, while the ACT is headquartered in Virginia, the US. In its first two decades, NATO jointly planned, financed, and constructed over \$3 billion worth of infrastructure for its forces, with approximately

²⁵⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, p. 372.

²⁵⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Member.

²⁵⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Member.

²⁵⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “NATO Secretary General”, **NATO**, 21.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50094.htm, (21.10.2024), (Secretary); North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, p. 15.

²⁵⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, pp. 21, 85.

one-third of the funding provided by the US. NATO funding is not generally used to acquire military equipment provided by the member states.²⁶⁰

In response to the growing Soviet threat perceived by Western countries, as evidenced by events such as the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb, the Berlin Blockade, and the Czechoslovak coup, the alliance strengthened its command structure by establishing a centralized military headquarters: the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). The US General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed as the first SACEUR. Additionally, NATO established a permanent civilian secretariat in Paris, Lord Ismay of the United Kingdom was its first Secretary General.²⁶¹

In the early stages of the Cold War, NATO implemented two pivotal strategies to counter the Soviet Union. The first was rooted in the concept of “collective defense”, which formed the core of NATO’s mission and was explicitly outlined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.²⁶² The second strategy was based on a deterrence approach, specifically the policy of “massive retaliation,” which entailed the potential use of nuclear weapons in response to a Soviet attack.²⁶³ These strategies generally were a fundamental approach employed by both sides.

The deterrence-based strategy also aligned closely with the broader characteristics of the Cold War. Rather than engaging in direct conflict, the emphasis was on preventing attacks through the mutual calculation of potential damage and destruction. This approach, widely known in the field of IR as mutually assured destruction (MAD). The logic of MAD relied on making any attack by one side unthinkable due to the catastrophic consequences for both.²⁶⁴

By the 1960s, most of the post-war challenges had been addressed. The détente process, which began in the late 1960s, further eased tensions between the West and the Eastern bloc. During this time, the Alliance resolved its primary remaining issues and there were no significant institutional changes until the

²⁶⁰ Yannis A. Stivachtis, “The American Supremacy and Leadership Preeminence in NATO: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance”, **Politics Between Nations: Power, Peace, and Diplomacy**, (Ed. Adebowale Akande), Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2023, pp. 51-71.

²⁶¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁶² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, pp. 371-372.

²⁶³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁶⁴ Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, “The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy”, **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 85, No: 2, 2006, p. 42.

1980s.²⁶⁵ As the rivalry between the west and east decreased in effect with the détente process, NATO gradually took on a more political approach. Its role especially in this period evolved from preserving the status quo to actively changing. For example, it moved towards promoting dialogue and détente between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, as recommended in "The Future Tasks of the Alliance." aimed for stability between Eastern and Western Europe, while John F. Kennedy's "Flexible Response" sought more adaptable strategies.²⁶⁶

By the mid-1980s, the general perception was that Soviet communism was losing the battle with the West. Additionally, with the accession of Spain in 1982, NATO welcomed its first new member since 1955.²⁶⁷ In 1987, the US and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which aimed to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles. It was one of the turning points that marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War.²⁶⁸ The INF Treaty was a significant achievement in arms control, as it marked the first time that the two superpowers agreed to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons.

The fact was that the economies in the Warsaw Pact were deteriorating. The Soviet Union could not afford the military spending that the Cold War imposed. Under these conditions, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power with the strong intention of reforming the communist system. Eventually, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, marked the beginning of a new era, and the longstanding Cold War was really coming to an end. At this point, NATO faced an existential question: whether there was still a need for the alliance or not.²⁶⁹

2.2.3. US Dominance in NATO and Final Thoughts

NATO's overall structure is built on collective defense, economic collaboration, and the promotion of western values. However, this multidimensional framework has also attracted criticism. This may include NATO's objectives, which

²⁶⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, p. 18.

²⁶⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁶⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁶⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Handbook, pp. 183-184.

²⁶⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

gradually took on a political dimension, especially in the later phases of the Cold War. Some argue that NATO's broader political objectives are over-intrusive. Others have pointed to the alliance's internal power dynamics, particularly the dominant role of the US.²⁷⁰ This led to criticism and moments of crisis within NATO.

At certain times, the alliance's actions and decisions are perceived as not completely serving the collective interests of all its members. To illustrate, the role of the US and its dominance within the organization is an essential aspect of discussions. After 1958, the famous French president Charles de Gaulle increasingly pointed out this matter. In July 1966, France formally withdrew from the military command structure of NATO and requested the removal of all Allied headquarters from French territory.²⁷¹

Nevertheless, de Gaulle proclaimed continued French commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty in the case of "unprovoked aggression". Notably, France did not actually leave the Alliance completely and made it clear that it would remain committed to standing alongside its allies in case of any hostilities.²⁷² Eventually, in 2009, France re-joined the military command structure of NATO.²⁷³

As discussed above, the European countries were relatively weakening, and their economies were devastated after the war. The US, on the other hand, was far more powerful than any other country. Its economic strength and military power made it the dominant force within NATO. Given the high level of perception about the Soviet threat on the continent, the US was able to shape the alliance's decision-making processes and its overall direction.²⁷⁴ Thus, many scholars, such as L. Kaplan, assumed the dominance of the US within NATO was inevitable for the European countries in this period, as in other international affairs.²⁷⁵ The question of whether the US' effectiveness and dominance within NATO serve as an advantage or disadvantage for Europe, and whether this dominance was inevitable and persists

²⁷⁰ Ellen Hallams, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)", **The Encyclopedia of War**, Ed. Gordon Martel, 1. ed, Blackwell Publishing, 2011, p. 6; Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse", **Survival**, Vol. 39, No: 1, 1997, (Endure), pp. 161-165.

²⁷¹ Hallams, pp. 5-6; Christian Nuenlist, "Dealing with the Devil: NATO and Gaullist France, 1958–66", **Journal of Transatlantic Studies**, Vol. 9, No: 3, 2011, pp. 220-221.

²⁷² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History.

²⁷³ Hallams, p. 13.

²⁷⁴ Waltz, NATO Expansion, p. 31; Walt, Endure, pp. 164-165.

²⁷⁵ Kaplan, Origins, pp. 11-12.

today, remains a different subject of debate. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis and time constraints, this subject will not be explored further.

According to L. Kaplan, NATO is not just a military organization. It is a complex combination of political and military relationships that have prevented conflicts among the members. If NATO were to disappear, the US would lose its status as a European power and its essential role in supporting the confidence of European nations since WW II.²⁷⁶

From a realist perspective, NATO's evolution can be seen as a strategic response to the anarchic nature of the international system and the shifting distribution of power within it.²⁷⁷ The alliance operates as a collective security mechanism, allowing member states to share resources and deter potential aggressors. This, in the end, enhances the security and power of individual states in a self-help system, where no higher authority exists to ensure their safety.

Neoclassical realism further emphasizes the role of domestic factors in shaping foreign policy decisions. The perceived threat of Soviet aggression was undoubtedly an important motive for the creation of NATO. However, reducing the Alliance to a mere military response oversimplifies its multidimensional nature and broader objectives. As discussed above, NATO's objectives have always gone beyond countering the perceived Soviet threat to a broader vision of European security and integration. These objectives also included such as preventing the re-emergence of European militarism, or promoting political integration based on shared Western values and democracy. This broader focus refers to NATO's expanded role as both a military alliance and a political organization.

Despite criticism and the complexities, NATO's enduring commitment to transatlantic security has allowed it to remain a significant force in IR even beyond the Cold War. As the geopolitical environment continues to evolve, NATO's objectives and strategies have inevitably adjusted.²⁷⁸ The Alliance's capacity to meet these changes while addressing criticism, managing power imbalances, and responding to the shifts in power distribution will be crucial to its continued effect.

²⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Origins*, pp. 27-28.

²⁷⁷ Walt, *Endure*, pp. 156-179; Waltz, *NATO Expansion*, pp. 23-24.

²⁷⁸ Waltz, *NATO Expansion*, p. 27.

Furthermore, the absence of NATO would leave a power vacuum in Europe, this potentially may increase tensions and the re-emergence of regional conflicts. Additionally, without NATO's collective defense mechanism, European nations would have to invest heavily in their own military capabilities to ensure security. Thus, scholars generally consider the termination of NATO as unlikely for now.²⁷⁹ Despite numerous deficiencies and discussions, NATO has somehow promoted stability in the Euro-Atlantic region for more than 70 years.²⁸⁰

2.3. TÜRKİYE'S ACCESSION TO NATO

This section will examine the historical process of Türkiye's accession to the transatlantic alliance. It will discuss the challenges and benefits of the process for both the alliance and Türkiye. The section basically seeks to provide an overview of the historical and strategic dynamics that shaped Türkiye's involvement in NATO. In this context, it will first examine the security challenges in the region and how Türkiye looked in the post-war era. The key events that led to Türkiye and Greece's NATO membership will be discussed briefly, particularly the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Korean War.

Second, Türkiye's initial membership efforts and its strong determination will be investigated, along with the role of the US in bringing Türkiye into the alliance. Thus, the strategic objectives of the parties and their geopolitical concerns will be explored. Türkiye's security and identity interests in being a member of NATO will be discussed. Finally, it will evaluate the importance of Türkiye's inclusion in NATO with its contributions to the alliance's collective security and its unique geopolitical position.

2.3.1. Türkiye in the Early Post-World War Period

As discussed above, the post-war period witnessed an intense power struggle between the two newly rising superpowers at global level. According to the

²⁷⁹ Stephen M. Walt, **The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition**, WW Norton Company, 2002, (Relevance) pp. 170-173; Kaplan, *Origins*, p. 27.

²⁸⁰ Kaplan, *Origins*, p. 28.

literature, it is generally assumed that the Soviet Union pursued an expansionist policy during the period, named Soviet expansionism. The US and other Western countries adopted a policy of containment as a countermeasure, aimed at preventing communism and potential Soviet influence from spreading.²⁸¹ They often supported counter-movements against those backed by the USSR and adopted a counter strategy. This eventually turned into a proxy war in many parts of the world.²⁸²

Both the US and the Soviet Union tried to extend their influence all over the world. They supported separatist movements and guerrilla campaigns. In some places, this effort has been successfully resisted and repelled, but most of them have consented to the dominance of the superpowers. In Türkiye, for example, the Soviets attempted to threaten territorial claims on Kars and Ardahan, demanding a share in the defenses and control over the Turkish straits.²⁸³ This action by the Soviets and the general dynamics of the period constituted the main elements of Türkiye's national security concerns during the Cold War era.

In the end, although Türkiye successfully overcame such external threats and pressures to its independence, the country found a solution to counter the perceived threat of the Soviet Union by aligning itself with the Western bloc.²⁸⁴ It also consented to US dominance in many areas. Even if Türkiye's alignment with the West was not solely driven by a perceived Soviet threat and did not merely result in countries' consenting to the US dominance, it played a significant role in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy and alliance behavior during the period. This alignment with the West, often assumed by scholars to be mutually beneficial. It allowed Türkiye to receive military and economic assistance. Also being a member of NATO allowed a sense of the country's desire to be part of Western civilization.²⁸⁵ It provided relative benefits to both sides, but also losses.

Following WW II, Türkiye and Greece, with their fragile social and economic structures, found themselves under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union.

²⁸¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, pp. 5-6.

²⁸² Philip Towle, "The Strategy of War by Proxy", **The RUSI Journal**, Vol. 126, No: 1, 1981, pp. 21-24.

²⁸³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, p. 7.

²⁸⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Türkiye and NATO - 1952", **NATO**, 22.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_191048.htm, (22.10.2024) (Türkiye 1952).

²⁸⁵ Rachel Ellehuus, "Turkey and NATO: A Relationship Worth Saving," **CSIS**, 02.12.2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkey-and-nato-relationship-worth-saving>, (22.10.2024).

Britain was also weakened at the end of the war and declared that it was no longer able to continue to assist the two countries in resisting any potential Soviet aggression.²⁸⁶ In this case, the US, as the competitor and new superpower, believed that leaving those countries with potential Soviet influence was not a wise choice, and thus it introduced the Truman Doctrine. President Truman, in his address to Congress on March 12, 1947, presented the doctrine, which aimed to contain the spread of communism and support democratic nations.²⁸⁷ He argued that Greece and Türkiye, dealing with internal and external threats, were critical to maintaining stability in the Middle East and preventing the domino effect of communist expansion. He requested \$400 million in aid for both countries, emphasizing the importance of supporting free people and safeguarding the investment made in winning WW II.²⁸⁸

The doctrine along with the Marshall Plan assumed as a key turning point and shift in American foreign policy. The new strategy implied containing the spread of communism with a proactive policy of influence and dominance. This was achieved by supporting several countries in their reconstruction of social and economic structures after WW II. It emphasized the importance of providing economic and military aid to prevent the spread of communism in strategically important regions²⁸⁹ It also promoted their security in resisting Soviet influence. In this way, the US arguably established its own dominance in strategic regions.

Moreover, the Truman Doctrine was specifically created to address the threat posed to Greece and Türkiye. However, the situation in Western Europe was equally concerning. For this reason, the US put the Marshall Plan into effect to implement the goals of the Truman Doctrine in a broader context.²⁹⁰

According to the critics, also mentioned by scholars in the literature, both the Marshall Plan and the Truman doctrine were not just an aid or a gift from the US to reconstruct the European economy; they were a loan and an investment for the US

²⁸⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, p. 8.

²⁸⁷ Dennis Merrill, "The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity", **Presidential Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 36, No: 1, 2006, pp. 27-28.

²⁸⁸ "Speeches: Recommendation for assistance to Greece and Turkey by the President of the US Harry Truman 12 March 1947", **NATO On-line Library**, 29.08.2001, https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1947/s470312a_e.htm, 22.11.2024, (22.10.2024).

²⁸⁹ Merrill, pp. 27-31.

²⁹⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Facts and Figures, p. 8.

that would benefit the American economy in return.²⁹¹ It eventually linked the weakening European countries to American dominance as well. The US saw the Marshall Plan as a strategic move to counter the possible and further influence of the Soviet Union in Europe, especially in the western part. Additionally, the US was already the most important manufacturer in the world after WW II, and Europe was creating a good opportunity for the US to import the products it manufactured into a new market space.²⁹² The increased trade and economic integration between Europe and the US helped to stimulate the American economy. Thus, the Marshall Plan, along with other strategies implemented by the US, particularly its efforts to establish a liberal international order, not only facilitated Europe's post-war recovery but also reinforced American economic and political dominance/hegemony on a global scale.

Beyond this criticism, scholars also often discuss that both the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan created a deterrent element by bringing the West together in the face of the actual Soviet threat. Overall, the proactive policies of the US played a key role in reconstructing a war-torn Europe.²⁹³ It further consolidated Western European countries together for the sake of a common cause and their integration with shared values. This laid the foundation for NATO and future economic cooperation and development between the US and western Europe.²⁹⁴

On the part of Türkiye, Turkish foreign policy is generally assumed to be grounded in the principle of "peace at home, peace abroad" approach of Atatürk. The approach aims to strengthen cooperation and regional security. For instance, in 1934, before joining NATO, Türkiye formed the Balkan Entente with Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Additionally, the Saadabad Pact of 1937 was signed with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan to promote the traditional approach of the country.²⁹⁵ This effort

²⁹¹ Kaplan, *Origins*, p. 12.

²⁹² Stanley V. Malcuit and Reuben E. Slesinger, "European Markets and American Business", **Journal of Marketing**, Vol. 24, No: 3, 1960, pp. 45-49; G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition", **International Relations of the Asia-Pacific**, Vol. 5, No: 2, 2005, pp. 137-138.

²⁹³ William I. Hitchcock, "The Marshall Plan and the creation of the West", **The Cambridge History of the Cold War**, Ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 1. ed, Cambridge University Press, 2010; Barry Eichengreen and Marc Uzan. "The Marshall Plan: Economic Effects and Implications for Eastern Europe and the Former USSR", **Economic Policy**, Vol.: 7, No.: 14, 2014, p. 13.

²⁹⁴ Kaplan, *Origins*, p. 12.

²⁹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Türkiye and NATO - 1952", **NATO**, 22.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_191048.htm, (22.10.2024) (Türkiye 1952).

continued during the Cold War, since Türkiye established regional partnerships through the Balkan Pact and the Baghdad Pact and eventually became involved in NATO. This also demonstrated the country's multi-dimensional approach.²⁹⁶

Türkiye remained non-belligerent during WW II. Thus, the country was relatively more stable than Greece in the post-war period, as it relatively did not suffer the devastation of war. Also, Türkiye was already seen by the US as an important ally in the region. This perception was further strengthened by Türkiye's insistent desire to join the NATO and its decisive participation in the Korean War.²⁹⁷ Türkiye benefited from the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and the Marshall Plan in 1948. Türkiye sent troops to support the UN in defending South Korea in 1950. This was Türkiye's first military action outside of its borders.²⁹⁸

More importantly, the scholars generally agree that its involvement in the Korean War was a significant step towards its integration into the Western alliance system. The Korean War eventually led to the first enlargement process of NATO, since it was assumed to be determined Türkiye and Greece's accession to the alliance. It also led the US to provide massive military assistance abroad, which highlighted its role as a global leader once again.²⁹⁹

Türkiye's involvement with Western Europe is a long and troubled issue for Mark Smith. Accordingly, the history of the two involves mutual indifference, dislike, and/or misunderstandings that fueled by power politics, imperialism, and cultural differences.³⁰⁰ Despite this complex historical context, the author argues that Türkiye's accession to the Western bloc during the Cold War was motivated by two important factors: first, the Cold War imposed high-security concerns and power politics on the nations. Second, Türkiye's own desire and insistence on joining the Western bloc.³⁰¹ This early insistence and determination to join NATO is generally

²⁹⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

²⁹⁷ John M. Vander Lippe, "Forgotten Brigade of the Forgotten War: Turkey's Participation in the Korean War", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 36, No: 1, 2000, (Korean War), pp. 93-94.

²⁹⁸ Joseph C. Satterthwaite, "The Truman Doctrine: Turkey", **The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 401, No: 1, 1972, p. 81.

²⁹⁹ Walter Lafeber, "NATO and the Korean War: A Context", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 13, No: 4, 1989, p. 461.

³⁰⁰ M. Smith, **Nato Enlargement During the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance**, 1st ed., Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2000, pp. 63-64.

³⁰¹ M. Smith, p. 64.

explained primarily in terms of the country's security concerns by scholars. Historians and IR scholars generally assume that Türkiye was under a severe threat from the USSR, which led the country to seek the protection of NATO. As a country outside of Western Europe, Türkiye felt increasingly vulnerable to the growing Soviet threat on its borders. Thus, the country sought to strengthen its security by joining the Alliance.³⁰² Second, scholars also argue that Türkiye had long been in search of an identity within Europe. NATO membership was therefore seen as an important step towards aligning itself with the West and solidifying its orientation.³⁰³

Both variables have important explanatory value for Türkiye's early desire and decision to align itself with the Western bloc. This belief was especially strengthened when Stalin attempted to revise the Montreux Convention to station troops in the Dardanelles and reclaim lost territory in the Kars and Ardahan provinces.³⁰⁴ This action greatly increased the actual and perceived threat in Türkiye. In fact, any direct engagement with Türkiye was not a wise choice or a practical option for the Soviet Union, given that the Soviet economy was also weakened and fragile at the end of the war.³⁰⁵ But the threat was real and always possible, especially in a world where conflict, competition, and power struggles are the casual aspects of the order. A broader analysis of Türkiye's desire to join NATO and its commitment to the Western Alliance will be analyzed along with other variables.

2.3.2. Türkiye's Strategic Importance for the West and the US

Türkiye's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, coupled with its strong military and its control over key waterways such as the Straits, governed by the Montreux Convention made it a valuable ally for NATO during the Cold War. Especially for the US in its intense power competition with the USSR.³⁰⁶

The US prioritized the defense of the western Mediterranean in the early stages of the Cold War and relied more on Britain for the Middle East, even with the

³⁰² Kuniholm, TR-West, p. 34; Lippe, Korean War, p. 95.

³⁰³ Oğuzlu, TRNA, p. 2; E. Yilmaz and Bilgin, pp. 40-41.

³⁰⁴ Leffler, p. 808.

³⁰⁵ David Binder, "Greece, Turkey, and NATO", **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol. 23, No: 2, 2012, p. 98.

³⁰⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

country's limitations. In the initial process, the US had no direct plan for Türkiye's accession to NATO.³⁰⁷ While recognizing Türkiye's strategic importance, the US offered military aid rather than concrete guarantees for full membership. This frustrated Türkiye's political elites, and they clearly expressed this disappointment in public and elsewhere.³⁰⁸ Although Türkiye's accession to NATO would add considerable strength to the alliance, the first demand and insistence came from Türkiye, and it was even against the initial hesitation and refusal of the US. This was probably the first example of Türkiye's perception of being neglected by the Allies.

In the aftermath of WW II, American foreign policy toward Türkiye was shaped by strategic imperatives aimed at expanding US global interests and influencing the country's alliance orientation. This approach reflected a broader US strategy during the era. As Melvyn Leffler clarifies: "Instead of waiting for an actual Soviet attack to Türkiye, the US recognized an opportunity to advance its regional strategic interests by leveraging the current geopolitical structure."³⁰⁹

This decision also corresponds to the structural realist perspective, where the state prioritizes its survival and exploits opportunities to maximize its power in the international arena as an expected consequence of the anarchic system.

In the process, Türkiye went from being a recipient of US aid to a formal ally. This shift was driven not only by the imminent Soviet threat but also, and more importantly by Türkiye's strategic importance to NATO and the US at the time.³¹⁰ Especially considering the country's unique and strategic location, its potential utility in waging war, protecting air bases, and safeguarding Middle Eastern oil resources, Türkiye would play an important role in American interests in every field.³¹¹ Thus, the primary motive for the US was Türkiye's extensive strategic importance, which was considered too valuable to be ignored during the period. The US therefore decided to modernize and aid the military power of Türkiye as it was at first an asset for its interest in the region. This investment not only reinforced Türkiye's role as a

³⁰⁷ Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, "Turkey's Participation in the Middle East Command and Its Admission to NATO, 1950–52", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No: 4, 1999, pp. 70-73.

³⁰⁸ Leffler, p. 820.

³⁰⁹ Leffler, p. 825.

³¹⁰ Lawrence S. Kaplan, **A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951**, Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, Washington D.C., 1980, (Assistance) pp. 1-7.

³¹¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

critical ally but also served to strengthen US dominance in the region and bolster its position in the rivalry with the Soviet Union.

As discussed above, rather than simply waiting for a potential Soviet attack on Türkiye, US officials took advantage and actively engaged with the country to strengthen its ties and ensure its alignment with Western interests.³¹² This involves all the aid provided to the country. The attempt wasn't just about defending territory from a potential aggressor but exploiting the nature of rivalry to gain a strategic opportunity against the other.

Like many scholars, Mark Smith also emphasizes why Türkiye's geo-strategic position is particularly important. Accordingly:

*First, it is located across the Turkish Straits, which is the only access point for the Soviet Union to enter the Eastern Mediterranean. Second, it is situated between the Soviet Union and the Suez region. These factors also made Türkiye vital for the oil supply to Europe, and NATO's further strategy identified the significance of Türkiye's advantageous position in regional security and energy supply dynamics.*³¹³

In sum, the US strategic calculations and its interests were the primary motives for the inclusion of Türkiye and Greece in the alliance. The decision was aimed not only to prevent them from siding with the Soviet Union but also to prevent them from remaining neutral. The US considered Türkiye and Greece particularly valuable due to their strategic locations in its competition with the Soviet Union. Therefore, excluding them from full membership in the alliance was not a risk that could be taken.³¹⁴

The role of the US in NATO's first enlargement was decisive. The US commitment to Greece and Türkiye was evident even before NATO's formation, particularly through initiatives like the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. This commitment played a crucial role in their eventual accession to the Alliance. As Cold War tensions escalated, the perceived threat from the Soviet Union encouraged NATO members to reconsider the enlargement.³¹⁵ This eventually led to the admission of previously rejected candidates, Greece and Türkiye. Their accession

³¹² Leffler, p. 825.

³¹³ M. Smith, p. 73.

³¹⁴ M. Smith, p. 71.

³¹⁵ Yeşilbursa, pp. 78-81.

was formalized through the US-led effort, driven by the strategic imperative to reinforce NATO's southern flank.

Greece and Türkiye were never underestimated by European countries, but their significance to the US at the time was more valuable. Their strategic importance for the political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, as well as the oil supplies, were critical for the US. Both, Greece and Türkiye were waiting for admission to NATO since the beginning of the negotiations, but they were initially rejected.³¹⁶ The US, at first, informed Türkiye that Italy would not be included in the organization, which was based on geographical reasons. However, the inclusion of Italy created a sense of betrayal and disappointment in Türkiye. Yet, this did not prevent Türkiye's desire and insistence to join the alliance.³¹⁷

In 1950, Türkiye intensified its diplomatic and military efforts in two ways. First, it was decided to deploy 4500 troops to Korea just after the beginning of the war. Second, Ankara directly appealed to the UK, France, and the US to request membership by highlighting its existing collaboration and importance for NATO.³¹⁸ This insistence was even furthered when Turkish officials implied that if it did not apply to the alliance, they would adopt a neutral approach rather than align with the US and the Western bloc.³¹⁹

The US faced a difficult situation in this period regarding Türkiye and Greece. Although they were important geostrategic assets for the West against the Soviet Union, it also had to be careful about disrupting the ongoing progress of NATO by over-extending the alliance. Regarding these concerns, to find a solution, the US proposed "associate status" for Türkiye and Greece. The proposal would enable them to participate in a coordinated strategy against any Soviet aggression while neglecting their full membership.³²⁰

In May 1950, Türkiye submitted its first unsuccessful application for membership to the alliance. At this point, Türkiye expressed its disappointment; President Celal Bayar emphasized that he was upset by NATO's refusal to offer full

³¹⁶ M. Smith, p. 67.

³¹⁷ M. Smith, pp. 68-69.

³¹⁸ Cameron S. Brown, "The One Coalition They Craved to Join: Turkey in the Korean War", **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 34, No: 1, 2008, pp. 95-97.

³¹⁹ Leffler, p. 822.

³²⁰ Leffler, p. 821.

membership to Türkiye, especially considering Türkiye's direct military contribution to Korea.³²¹ Türkiye was demanding an extended security commitment against any Soviet attack by being a full member of NATO. In response to the US's initial hesitation, Türkiye clearly implied its intention to remain neutral if its demands were not met.³²²

Eventually, fear of Türkiye's neutrality and losing the country's determined commitment to the West paved the way for both Greece's and Türkiye's full membership. By early 1951, US officials recognized the political risks of refusal and acknowledged the necessity of recognizing both Greece and Türkiye for full membership.³²³ Türkiye's persistent demand for NATO membership and the possible consequences of rejection forced the US to change its position. Additionally, the country also took every opportunity to show its determination and commitment to the Western alliance, such as during the Korean War.

M. Smith clarifies that the accession of Türkiye to NATO in two stages:

*The first stage, in September 1950, involved a decision to integrate them into NATO military planning and grant them associate membership status. The second stage, in February 1952, finalized their formal accession, solidifying their full membership within the Alliance. The decision on accession is made by NAC, and these decisions need the consensus of all members instead of the majority vote.*³²⁴

Consequently, in 1952, three years after the Washington Treaty was signed, Greece and Türkiye became members of NATO. This move helped NATO to strengthen its southern flank, while it helped Türkiye to get away from the Soviet pressure that it perceived intensely and to satisfy its long-standing desire for Westernization.³²⁵

Türkiye's strategic location enhanced NATO's presence and responsibility in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, as the country joined the Alliance on its southeastern flank. Türkiye played an important role in deterring Soviet aggression since the country has a large army and a unique geostrategic position.³²⁶ Soon after its accession, Türkiye began hosting NATO facilities and actively participating in

³²¹ Brown, pp. 103-104.

³²² Brown, p. 102.

³²³ Yeşilbursa, pp. 77-78.

³²⁴ M. Smith, pp. 74-76.

³²⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Member.

³²⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

joint military exercises. Both NATO and Türkiye saw this membership as mutually beneficial. Türkiye's strategic location allowed the deployment of NATO missile systems on its territory, which was seen as a crucial deterrent against potential Soviet aggression in Europe.³²⁷

Finally, with Türkiye's accession to the transatlantic alliance, both sides were eager to seek the advantages of this membership. For Türkiye, this included seeking US assistance to modernize its military and secure economic aid. Ankara also sought to play a more effective role on the international stage by building stronger ties and being part of Western Europe. In line with the basic principle of the country's modernization process. Türkiye also became a founding member of the Council of Europe and later associated with the EEC, forerunner of the EU, through the Ankara Agreement.³²⁸

³²⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

³²⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCESS-TRACING: THE GENERAL COURSE OF THE RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

Türkiye-NATO relations during the Cold War were mostly determined by the greater influence of the US.³²⁹ Given that the dominant influence of the US on NATO was particularly evident during the Cold War, it is reasonable to assume that Türkiye's relationship with NATO parallels, to some extent, its relationship with the US as well.

This dynamic also illustrates the importance of the bilateral relationship between Türkiye and the US throughout history, and it has not changed much today, given the status of the US as the dominant power in the Western alliance and, more broadly, in the international system.³³⁰ Of course, some conditions have changed over time, but still, it can be assumed that the interconnectedness of Türkiye-NATO relations and Türkiye-US bilateral relations will also be valid in general. The thesis applies this logic generally in all parts of its evaluation, as Turkish American relations generally mirrored the country's broader engagement with NATO and the West, obviously during the Cold War.³³¹

The first part of this chapter details Türkiye's strategic importance for NATO and the US. The second part examines Türkiye's own strategic interests within NATO and its broader alignment with the Western alliance. Finally, the chapter evaluates moments of crisis in the relationship to understand the general course of bilateral relations. This chapter is particularly important for the theoretical assessment of the thesis, as it offers valuable empirical information to facilitate process tracing during the Cold War era.

³²⁹ Ayşe Ömür Atmaca, "The Geopolitical Origins of Turkish-American Relations: Revisiting the Cold War Years", **All Azimuth: A Journal of FP and Peace**, Vol. 3, No: 1, 2014, pp. 19-34; Tarık Oğuzlu, "Testing the Strength of the Turkish-American Strategic Relationship through NATO: Convergence or Divergence within the Alliance?", **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, Vol. 15, No: 2, 2013, (Testing), p. 213.

³³⁰ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 81, No: 4, 2002, (Primacy), p. 20; Stephen M. Walt, "AMERICAN PRIMACY: Its Prospects and Pitfalls", **Naval War College Review**, Vol. 55, No: 2, 2002, (Primacy) pp. 9-28.

³³¹ Oğuzlu, Testing, pp. 210-213.

3.1. STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF TÜRKİYE FOR NATO AND THE US

The first section will provide an overview of the strategic importance of Türkiye to NATO and the US, during the Cold War. First, it will examine Türkiye's general contributions to the transatlantic alliance, including its military capabilities and infrastructure. Second, the section will explore Türkiye's unique geostrategic location and its implications for NATO's defense strategy. Finally, it will discuss the establishment and significance of military bases and defense installations in Türkiye, highlighting their role in the broader context of NATO's Cold War strategy.

3.1.1. Türkiye's General Contributions to The Transatlantic Alliance

Türkiye has been a member of NATO for more than 70 years and has the Alliance's second-largest army. It is also one of the top ten financial contributors, with an estimated \$13 billion spent on NATO in 2021.³³² NATO collects data on member states' defense spending. This data includes military expenditures, budgets of other relevant departments, and research and development costs.³³³ Türkiye is considered a key member of NATO and addresses regional security threats by actively participating in Alliance operations. The report identifies Türkiye as a significant contributor to NATO's defense burden, ranking among the top ten contributors. Türkiye's defense spending has increased recently but remains below NATO's 2% target. The country spends 13% of its defense budget on research and development, which is below the 20% target.³³⁴

Türkiye actively contributes to NATO's infrastructure and operations. It hosts key facilities and a ballistic missile defense system in the soil. The important ones can be summarized as follows:

a. The headquarters of NATO's Land Forces Command (LANDCOM) in Izmir

³³² Melek Adsız, “70 Years in Nato: Turkey as A Strategic Alliance”, **Çanakkale Araştırmaları Türk Yılı**, Vol. 21, No: 33, 2022, p. 126.

³³³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2024)”, **NATO**, 23.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_226465.htm, (23.10.2024), (Expenditure).

³³⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Expenditure.

- b. *The Rapid Deployable Corps Headquarters, in Istanbul, is one of nine High Readiness Land Forces headquarters.*
- c. *The air bases at Incirlik and Konya, which support NATO's early airborne warning systems.*
- d. *The detection and tracking radar (X-band radar) in Malatya/Kürecik.*³³⁵

As a further contribution, Türkiye has established the NATO Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence (CoE-DAT) and the Partnership for Peace Training Centre in Ankara and hosts the Multinational Maritime Security Centre of Excellence in Istanbul.³³⁶ The country's unique geostrategic location gives it a strong air and maritime presence in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa. This presence makes the country extremely valuable to NATO's regional presence, deterrence, and defense capabilities.³³⁷

Turkish decision-makers and intellectuals of the Cold War period have often emphasized Türkiye's commitment and its strategic value to NATO several times. Necdet Tezel and Engin Oba, Turkish ambassadors during the Cold War period, described Türkiye's position as "pivotal" to NATO and the defense of Europe and the Middle East. They emphasized the material aspects of Türkiye's contributions to NATO's goals, such as the country's vast territory, large population, and powerful military, as crucial assets. They also emphasized Türkiye's substantial defense spending and its role in stabilizing the region, arguing that these efforts strengthen NATO's entire southern flank.³³⁸ The general perspective emphasizes Türkiye's geostrategic position as a highly valuable asset for NATO in its contributions as a committed ally, except for the periods of fluctuation, which will also be discussed later in the thesis.

Another significant and unique contribution of Türkiye to NATO has been its distinctive status as a predominantly Muslim country. This distinction is further referring to Türkiye's founding principles of secularism and democracy, which enhance its uniqueness compared to other Muslim-majority nations in the region. Bruce R. Kuniholm highlights the importance of this position, accordingly:

³³⁵ Adsiz, pp. 121-135.

³³⁶ Republic of Türkiye MFA, "IV. Türkiye's International Security Initiatives and Contributions to NATO and EU Operations", **MFA**, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/iv_-european-security-and-defence-identity_policy-esdi_p_.en.mfa, (23.10.2024).

³³⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

³³⁸ E. Yilmaz and Bilgin, p. 55.

*As NATO's only Muslim country, Turkey also provided a cultural bridge between Europe and the Middle East. If the US eventually reestablishes ties with Iran, those ties will have been facilitated by the relationship it shares with intermediaries, such as Turkey.*³³⁹

This unique position is likely to serve two critical purposes. First, Türkiye's success as a secular and democratic country with a Muslim-majority population shows the compatibility of these values with Islamic traditions and potentially influence other Muslim-majority countries. Second, Türkiye's adoption of Western ideals in the Cold War period symbolized a path to modernization, it offered an inspiration to neighboring countries in the region as a model country.³⁴⁰

Overall, Türkiye played a multidimensional role in deterring the perceived Soviet threat during the Cold War. Militarily, its large and capable armed forces supported NATO's collective defense efforts, while the presence of NATO facilities on Turkish soil enhanced early warning and strategic capabilities. Politically, Türkiye's NATO membership signaled alliance resolve and cooperation against Soviet influence, particularly in the Middle East. Diplomatically, Türkiye fostered regional relations, mediated conflicts, and actively participated in security initiatives.³⁴¹

By strengthening ties with non-aligned and non-communist states, Türkiye extended NATO's influence and significantly contributed to regional stability and security, making it an indispensable actor in deterring Soviet aggression. These efforts positioned Türkiye as a key player in the alliance and an essential actor in deterring Soviet aggression throughout the Cold War period.³⁴²

3.1.2. Geostrategic and Unique Location of Türkiye

The dominant role of the US and its strategic interests due to the geostrategic importance of Türkiye's unique location was one of the most important determinants

³³⁹ Kuniholm, TR-West, p. 39.

³⁴⁰ Paul Kubicek, "Debating the Merits of the 'Turkish Model for Democratization in the Middle East'", **Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 12, No: 3, 2013, p. 68; Meliha Benli Altunisik, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East", **Arab Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 27, No: 1/2, 2005, pp. 45-47.

³⁴¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

³⁴² Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", **Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 54, No: 1, 2000, pp. 169-182.

that explained why the US favored Türkiye's membership while many others were skeptical. Türkiye's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East makes it a crucial asset for NATO in general.³⁴³ Its participation in NATO's Southern Flank was increasingly important for the Alliance's strategies to deal with security threats and maintain regional stability during the Cold War.³⁴⁴

The main logic in understanding why Türkiye's geostrategic location is so valuable to the Alliance is that Türkiye's contributions to NATO included a variety of military assets, airfields, radar systems, and missile defense installations, which significantly enhanced the Alliance's deterrence capabilities against the USSR.³⁴⁵ Additionally, the Turkish Armed Forces represent the second-largest military force in NATO, after the US Armed Forces. Its substantial military power has played an important role in the Alliance's collective defense policy.³⁴⁶

For Kuniholm, Türkiye's unique position as the only Muslim-majority member of NATO also played a vital role in the region.³⁴⁷ It has served as a bridge between the Alliance and the Middle Eastern countries, also contributed to the stability of the wider Mediterranean region.³⁴⁸ This geographical proximity places Türkiye at the forefront of any potential conflict with the Soviet Union as a buffer state as well. This, in fact, created a security threat to the country while providing a significant benefit to NATO. It also allows for control of the strategic Turkish Straits by limiting the Soviets' naval access and presence in the Middle East.³⁴⁹

3.1.3. Military Bases, Facilities, and Defense Installations

One of the most important aspects of Türkiye's accession to NATO for the alliance and especially for the US is the NATO/US military bases to be established in

³⁴³ Stephen J. Blank et al., **Turkey's Strategic Position at the Crossroads of World Affairs**, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002, pp. vii-xi.

³⁴⁴ Kuniholm, TR-West, p. 34.

³⁴⁵ Müge Kınacıoğlu, "NATO-Turkey Relations: From Collective Defence to Collective Security", **Turkish Foreign Policy**, Ed. Pınar Gözen Ercan, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2017, p. 89.

³⁴⁶ Mehmet Seyfettin Erol and Şafak Oğuz, "Turkey and Nato: Questioning the Solidarity", **Uluslararası İlişkiler Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 1, No: 2, 2021, p. 143.

³⁴⁷ Kuniholm, TR-West, p. 39.

³⁴⁸ Sayari, p. 179.

³⁴⁹ Birol Akduman, "NATO's Southern Flank: The Evolution of Türkiye's Strategic Role and Its Implications for Regional Security", **İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 12, No: 5, 2023, p. 2954.

Türkiye. In this context, negotiations on the location and status of the bases have constituted one of the most important parts of the membership process.³⁵⁰ Especially, the US Air Force was strongly in favor of the admission of Türkiye; otherwise, the country wouldn't allow them to build airbases on their soil unless they were included in the alliance.³⁵¹

According to J. Stevenson, this global presence was driven by American interests expanding on a global scale during the post-war period, largely due to competition with the Soviet Union and the implementation of the containment strategy. By the end of WW II, US troops were stationed on every continent except Antarctica, and the US operated more than 2,000 military bases worldwide.³⁵²

In the post-war period, the main allies in Europe were relatively in weaker positions, notably the UK. This created a vacuum to be filled and forced the emergence of the US on the global stage as a dominant power position in the Western bloc.³⁵³ As already discussed, the US aimed to reshape the world order in its own image and strategic interests. The country was also already aware of the importance of Türkiye's unique location during WW II. As a belligerent country, Türkiye did not give permission for its airports to be used by the Allies.³⁵⁴

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the intelligence organization of that era, turned the American ambassador's summer house in Adana into a secret intelligence base.³⁵⁵ Moreover, in the early period when the US had the monopoly on nuclear bombs, this self-confidence put the significance of the alliance relations with Türkiye in the background. But as the intensity of competition and the conflictual environment increased, developments like the Soviet Union obtaining atomic bombs were another factor that increased the importance of Türkiye's strategic position for the Western alliance.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Kınacıoğlu, p. 89.

³⁵¹ D. J. K., "Greece, Turkey, and N.A.T.O.", **The World Today**, Vol. 8, No: 4, 1952, p. 163.

³⁵² Jonathan Stevenson, "Overseas Bases and US Strategic Posture", **Adelphi Series**, Vol. 60, No: 484-486, 2020, pp. 13-15.

³⁵³ Wallerstein, pp. 1-2.

³⁵⁴ Cossaboom and Leiser, p. 73.

³⁵⁵ Cossaboom and Leiser, p. 75.

³⁵⁶ Selin M. Bölme, "Soğuk Savaş'ta NATO-ABD-Türkiye Üçgeninde Askeri Üsler: Süreklilik ve Değişim", **Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi**, Vol. 9, No: 34, 2012, p. 55.

Afterwards, particularly by the US Air Force, the strategic position of Türkiye was recognized as crucial, and even the decision of the country to remain neutral was perceived as unacceptable by the US. The American air force commanders not only found Anatolia valuable against the Soviet threat but also found its capacity as a platform to support potential American bombardments in the region.³⁵⁷ Eventually, both sides agreed, and initiatives were launched to modernize airfields in Türkiye.

Bölme also clarifies that during the Cold War, there were two types of military bases in Türkiye:

*The first type consisted of NATO bases, and the second type comprised bases and facilities built based on the Military Facilities Agreement, operated solely by American forces. In fact, the latter are national military facilities owned by Türkiye. However, the agreements provide certain privileges and concessions to the US, allowing the use of these facilities by American forces.*³⁵⁸

After the intense domestic discussions in the 1960s, the US Embassy in Ankara provided information that only four facilities used by Americans in Türkiye officially have the NATO emblem. The remaining 12 bases, which represent 75% of the facilities, are utilized based on the Military Facilities Agreement. In this context, Incirlik Air Base was not allocated under the NATO Agreement, yet it was operationally used directly by the US.³⁵⁹

During this period, Türkiye and the US reached new arrangements on the status and use of military bases. These agreements aligned with Article 51 of the UN Charter and Article 3 of the NATO Agreement on collective defense and security cooperation. Many bases were transferred to the Turkish government, while the remaining facilities were designated as "joint defense facilities" under NATO's framework to ensure their strategic role within the Alliance's specific operations.³⁶⁰

Furthermore, Turkish Cyprus Operation in July 1974 and the subsequent American Congress' decision to impose an arms embargo on Türkiye, resulted in the termination of the treaty, except for the Incirlik airbase, which is solely reserved for

³⁵⁷ Craig Livingston, "One Thousand Wings": The United States Air Force Group and the American Mission for Aid to Turkey, 1947-50", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 30, No: 4, 1994, pp. 778-825.

³⁵⁸ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 60.

³⁵⁹ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, pp. 60-61.

³⁶⁰ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, pp. 63-64.

NATO missions. The bases were not allowed to operate until the embargo was lifted in 1978.³⁶¹ By then, it was obvious for both sides that a new agreement was needed to regulate relations.

Türkiye, for its part, demanded renewed assistance from the US and guarantees against possible future cuts from Congress in exchange for allowing the bases to be used again.³⁶² Negotiations resulted in the signing of the "Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement" (DECA) with the US on March 29, 1980.³⁶³ DECA marked a new era not only in Turkish-US relations but also in Türkiye's commitments within NATO as well. It was founded on the principle of enhancing defense cooperation among member states and implemented within the framework of the NATO Treaty. Notably, DECA remains in force today and aligned with the principles of the UN Charter.³⁶⁴

In the 1980s, there was a significant expansion of American military installations and the establishment of facilities for nuclear weapons on Turkish soil. On October 29, 1982, Türkiye and the US reached an agreement under the DECA, they approved the modernization of 10 air bases in Türkiye and the construction of new air bases in Muş and Batman.³⁶⁵ Türkiye restricted the use of bases to NATO missions. However, the US obtained permission from Türkiye to use the bases, such as in the 1991 Gulf War, to bomb Iraq. The planes took off from Incirlik and refueled at airports in Batman, Muş, and Diyarbakır.³⁶⁶

As a result, Türkiye became the fourth country to host American nuclear weapons on its soil, with a total of 489 nuclear weapons in the 1980s.³⁶⁷ In addition to nuclear weapons, radar systems have also been upgraded at bases in Türkiye. According to a 1984 report entitled "American Military Facilities in Türkiye," there were 16 early warning radar systems at the 10 bases on Turkish soil at the time.³⁶⁸

³⁶¹ Sedat Laçiner, "Turkish Foreign Policy (1971-1980): Ideologies vs. Realities", **Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika**, No: 21, 2010, pp. 80-81.

³⁶² Nasuh Uslu, "The Cooperation Amid Problems: Turkish-American Relations in the 1980s", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, No: 27, 1997, pp. 13-15.

³⁶³ Atmaca, p. 26.

³⁶⁴ Atmaca, pp. 26-28.

³⁶⁵ Ömer Karasapan, "Turkey and US Strategy in the Age of Glasnost", *Middle East Report*, No.:160, 1989, pp. 4-22.

³⁶⁶ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 67.

³⁶⁷ Karasapan, p. 5.

³⁶⁸ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 67.

As the international environment began to change again towards the end of the 1980s, it also impacted Türkiye and NATO. The period that began with an arms race and the Cold War period came close to an end, with arms reduction agreements. Developments in the final years of the Cold War directly influenced US base policy, leading to the closure of many bases as part of the restructuring of overseas bases under NATO plans. While the end of the Cold War did not mean abandonment of bases in Türkiye, it did herald new roles for them alongside the renewed NATO.³⁶⁹ The Erhaç Air Base and Eskişehir Central Ammunition Depot in Türkiye were closed in March 1991, with the withdrawal of nuclear weapons. Additionally, the number of nuclear-capable aircraft fleets in Türkiye was reduced from four to two.³⁷⁰

Overall, in the general course of history, the US has had a significant military presence in Türkiye since the country's entry into NATO. According to the 2010 Base Structure Report of the US, there are numerous bases and facilities in Türkiye where American forces are stationed, including the Ankara Management Office, Batman Air Base, Çiğli Air Base, Incirlik Air Base, Izmir Air Station, Izmir Depot, Muş Air Base, Yumurtalık Fuel Depot, and several smaller bases.³⁷¹ Despite being under the NATO umbrella, concerns persisted over the use of these facilities primarily to serve American interests rather than NATO objectives.

In conclusion, these privileges that were granted to the US became a major source of controversy in their relationship. This was due to moments of crisis caused by diverging interests with the US, such as the Cuban missile crisis, the Johnson Letter, and the Cyprus issue, along with the impact of domestic political dynamics. These critical issues will be evaluated in the following sections as an important variable in demonstrating Türkiye's commitment to the Alliance.

3.2. TÜRKİYE'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN NATO

Türkiye's strategic interests in NATO are primarily defined by the country's significant need for security and protection against perceived Soviet aggression.

³⁶⁹ Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War", **International Organization**, Vol. 50, No: 3, 1996, pp. 445-475.

³⁷⁰ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 67.

³⁷¹ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 65.

During the Cold War, the country also had limited economic capacity and needed financial aid and assistance in modernizing its military technology. The Alliance and its strategic partnership with the US are generally assumed to provide Türkiye with military support, technology transfer, and economic assistance.³⁷²

The first rapprochement between Türkiye and the US began in the immediate post-war period, and the process was gradual, with increasing cooperation throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. Eventually, Türkiye became an official alliance member of the Western bloc, and the strategic partnership reached its final form in 1952.³⁷³ The relationship also experienced several fluctuations during the process. Although there are a variety of reasons for the ups and downs in the relationship, NATO has so far made an evident contribution not only to Türkiye's security and economic development but also to its political integration process within the Western hemisphere.³⁷⁴ Türkiye has embraced the constructive values shared by NATO, which, to some extent, are also inherent in its national identity.

In the context of the primary objective of the thesis is to analyze the relationship, particularly in terms of assessing Türkiye's alliance behavior, its insistence on balancing with the Western bloc, and its evolving commitment during the Cold War. This section will provide an overview and a brief process-tracing of Türkiye's strategic interests within the Western alliance in general during the Cold War era to provide valuable information and evidence for the following assessment of Türkiye's alliance behavior. Türkiye's strategic interests are assessed in three stages: first, in terms of security and defense with military and technological assistance; second, regarding economic development with financial aid; and finally, in the context of political integration, in which the country wants to be part of the Western hemisphere.

³⁷² Şuhsnaz Yılmaz, "Turkey's Quest for NATO Membership: The Institutionalization of the Turkish–American Alliance", **Southeast European and Black Sea Studies**, Vol. 12, No: 4, 2012, p. 484.

³⁷³ Arif Bağbaşlıoğlu, "NATO's Enlargement Policy and Türkiye's Position: A Key NATO Ally", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 25, No: Spring, 2023, pp. 25-26.

³⁷⁴ Oğuzlu, Testing, pp. 207-222; Oğuzlu, Eroding, pp. 153-164.

3.2.1. National Defense and Security Interests

As discussed earlier, security concerns were the primary and foremost motives in the literature for Türkiye's decision to join NATO against the perceived Soviet threat. As a member of the alliance, Türkiye sought to protect itself and consolidate its position within the Western security framework.³⁷⁵

First of all, NATO membership provided a framework for collective security, as outlined in Article 5, which states that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. While the practical effectiveness of this principle has been a subject of debate, Türkiye's membership in the Alliance served as a strong deterrent against potential Soviet aggression.³⁷⁶

The Soviet acquisition of nuclear bombs further heightened the importance of Türkiye's accession to NATO to obtain an imminent security umbrella to ensure its security.³⁷⁷ Türkiye, at the time, lacked the economic capacity to cover the cost of modernizing its extensive military establishment. Therefore, economic aid was seen as essential not only for the country's development but also for strengthening its military capabilities and infrastructure in the face of perceived Soviet threats.³⁷⁸ Moreover, being part of an alliance in a divided world would be expected to involve mutual sharing and cooperation of the values and assets possessed by the members through a process of diffusion. Technological, infrastructural, and/or joint military exercises and actions are all expected benefits.

With the growing strategic partnership between the US and Türkiye in the aftermath of WW II, both parties aimed to strengthen and modernize the Turkish Armed Forces against the Soviet Union with proposed US aid and assistance.³⁷⁹ Only after Türkiye became an official NATO member The US and Türkiye concluded many agreements regarding military facilities, the status of forces, etc., and the

³⁷⁵ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing theories of alliance formation: the case of Southwest Asia", **International Organization**, Vol. 42, No: 2, 1988, (Testing), pp. 281, 293.

³⁷⁶ Kınacıoğlu, pp. 83-84.

³⁷⁷ Wayne Mclean and James Dwyer, "Nuclear Deterrence, Missile Systems and the Security of Turkey in the 'New' Middle East", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 17, No: 3, 2015, pp. 141-142.

³⁷⁸ Leffler, p. 808.

³⁷⁹ Atmaca, p. 27.

presence of US forces reached its peak in the early 1960s. Almost 30 security and defense facilities were established with an estimated 5,000 US personnel.³⁸⁰

The 1960s also experienced another key moment, 15 Jupiter ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads were deployed in Türkiye, which were removed during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but later replaced with some tactical nuclear weapons that remain in Türkiye.³⁸¹ Its effect and further evaluation of Türkiye's alliance behavior will be discussed.

From 1947 to mid-1975, the US provided approximately a total of \$7 billion in aid, of which more than \$4.5 billion was allocated to the military and defense, an average of about \$160 million per year, to support personnel, equipment, training, and modernization of the armed forces.³⁸²

Both because of the US's internal policies and budget allocation problems, as well as the effect of strained relations following a series of crisis moments, pressures within Türkiye also brought about a reduction in the US military presence during the late 1960s.³⁸³ The number of American military personnel and their dependents in Türkiye was reduced from 24,000 in 1968 to about 15,000, and several US military facilities were turned over to the Turks. After several years of negotiations, a bilateral defense cooperation agreement was signed in 1969.³⁸⁴ On top of that, in 1974, when Türkiye sent troops on behalf of to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority, the US Congress responded with the 1975–1978 embargo on the US military aid and arms sales to Türkiye.³⁸⁵ But in the end, due to several factors that will be discussed later, the commitments of Türkiye and the alliance returned to normalization, with a re-establishment of a high level of commitment by the parties. DECA was formalized after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁰ Zanoliti, Jim. “Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges”, **Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service**, Washington D.C., 2011, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/tr/ADA543293>, (23.10.2024), p. 38.

³⁸¹ Zanoliti, p. 39.

³⁸² Zanoliti, pp. 39-41.

³⁸³ Walt, Testing, pp. 294-295.

³⁸⁴ The Comptroller General of the US, “United States economic assistance to Turkey: report to the Congress”, **US General Accounting Office**, Washington D.C., 1974, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/b-125085.pdf>, (23.11.2024), (Congress 1974), p. 6.

³⁸⁵ Zanoliti, p. 39.

³⁸⁶ Atmaca, p. 26.

Between 1980 and 1985, the DECA agreement between Türkiye and the US was extended for five-year periods. US military aid to Türkiye decreased, from \$913 million in 1980 to \$525 million in 1985. In 1985, the Özal government called for radical changes to the agreement, but these demands were not immediately met. In 1986, the agreement was extended until 1990 through additional letters.³⁸⁷ From 1987 to 1992, US military assistance reached historically unprecedented levels, averaging about \$425 million in grants and \$110 million in loans annually. These developments revitalized a highly committed strategic alliance.³⁸⁸

Moreover, although many withdrew at the end of the Cold War, Türkiye also became the fourth largest host of American nuclear warheads, with a total of 489. In addition to nuclear weapons upgrades, radar systems at Turkish bases were also improved.³⁸⁹ The 1984 report "American Military Facilities in Türkiye" noted that there were 16 early warning radar systems at the 10 bases in Türkiye at this period.³⁹⁰

3.2.2. Economic Development and Financial Aid

Türkiye's financial needs and the assistance expected from the US have been other important determinants in its interaction with the US, even in the initial stages of bilateral relations. The same logic is also suitable for the country's relations with NATO, especially during the Cold War. Scholars generally assumed that Türkiye's need for economic aid and military modernization was one of the key drivers of its alignment decision.³⁹¹ Türkiye's membership in the alliance provided evident financial support and access to advanced military technology. In the initial process, in 1946, before its accession to NATO, Türkiye was granted 'loans' ranging from 25 to 50 million dollars.³⁹² Following that, as explored earlier, the Truman Doctrine was launched, and the US committed to defending Türkiye against potential Soviet aggression. Both the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan were the initial and

³⁸⁷ Uslu, pp. 15-16.

³⁸⁸ Zanotti, pp. 39-40.

³⁸⁹ Karasapan, pp. 4-5.

³⁹⁰ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 67.

³⁹¹ Senem Üstün, "Turkey and the Marshall Plan: Strive for Aid", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, No: 27, 1997, pp. 31-32; Ş. Yılmaz, pp. 483-484; Akduman, p. 2954.

³⁹² Walt, Testing, p. 293.

fundamental framework of the economic aid that Türkiye received during the Cold War. The reports on the Marshall Plan in Türkiye (1950–1952) highlighted the extent of Türkiye's infrastructure requirements.³⁹³ As often discussed above, the need for strong economic assistance also became a key factor in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War era.

In the context of the Marshall Plan, it initially offered to deliver, approximately \$250 million to Greece and \$150 million to Türkiye against potential Soviet aggression.³⁹⁴ M. Halis Özer presented in his study that:

*The aid provided by the Marshall Plan had two forms: direct and indirect. Direct aid was in the form of grants, loans, and debts. The loans and debts were considered long-term with an interest rate of 2.5%. Additionally, more than \$38 million was invested in the agricultural sector, which is approximately 20.75% of the total \$184.5 million in aid.*³⁹⁵

The US and alliance partners wished for Türkiye to invest in the agricultural sector to meet the emerging food shortage in Europe after WW II. This, in the initial process, has achieved significant success; the economy increased by 11% between 1950-1953 per year. During the same period, due to advancements in the agricultural sector, there was a 28% increase in per capita income as well.³⁹⁶ Although this heavy dependence on the agriculture sector will create further problems, it will be discussed in the assessment of the theoretical part.

In 1948, Türkiye joined the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which later became the OECD. Under the European Recovery Program, Türkiye received approximately \$183 million in economic aid by 1950, alongside nearly \$200 million in military aid, primarily in the form of grants. This also helped a precise boost in the Turkish economy, contributing to about 50% of the increase in imports and around 40% of the growth in investments during this time.³⁹⁷ In the context of the economic and financial support that the country received during

³⁹³ Mehmet Halis Özer, “The Effects of the Marshall Plan Aids to the Development of the Agricultural Sector in Turkey, the 1948-1953 Period”, **International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues**, Vol. 4, No: 2, 2014, pp. 427-439.

³⁹⁴ George McGhee, **The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1990, p. 23.

³⁹⁵ Özer, pp. 430-437.

³⁹⁶ Özer, p. 437.

³⁹⁷ İsmet Sabit Barutçugil, “Economic relations between Turkey and the USA”, **Uludağ Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, Vol. 7, No: 1, 1986, p. 146.

this period, it averaged nearly \$100 million per year from 1950 to 1960.³⁹⁸ Of course, in turn, the country provided many privileges and concessions to the US and NATO.

In 1962, the "Consortium for Economic Assistance to Türkiye" was established under the auspices of the OECD, with US planning. According to the report, this broader "Consortium" consists of 12 European countries and Canada, the WB, and the US.³⁹⁹ The US objectives were defined as spreading the burden of assistance to the country and reducing the bilateral focus of the alliance. In addition, more effective coordination would be achieved as the other European members of the Alliance increasingly viewed Türkiye as an important trading partner and export market, as well as a potential member of the EEC, a further European integration process for the country.⁴⁰⁰

From Türkiye's part, on the other hand, this likely to be perceived that would broaden the scope of foreign aid as an instrument to obtain more economic development and would provide more opportunities for countries integration with Western Europe.

The 1960s introduced several significant challenges and controversies. By the late 1960s, the level of aid decreased, driven by two primary factors. First, the US faced increasing economic pressures as it competed with the USSR on a global scale. Second, and more importantly, the crisis moments in relations, which will be examined later, played a key role in this decline.⁴⁰¹ The aid amount dropped sharply from \$135 million in 1967 to \$40 million in 1969. Between 1969 and the fiscal year 1972, the annual aid averaged \$42.5 million.⁴⁰² Overall, from 1947 to mid-1973, US assistance to Türkiye totaled approximately \$6.7 billion, with \$3 billion specifically allocated to the country's economic development.⁴⁰³

Until 1974, relations between Türkiye and the US remained generally stable, despite some ups and downs. But after 1974, when Türkiye initiated 'the Cyprus Peace Operation', the period led to the biggest crisis in the relations. consequently, a period of strained relationships and a series of embargoes imposed by the West

³⁹⁸ Walt, Testing, p. 294.

³⁹⁹ The Comptroller General of the US, Congress 1974, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ The Comptroller General of the US, Congress 1974, p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ Walt, Testing, p. 294.

⁴⁰² The Comptroller General of the US, Congress 1974, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰³ The Comptroller General of the US, Congress 1974, p. i.

during this period.⁴⁰⁴ The relations normalized and were restored in 1980 due to the re-conflictualization of the Cold War environment, and several other factors will be discussed later.

In the final period, Türkiye continued to receive a significant amount of financial aid and assistance. In fact, it was at its peak. The country, from the 1980s, until the end of the Cold War, with the following reinforcement of the bilateral commitments to the high-level in the following process.

3.2.3. Western Identity Interests

Türkiye's alignment decision with NATO not only contains its economic and security integration but also reflects its desire to be recognized as part of Western civilization and the hemisphere, which is also partly inherited in the country's national identity.⁴⁰⁵ As discussed above, NATO was not only a military-security alliance, but it was also serving a broader political objective: first, to ensure European stability; second, and ultimately, to encourage the European political integration process in the light of Western liberal values and democracy.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, for Türkiye, as the decision-makers perceived at the time, this opportunity was a way to fulfill its long-desired and discussed efforts to be a part of the Western European Hemisphere and its civilization by integrating with its shared values.

During the Cold War, after joining NATO and eventually integrating into the EEC, it obviously served the country's larger objective of its desired integration with Western civilization and to be a part of the Western European hemisphere.⁴⁰⁷ Another point is that countries broader integration with the new institutions like the EEC and OECD, as well as being part of Western Europe, is also creating further opportunities, as discussed above, such as expanded trade with Europe and as an important source of financial development assistance.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ Barutçugil, p. 147.

⁴⁰⁵ Oğuzlu, Eroding, p. 153.

⁴⁰⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, History; Kaplan, Origins, p. 27.

⁴⁰⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, **Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance**, Brookings Institution Press, 2018, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ The Comptroller General of the US, Congress 1974, pp. 6-8.

For Bilgin and Yilmaz, the Western identity of Türkiye was also actively constructed and reinforced by politicians, intellectuals, and strategic partnerships throughout the Cold War. At the time, individuals from every field were proving that the country was actively seeking to accomplish the desire for Westernization in Türkiye, and they actively further constructed this identity for the country.⁴⁰⁹

To illustrate, Turkish ambassador and assembly member Kamran Inan, in his article from 1974, argues that:

*Türkiye's NATO membership signals a deeper alignment with the West. He frames this alliance as a pivotal step in Türkiye's ongoing Westernization process. He emphasizes the importance of Türkiye's obtaining its place in the Atlantic community and the frontiers of Europe being replaced by Eastern Türkiye. For him, Türkiye's NATO membership is built on shared political outlooks and common interests, which over time promotes a sense of shared identity. And in the context of Türkiye's historical development, this constitutes an important achievement and a milestone.*⁴¹⁰

In a similar approach, Haluk Bayülken, who was a former Turkish representative to the UN, highlighted Türkiye's strong commitment and faith in the principles of the UN Charter. He emphasized that Türkiye's belief in the Charter's ideals significantly influenced its decision to engage in the Korean War. It was an effort regarding its identity as a reliable and dedicated member of the UN.⁴¹¹

As a result, the general assumption in many studies is that Türkiye's decision to join NATO went beyond mere concerns about the Soviet threat following WW II. Instead, it was motivated for several reasons. Scholars generally assert that membership in NATO would solidify Ankara's long-standing desire for Western orientation and to be part of the Western European integration process. As discussed, it would be not wrong to consider the organization not only as a military but also as an entity with political and cultural objectives. In this context, Türkiye also pursued its own objective of being part of the European system. The decision-makers added a cultural dimension to NATO, which in a way suits the structure of the organization.

⁴⁰⁹ Yilmaz, Bilgin, "Constructing Turkey's 'Western' Identity during the Cold War", p. 43.

⁴¹⁰ E. Yilmaz and Bilgin, p. 52.

⁴¹¹ E. Yilmaz and Bilgin, p. 47.

3.3. CRISIS MOMENTS IN THE COURSE OF THE RELATIONS

The general course of relations during the Cold War has been shaped by a variety of factors that will be analyzed throughout the following part of this chapter. It has been generally characterized by cooperation and shared interests, yet the relationship has also experienced periods of fragility and fluctuations. These moments of crisis have a significant impact on the dynamics of the relations and especially have important explanatory value for Türkiye's evolving commitment to NATO during the Cold War era. Their influence was relatively less influential in the mid-long term, but in the short term, also sometimes generated unexpected behaviors. The section particularly evaluates two critical moments during the Cold War in which Türkiye is directly involved: the first is the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the second is the Johnson Letter and Cyprus issue.

3.3.1. Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)

To begin with the initial one, the Cuban missile crisis was one of the biggest challenges between the superpowers. It brought them to the edge of war, and a dangerous one at that.⁴¹² Historians and scholars generally assume that the Cuban Missile Crisis highlighted the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the potential for catastrophic consequences. The crisis is mostly defined as the closest point the world has ever come to the threat of nuclear war.⁴¹³ Thus, it demonstrated the importance of diplomacy and the urgency of the need to prevent nuclear proliferation.

The beginning of the crisis can be dated back to several US actions. In particular, the CIA's covert operations, its support for paramilitary groups to overthrow the Cuban government,⁴¹⁴ and in 1961, the US also stationed nuclear missiles in both Italy and Türkiye, close to the Soviet borders.⁴¹⁵ All these moves

⁴¹² James G. Blight et al., "The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 66, No: 1, 1987, pp. 170-173; Graham Allison, "The Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy Today", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 91, No: 4, 2012, (Lessons), pp. 11-12.

⁴¹³ Blight et al., pp. 170-171.

⁴¹⁴ Piero Gleijeses, "The CIA's Paramilitary Operations during the Cold War: An Assessment", **Cold War History**, Vol. 16, No: 3, 2016, p. 6.

⁴¹⁵ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Reassessing the Role of US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey", **Arms Control Today**, Vol. 40, No: 5, 2010, pp. 8, 11; Muhammet Furkan Küçükmeral, "The Making of Nuclear

heightened tensions and pushed the Soviet Union to deploy missiles in Cuba, close to the US border.

Although some scholars have suggested that the crisis was triggered by the Soviet decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba, in fact, arguably these initial US moves that triggered the Soviet decision. Beyond the general details and discussions of the crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, within the scope of the thesis, will be considered in the context of the initial the US effort to deploy the Jupiter missiles in Türkiye and its subsequent agreement with the Soviet Union to withdraw them along with its implications on the general course of relations.

At a NATO meeting in 1957, tensions increased over the Soviet Union's rejection of disarmament efforts and its active development of advanced weapons, particularly missiles. In response to this perceived threat, NATO discussed deploying intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) in Italy and Türkiye.⁴¹⁶ Most of the allies considered this move a provocation to the Soviets and initially opposed the offer. Türkiye and Italy, however, agreed with the US proposal. Türkiye was enthusiastic throughout the process.⁴¹⁷

However, the Soviet attitude toward armament and the more powerful weapons being developed on Europe's borders reinforced the perception of a growing Soviet threat and helped to convince other members.⁴¹⁸ Negotiations began with the US and Türkiye for an agreement to deploy IRBMs. For Criss, Zorlu's eagerness to sign the deal as soon as possible seems overzealous.⁴¹⁹ According to the agreement, Türkiye would own the missiles, while the nuclear warheads would belong to the US. The missiles could only be launched with the orders of SACEUR, who was an American, and required the approval of both the US and Turkish governments.⁴²⁰

Turkey: The Acquisition Process of Jupiter Missiles”, **Türk Savaş Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 1, No: 1, 2020, pp. 77-78.

⁴¹⁶ Küçükmeral, p. 77.

⁴¹⁷ Barton J. Bernstein, “The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?”, **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 95, No: 1, 1980, pp. 99; Nur Bilge Criss, “Strategic Nuclear Missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter Affair, 1959–1963”, **Journal of Strategic Studies**, Vol. 20, No: 3, 1997, (Missiles) p. 99.

⁴¹⁸ William F. Scott and Harriet Fast Scott, “Soviet Military Strategy Toward Western Europe”, **The Soviet Naval Threat to Europe**, (Ed. Bruce W. Watson and Susan M. Watson), Routledge, New York, 1989, pp. 8-13.

⁴¹⁹ Criss, Missiles, p. 106.

⁴²⁰ Bernstein, p. 99.

In May 1959, the Soviet Union took direct action by issuing a verbal note to Türkiye. This note questioned Türkiye regarding press reports about the deployment of nuclear missiles on its soil. It also contained a covert threat, implying that the Soviet Union would take action to protect its southern borders. Furthermore, the Soviet Union accused Türkiye of aligning itself with NATO's offensive objectives by permitting the construction of "missile bases" within its territory.⁴²¹

During the Kennedy administration, in late 1961, the agreement was reached, and the missiles were deployed in Türkiye.⁴²² Eventually, in July 1962, the US discovered that the Soviet Union had begun to ship missiles to Cuba. Such missiles could hit much of the eastern US within minutes if launched from Cuba. President Kennedy immediately imposed a naval 'quarantine' or blockade in Cuba to prevent further Soviet deployment.⁴²³ The superpowers engaged in tense negotiations with the world, fearing a nuclear war. In the end, the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba in exchange for a US promise not to invade the country in any case. The US also secretly agreed to remove missiles from Türkiye within months. This was likely to end the crisis in late 1962.⁴²⁴

Considering the implications of the crisis for Türkiye, Unlike in Italy, where socialists and Democrats reached a consensus, in Türkiye there was an intense debate on the removal of the Jupiter missiles.⁴²⁵ the general view in the literature is that, throughout the process, Turkish political elites and military leaders saw the Jupiter Missiles as a useful military power that would deter the Soviets from pressuring the country.⁴²⁶

Criss also evaluates some further consequences of the crisis that affect Türkiye-NATO relations accordingly:

First, the deployment of US strategic missiles in other NATO countries was abandoned. Second, the crisis also damaged relations between the two

⁴²¹ Criss, Missiles, p. 107.

⁴²² Süleyman Seydi, "Turkish–American Relations and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1957–63", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 46, No: 3, 2010, pp. 435-437.

⁴²³ Blight et al., pp. 173-176; Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy, "October Missiles and November Elections: The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962", **The Journal of American History**, Vol. 73, No: 1, 1986, pp. 98-100.

⁴²⁴ Seydi, p. 444.

⁴²⁵ Criss, Missiles, p. 116.

⁴²⁶ Bernstein, p. 100; Criss, "Missiles", p. 109; Seydi, pp. 433-455.

*superpowers and their respective allies, Türkiye and Cuba. The growing debates and polarization in Turkish domestic politics indicated that the US actions may have made Türkiye feel less secure about America's commitment to its defense.*⁴²⁷

Consequently, Türkiye's NATO membership was, perhaps for the first time, perceived as a threat to its own security. The belief was that, in the event of a nuclear attack on Türkiye, NATO allies could not respond with equal retaliation, thus leaving Türkiye vulnerable to any possible aggression.⁴²⁸ This perception triggered further debates about the effectiveness of Türkiye's alliance with NATO and its commitment to the West. And it was only a few years later, in 1964, that the Cyprus issue and the Johnson letter led to another major crisis. Only about 10 years after Türkiye's entry into the alliance, these two important events have shown that the security interests of Türkiye and the Western alliance are not always necessarily aligned.

3.3.2. Cyprus issue, Johnson Letter, and 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation

Türkiye's relations with the US and the West in general began to improve at the end of WW II, and especially after 1945, they gradually progressed. In the early period, between 1945 and 1960, with Türkiye's accession to NATO, relations experienced their honeymoon period without any specific problems and progressed steadily. Even a rapprochement between Türkiye and Greece, the historical foes, occurred during the initial stages due to their NATO membership, but this did not last long due to crisis moments such as the Cyprus problem.⁴²⁹

Moreover, as discussed above, the mid-1960s marked a series of challenges. The second crisis, arguably surpassed even the Cuban Missile Crisis in its implications, occurred when Türkiye and the transatlantic alliance faced a serious divergence of interests and disagreements over Cyprus. This conflict triggered tensions within NATO and strained Türkiye's relations with other Western nations as well. It also increased the anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in Türkiye.

⁴²⁷ Criss, Missiles, pp. 97-98.

⁴²⁸ Criss, Missiles, p. 116.

⁴²⁹ Nur Bilge Criss, "Türkiye-NATO İttifakının Tarihsel Boyutu", *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, Vol. 9, No: 34, 2012, (Tarihsel), pp. 1-2.

First, the island of Cyprus, which had been under the control of the British since 1878, experienced great pressure from the church-controlled Greek authority after 1940. The Greek Cypriots increased the tension severely with the idea of linking Cyprus to Greece, known as 'Enosis'.⁴³⁰ This idea was initially opposed by Britain and especially by Türkiye; as a result, the Greek community initiated an armed struggle against the ethnic Turks on the island.⁴³¹ In 1955 and 1956, Britain, Türkiye, and Greece held their first joint meetings in London. Türkiye proposed the division of the island between the two communities. As the events escalated, the US also became involved.⁴³² Along with the efforts of the Turkish side, the negotiations resulted in a legal framework that emerged in the Zurich and London Agreements, signed in 1959, which led to the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus on August 16, 1960.⁴³³

However, it wasn't long after the order of 1960 collapsed, due to several reasons, mainly because the Greek Cypriots were not satisfied with the situation, and in 1963, Makarios, the famous Greek Cypriot statesman, sent the articles by changing all the conditions to be contradictory for the Turkish Cypriots.⁴³⁴ This resulted in further armed conflicts, and there were massive massacres against the Turks on the island, which exceeded the humanitarian precautions.

From Türkiye's side, the expectations from the legal framework on agreements were not fulfilled by the Greek Cypriots and Greece. The country believed that Greek Cypriots did not give up their ambitions and attempted in the annexation of the island to Greece. Massive armed attacks by Greek Cypriots to the Turkish Cypriots were the last straw for the country.⁴³⁵ Türkiye at the time, struggled to choose between its hardly achieved progressive integrity with the Western world

⁴³⁰ Floya Anthias and Ron Ayres, "Ethnicity and Class in Cyprus", **Race & Class**, Vol. 25, No: 1, 1983, p. 62.

⁴³¹ Metin İlhan, "Kıbrıs Sorununun Türk–Amerikan İlişkilerine Yansıması (1958-1974)", **Türkiyat Mecmuası**, Vol. 25, No: 2, 2015, p. 260.

⁴³² David Souter, "An Island Apart: A Review of the Cyprus Problem", **Third World Quarterly**, Vol. 6, No: 3, 1984, pp. 660-662.

⁴³³ Mustafa Çay, "Retrogression of the Turkish-Greek Relationship the Issue of Cyprus and Related Developments (1950-1960)", **Social, Educational, Political, Economic and Other Developments Occurred in Turkey Between the Years of 1938-1980**, Ed. Özkan Akman, Mustafa Murat Çay, Fatih Bozbayındır and Erhan Tunç, ISRES Publishing, 2019, pp. 23-24.

⁴³⁴ İlhan, p. 262.

⁴³⁵ Republic of Türkiye MFA, "Why and How Did the 1960 Order Collapse?", **MFA**, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/why-and-how-did-the-1960-order-collapse_.en.mfa, (24.10.2024).

and the protection of its own descendants who were exposed to the massacres, as well respecting to its own will of sovereignty and independence.

In this period, İsmet İnönü, one of the founders of the country after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the Prime Minister of the period, initially tried to resolve the issue cautiously under the supervision of the West and especially the USA. During the negotiations, the US firmly rejected the use of the weapons they provided within the scope of NATO and American military aid by Türkiye and Greece in Cyprus.⁴³⁶ As the massacres and clashes increased, despite all the difficulties and dilemmas, Türkiye decided to protect and solve the problem by actively participating at the risk of confronting the alliance. On December 25, 1963, Turkish warplanes flew over the skies of Cyprus and intimidated the Greeks.⁴³⁷

Eventually in 1964, after President Makarios announced the unilateral annulment of the 1959 and 1960 agreements, Türkiye brought the issue to the UN and made attempts to NATO. However, these attempts were rejected by the Alliance.⁴³⁸ This interruption and senseless approach of the US and NATO against of all Inönü's efforts on Cyprus issue likely to have done a serious damage to the relations, with severe results, will be discussed later. The US, for the most part, chose to remain neutral in the Cyprus issue on the grounds that the leaders of both parties did not make any efforts to reduce tensions. The country noticed that both communities were armed, which increased the tension, and this led to serious controversies between two NATO members, Türkiye and Greece.⁴³⁹

It is also likely to reflect the serious concern of both the US and the broader alliance on the issue, which would jeopardize the integrity of the alliance, probably for the first time, in the ongoing Soviet threat and conflictual environment of the era. From the Turkish side, the fact that the US approached the events in Cyprus as a problem that could be solved between the two countries and remained insensitive to

⁴³⁶ İlhan, pp. 262-263.

⁴³⁷ İlhan, p. 262.

⁴³⁸ Çay, p. 206.

⁴³⁹ Emre Feyzi Çolakoğlu, "From Non-Intervention to Mediation: The Transformation of the US Cyprus Policy (1960–1967)", **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, Vol. 24, No: 6, 2022, (Cyprus), pp. 913-915.

the massacres increased the perception of Türkiye's concerns about the conflicts with its own will and sovereign rights that would contradict the alliance.⁴⁴⁰

As the situation in Cyprus deteriorated further, on January 28, 1964, İsmet İnönü sent Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin to American Ambassador Raymond Hare and informed him that they would directly intervene if they were not given guarantees within a day. Türkiye's decisive stance forced the US to intervene, resulting in the formation of a peacekeeping force under UN supervision.⁴⁴¹ However, this did not solve the problem; the intensity of the conflicts and the violence against Turkish Cypriots continued to increase and became more dangerous. Given this situation, the decision to intervene in Cyprus was discussed at the Council of Ministers meeting chaired by İsmet İnönü. American Ambassador Hare was informed.⁴⁴²

Johnson, who was convinced that Türkiye would take a decisive stance on Cyprus and make a military intervention, wrote a letter to Prime Minister İnönü on June 5, 1964, which lacked diplomatic ethics.⁴⁴³ The letter, in sum, stated that Türkiye could not unilaterally intervene in Cyprus, could not use American and NATO's provided weapons, and threatened that in such a case, the country would be left alone against any Soviet threat and aggression. He emphasized that this decision was made on behalf of both the US and NATO. In addition, it was also, in a way, threatened the country that, in such a case, the UN would be against Türkiye and the UN Security Council would not remain silent against the intervention. Finally, İnönü was invited to the US for consultation on the situation.⁴⁴⁴

The blocking of Türkiye's request for intervention against Greek oppression and massacres with a threatening and diplomatically unethical letter by Johnson,

⁴⁴⁰ Çolakoğlu, Cyprus, pp. 916-918.

⁴⁴¹ Gürhan Yellice, "The American Intervention in the 1964 Cyprus Crisis and the Greek Political Reaction (February-August 1964)", *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları*, Vol. 17, No: 35, 2018, p. 375.

⁴⁴² Yellice, p. 376.

⁴⁴³ Çolakoğlu, Cyprus, p. 921.

⁴⁴⁴ Suha Bölükbaşı, "The Johnson Letter Revisited", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 29, No: 3, 1993, p. 506; Özgür Özdamar and Okhan Erciyas, "Turkey and Cyprus: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Decisions during the Crises of 1964, 1967, and 1974", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 16, No: 3, 2020, pp. 8-9.

which was also leaked to the public, was met with a strong reaction in Türkiye and caused a historical wound in both Türkiye-US and Türkiye-NATO relations.⁴⁴⁵

Its influence on the domestic political arena was intense, especially by the opposition parties, which criticized the government's foreign policy. It was also considered to be one of the starting points of anti-Americanism in Turkish public opinion, as it paved the way for the strengthening of the leftist movements of the time.⁴⁴⁶ Another important result of the crisis directly affects Türkiye's relations with NATO and the West. Johnson's letter stated that Türkiye could not unilaterally intervene in Cyprus with the weapons it had received from the US, which created a serious mistrust of American policy in Türkiye. This event caused Türkiye to re-evaluate its foreign policy behavior, as it also led to the warming of relations with the Soviet Union.⁴⁴⁷

But all these developments, would not hesitate the process that would ultimately lead Türkiye to launch the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation. Given all these circumstances, 1974 was a result rather than a sudden event. It reflects the climax of the crisis period that emerged because of the developments outlined so far. Also, after the coup d'état of the Greek Cypriot forces supported by Greece in 1974, violence, mass killings, and chaos reached their peak.⁴⁴⁸ Ultimately, in a highly unexpected and unique foreign policy move, given its position in NATO and its alignment with the Western alliance, Türkiye directly responded with the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation.⁴⁴⁹ In fact, the 1974 events as a foreign policy behavior also reflected, to some extent, Türkiye's domestic political dynamics, its high value on sovereignty and complete independence, and some other characteristics that inherent in the national identity along with rigid public pressure.

The first effect of this decision was at the sub-regional level; given that the Cyprus question is still an unresolved issue and one of the most prolonged conflicts

⁴⁴⁵ Tamer Balcı, "The Cyprus Crisis and the Southern Flank of NATO (1960-1975)", **International Review of Turkish Studies**, 2012, pp. 38, 42.

⁴⁴⁶ Murat Erdem, "US President L.B. Johnson's Letter Of 1964 and Its Impact on Turkish Public Opinion", **The Journal of International Social Research**, Vol. 7, No: 33, 2014, pp. 312-314.

⁴⁴⁷ T. Balcı, pp. 44, 51.

⁴⁴⁸ Republic of Türkiye MFA, "Cyprus (Historical Overview)", **MFA**, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus-_historical-overview_.en.mfa, (24.10.2024).

⁴⁴⁹ Gizem Bilgin Aytaç, "Cyprus Peace Operation in The Perspective of Responsibility to Protect", **İçtimaiyat**, Vol. 6, No: 2, 2022, pp. 669-680.

on the global scene, it radically changed the balances in the Eastern Mediterranean and reshaped the military and political dynamics in the region. Greece and Türkiye's relations has never fully recovered, considering their historical enmity as well. Cyprus issue remains one of the most significant struggles in Türkiye's broader Western and transatlantic relations, especially for its European integration process.⁴⁵⁰

The result for NATO can be seen as one of the greatest challenges, for the first time two members were directly fighting each other. This seriously threatened the integrity and cohesion of the alliance. Both countries remained in NATO, but Greece temporarily left the command structure.⁴⁵¹ As all other commitments normalized with the re-conflictualization of the Cold War period, Greece returned to NATO's integrated military structure in 1980, before achieving its long-term goal of joining the European Economic Community.⁴⁵²

The implications of the event for Türkiye and the relations were severe; the already strained relation period was further exacerbated, especially with the sanctions and embargoes. The US Congress responded by imposing an embargo on the US military aid and arms sales to Türkiye that lasted from 1975 to 1978.⁴⁵³ However, it remained uncertain whether Congress would agree to resume military aid. Türkiye, in turn, suspended all military arrangements with the US and its defense and intelligence installations on Turkish territory in the period of the embargo, except for Incirlik, which remains operational but solely for NATO-related activities.⁴⁵⁴

Another implication was again the role of the Soviet Union in the crisis; both Türkiye and the Union continued to maintain close relations, and the Soviet goal was likely to exploit the Turkish-American and NATO differences to their advantage.⁴⁵⁵ For Türkiye, this was likely to continue balancing its heavy dependence on the Western allies and use the situation as a trump card against the Western alliance. In

⁴⁵⁰ Özdamar and Erciyas, pp. 2, 12.

⁴⁵¹ Ronald R. Krebs, "Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict", **International Organization**, Vol. 53, No: 2, 1999, pp. 343-344.

⁴⁵² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO Declassified: Greece and NATO 1952", **NATO**, 24.10.2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/declassified_181434.htm, (24.11.2024), (Greece).

⁴⁵³ Murat Karagöz, "US Arms Embargo against Turkey - after 30 Years an Institutional Approach towards US Policy Making", **PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 9, No: 4, 2004, p. 107.

⁴⁵⁴ Laçiner, p. 80.

⁴⁵⁵ John Sakkas and Nataliya Zhukova, "The Soviet Union, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem, 1967-1974", **Les cahiers Irice**, Vol. 10, No: 1, 2013, p. 128.

February 1975, the US imposed an arms embargo on Türkiye on the grounds that the country had used American and NATO-supported weapons during the intervention. This decision along with other crisis moments caused great anger among the Turkish public and influenced the domestic political landscape.⁴⁵⁶ Anti-American/anti-Western sentiments in Türkiye grew substantially during this period, and relatively this dynamic still has an impact on Turkish Domestic politics.

In conclusion, the Johnson Letter, the Cyprus issue, and the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation marked an important turning point in Türkiye's foreign policy behavior and its commitment to NATO, especially the US. Given the effects of the détente period and the reduction of the Cold War's competitive environment, the country may also be able to develop a more maneuvering foreign policy behavior. This was also another important explanation that Türkiye can pursue such unexpected policies during the crisis moments. The process allowed Türkiye to improve its relations with the Soviet Union and other non-bloc countries, also to play a more active role in regional security politics. Moreover, the intensity of the reactions in political parties, leaders, and social movements marked the obvious role of the process in shaping Turkish foreign policy. The process undoubtedly changed the domestic political dynamics as well as the foreign policy strategies. The events enabled Türkiye to pursue a more independent foreign policy in the international scene and to discover a new strategic policy of balancing between East and West.

⁴⁵⁶ "Türkiye'de NATO Karşıtlığının Tarihsel ve Siyasal Kökenleri", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.: 4, No.: 40, 2012, pp. 31-41.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL ASSESSMENT OF TÜRKİYE'S ALLIANCE BEHAVIOR DURING THE COLD WAR

The thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of why and how Türkiye moved from neutrality to an integration process with NATO and Türkiye's relationship with the transatlantic alliance, particularly in terms of assessing its alliance behavior, its insistence on balancing with the Western bloc, and its evolving commitment during the Cold War period. This comprehensive analysis requires the evaluation of both systemic and domestic factors. In this context, the thesis adopted neoclassical realist theory for its assessment to understand how the interaction between structural pressures and domestic factors shapes state behavior. This chapter initially examines the structural factors, particularly the impact of bipolarity and the general characteristics of the Cold War world order, its evolving power dynamics. Second, the external threats and opportunities faced by the country will be examined along with its strategic environment. Finally at the domestic level, three key intervening variables will be examined to understand Türkiye's alignment decision with NATO and its alliance behavior. Notably, these variables are leader images, ideological and political orientations, the strategic culture of the country, its national identity and some of the historical experiences, state-society relations and the role of military.

4.1. STRUCTURAL AND EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Structural and external factors are generally assumed to be the core and prominent determinants of any assessment in realist traditions. As explored in detail, Neorealism addresses the systemic pressures and constraints imposed by the international system, such as its anarchic nature and the distribution of power within it.⁴⁵⁷ Neorealism provides a reliable and powerful explanation for understanding the international system and the constant pressures that it puts on states. Neoclassical realism on the other hand, is more useful in explaining the foreign policy behaviors

⁴⁵⁷ Ripsman, Neoclassical Realism, p. 12.

of states, especially in crisis moments and/or specific choices, in case of unexpected or unique behaviors within a certain period, by synthesizing structural factors with the domestic dynamics of states.⁴⁵⁸

This thesis adopted a position in which the structural imperatives, the pressures and constraints caused by the system, along with the external threats and benefits, are seen as the first and foremost determinants of the political outcomes. In the context of Türkiye's alliance behavior, particularly its insistence on alignment with the transatlantic alliance and the evolving commitment during the Cold War period. Domestic factors, on the other hand, are the complementary and intervening factors that shape the outcomes of those primary systemic and external factors.

The international system itself creates constant pressure and has implications for states.⁴⁵⁹ From Türkiye's perspective, it is natural to expect several implications for its alliance behavior and foreign policy decisions during the Cold War. Like all states in the international system, Türkiye has faced strong systemic pressures, especially in times of conflict and competition in high-level bipolarity, along with the clarity of external threats and benefits surrounded in its strategic environment. These structural factors are assumed to be directly or indirectly affecting Türkiye's fundamental choices and actions during the period. Directly, because some of the factors constantly compel states to behave in expected ways due to the constraints and pressures inherent in the anarchic nature of the international system and the distribution of power within it.⁴⁶⁰ Survival and security are paramount concerns for states since the implications of the system are clearer especially during periods of heightened tension, such as the Cold War.⁴⁶¹ Indirectly, because they also shape the perceptions and images of decision-makers by influencing their strategic thinking and policy choices, and of course, there are other strong determinants for Türkiye's foreign policy decisions during the Cold War except for the external constraints, which will be explored in the following sections with the aim of creating a chain of complementary explanations for Türkiye's alliance behavior in general.

⁴⁵⁸ Gustav Meibauer, "Interests, Ideas, and the Study of State Behaviour in Neoclassical Realism", **Review of International Studies**, Vol. 46, No: 1, 2020, (Behaviour) pp. 12, 15.

⁴⁵⁹ Waltz, *Realist Thought*, p. 33.

⁴⁶⁰ Mearsheimer, *Institutions*, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶¹ Mearsheimer, *Institutions*, pp. 11-12.

Here in this section, the aim is to determine the systemic imperatives that puts constant - pressures that the system itself created on the states, which would possibly be considered a neorealist application, and put them forward by emphasizing the complementary explanation of the neoclassical realist assumption, such as clarity of the external threats and benefits to describe the condition of Türkiye's strategic environment. Above all, it will analyze how these structural factors affected Türkiye's alignment decision and broader its alliance commitment during the Cold War. This section first seeks to identify the expected implications of the Cold War international system, and second, it will clarify the structural and external factors that constrained Türkiye during the period. And finally, make inferences based on those systemic determinants to explain Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War.

4.1.1. International System, Structural Imperatives, and Distribution of Power

The analysis of systemic factors begins with identifying the nature of the international system itself before assessing which and how these systemic factors influenced Türkiye's alliance behavior and its general commitment to NATO during the Cold War. The system itself, as Waltz suggested and explored earlier, is characterized by an anarchic nature in which the lack of a central governing authority exposes significant pressures and constraints for states.⁴⁶² These pressures are identified in the realist tradition as Waltz assumed this anarchic environment as the only ordering principle for the states in his theory.⁴⁶³ Accordingly given that external threats are also always visible in the background, the anarchic environment constantly pushes the states to seek survival.

In the neoclassical realist tradition, as Ripsman et al. discusses, anarchy is a 'permissive condition' rather than an 'independent causal variable'. Conversely, the distribution of power and overall power dynamics is considered explanatory variables.⁴⁶⁴ This means that the former is an indirect factor in explaining outcomes; similarly, the thesis considers anarchy as a constant pressure that creates the

⁴⁶² Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 81-88.

⁴⁶³ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 88-93.

⁴⁶⁴ Ripsman et al., p. 43.

circumstances for other explanatory variables to understand Türkiye's decision to join NATO and its overall commitment during the Cold War.

Overall, the first characteristic that the thesis notices in identifying the international system and its implication on Türkiye's alliance behavior is its anarchic nature and its constant implications for states. This means there is constant pressure, in the background, on states to put in all their effort and use all kinds of measures available to enhance their security capacity to survive.⁴⁶⁵ It creates the conditions for the persistent prioritization of survival and security concerns above all, in a self-help environment, as a constant condition that influences other explanatory variables, such as external threats, the perception of the state, leaders, and their images, in shaping the political outcome.

For example, in the case of Türkiye, even if it meant an alignment with the Western bloc, with which it had initially fought for independence, it would move in that direction if it was the most optimal/rational decision for the security of the nation, even though nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments are inherent in its deep-rooted identities and beliefs. because the perception and image of the elites are constantly under pressure by considering survival and security concerns above all, which will be more reasonable in the final part when the chain of all explanatory factors is structured. Overall, Anarchy is seen as a constant factor that is always in the background, influencing other variables to derive the outcome in the realist tradition.

The second consideration in the assessment of the system is its distribution of power inside. The general characterization and conceptualization of bipolarity in the Cold War era are already discussed. Accordingly, the most widely accepted characterization of the post-WW II international system is bipolarity. For Gaddis, while neither the Soviet Union nor the US could completely dominate the system, there was a distinct gap between the two superpowers and their nearest competitors.⁴⁶⁶ Realist tradition gives primary importance to the role of great powers in international politics. They can influence how the international system is structured and determine which issues matter and are prioritized in international

⁴⁶⁵ Mearsheimer, *Institutions*, p. 11.

⁴⁶⁶ Gaddis, *Long Peace*, p. 104.

politics.⁴⁶⁷ This includes whether, at a given time, the international order would be cooperative or conflictual, which is mostly shaped by the great powers and their choices. The emergence of the Soviet Union and the US as superpowers in the post-war period and how they shaped the general characteristics of international politics is already discussed. In short, it is expected that states at different levels of power will respond differently to the structural imperatives.

In the case of Türkiye's relative power distribution, according to Oğuzlu and Kasım Han, Türkiye was evaluated as a middle power actor in international politics during the Cold War era.⁴⁶⁸ The thesis will apply a similar approach to Türkiye's power distribution in the system. Türkiye's geostrategic importance has already been discussed. Indeed, Türkiye was not one of the great powers of the twentieth century. But it has many geostrategic advantages to provide the country with a potential and expanded role in world politics.⁴⁶⁹

Given its unique location and strategic importance, especially during the Cold War, along with its young and active population and relatively strong army in its region, probably make Türkiye a middle-power. Türkiye possesses significant regional influence and a relative military strength. It can also be assumed to be a regional power, or a potential one, since it actively seeks leadership and influence within its region. It has relatively low levels of global influence, economic problems, low levels of technological advancement and industrial production are the reasons that are likely to prevent the country from having a higher status.

After identifying the structure of the system and its power distribution among the subjected actors, the expected implications of these structural imperatives on Türkiye's external behavior can now be examined in a clearer sense. A pure Waltzian perspective, even if it doesn't provide a comprehensive explanation of Türkiye's Cold War alliance behavior in general, it highlights the structural pressures and constraints that were imposed on the country during the Cold War era as constant and

⁴⁶⁷ Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 51-53.

⁴⁶⁸ Tarık Oğuzlu and Ahmet Kasım Han, "Making Sense of Turkey's Foreign Policy from the Perspective of Neorealism", **Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi**, Vol. 20, No: 78, 2023, p. 60.

⁴⁶⁹ Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 35, No: 4, 1999, p. 152.

independent factors that also mostly influence other variables and indirectly determine state behaviors.

In this regard, from a pure structural realist perspective, the first systemic imperative of bipolarity is that lesser powers in the system, such as Türkiye in this case, are expected to be more mechanical and responsive to the systemic constraints and pressures that were determined largely by the great powers. Their foreign policy choices and maneuvering capabilities are much more limited and restricted by systemic imperatives and external factors.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, under bipolarity, the country is affected by systemic pressures much more than any of greater power in the system and expected to be more restricted in its foreign policy choices. More explicitly, if the great powers have established an international order in which the world is divided into two blocs and there is a high degree of external pressure within this order, e.g., penetration, proxy wars, covert operations, etc., lesser powers, such as Türkiye, are expected to comply with the structural pressures created by this order. Then, the result is expected to be an alignment/balancing decision with one of the blocs.

The second structural imperative regarding the distribution of power, which also refers to Waltz's BoP theory. According to him, to counterbalance exceeding external threats, states have two balancing options: the first is "internal balancing" of self-strengthening, such as increasing economic capability, increasing military size, or developing better military technologies, and the second is "external efforts" of alignment and realignment with other states.⁴⁷¹

Given Türkiye's limited power and capabilities in the aftermath of WW II, it was far weaker than the emerging superpowers that dominated the international system. Clearly, Türkiye lacked the necessary resources to confront potential external threats independently in such a competitive global environment. This was particularly evident during periods of direct external pressure, such as Stalin's aggressive actions immediately after the war.⁴⁷² Türkiye, as a lesser power, is expected to seek counterbalancing measures against the rising superpowers under the

⁴⁷⁰ Miriam Fendius Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard", **British Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 25, No: 2, 1995, pp. 171-217.

⁴⁷¹ Waltz, Theory of IP, pp. 111, 118-121.

⁴⁷² Leffler, p. 808.

structural imperatives and constraints.⁴⁷³ It is also reasonable that such a balancing act would require external assistance, as domestic resources alone were insufficient to address these challenges.

Additionally, since the Cold War was broadly characterized by a prolonged environment of competition and conflict, weaker states were often compelled to align with one of the major powers. This alignment was seen as a necessary and expected behavior to enhance their security and counterbalance potential external threats in the highly polarized international system.⁴⁷⁴ Being alone in such an environment would create a security problem itself.

As Ikenberry et al. claim weak states in bipolarity tend to participate in institutional arrangements defined and dominated by one or the other of the major players.⁴⁷⁵ Türkiye was compelled to seek an external alliance with one of the dominant poles, as its limited ability to enhance its power domestically necessitated external support to maximize its security. In this context, US strategic initiatives such as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan can be interpreted as efforts to strengthen Türkiye's internal capacity through the provision of economic and military aid. These measures were likely perceived by the decision-makers as crucial steps to strengthen Türkiye's position within the broader framework of Cold War alliances.

The third imperative thesis suggests that they are derived from the first two and in a way combines them. It refers to the effectiveness of great powers in determining the structure, deciding whether the order is confrontational, competitive, or more peaceful, and that the lesser powers are more mechanical to consent to these external pressures. It implies that the degree of bipolar competition that is largely determined by the great powers influences the degree of systemic constraints and implications imposed on the lesser states' expected behaviors.⁴⁷⁶

Oğuzlu and Han clarifies that:

Under bipolarity, the possibility for lesser powers to achieve their interests depends on the level of competition between the two most powerful countries in the system. In an intense competition between the two poles, the maneuvering

⁴⁷³ M. F. Elman, pp. 172-174.

⁴⁷⁴ Morgenthau, *Alliances*, pp. 185-195.

⁴⁷⁵ Ikenberry et al., p. 21.

⁴⁷⁶ Mearsheimer, *STR*, pp. 51-53; Ikenberry et al., pp. 15-21.

*capability of the lesser powers would decline in parallel. In tight bipolar environments, lesser powers would consent to external pressures easily and would have fewer choices in acting about their own will.*⁴⁷⁷

In short, this suggests that the more the international system was built on rigid bipolarity, the more sensitive and cautious Turkish decision-makers were in their interactions with external counterparts. In such a context, the more systemic constraints are dominant on state behavior, the less domestic intervening variables and other factors are effective.⁴⁷⁸ In other words, the degree of competition and conflicts determined by the great powers are expected to increase the degree of the first two expected implications on the lesser powers.

In a rigid bipolar environment, the system imposes a high level of constraints and pressures on the states. Conversely, in a less rigid bipolar system, these pressures are expected to be reduced as allowing states more flexibility in their decision-making and interactions. As Oğuzlu and Han argue, the more the international environment was characterized by rigid bipolarity, the more cautious and sensitive Turkish decision-makers became in their interactions with external counterparts, particularly their Western allies.⁴⁷⁹

To illustrate, during the period of détente, Türkiye was able to develop better relations with the Soviet Union. The decrease in the US-Soviet tensions reduced the effectiveness of systemic constraints and allowed for more maneuvering capability in foreign policy decisions. Overall, it also suggests that under bipolarity, the ability of lesser powers to achieve their specific interests depends on the level of competition between the two most powerful states.

This explanation creates another consequence for the thesis, the evolution of the system into a more confrontational environment largely shaped by the great powers is expected to increase the explanatory value of systemic and external factors. It also decreases the effectiveness of the neoclassical implication of domestic intervening variables due to the degree of the competitive and conflictual bipolar environment. Therefore, the thesis assumes to put more emphasis on the structural and external factors and evaluates the domestic-level factors as complementary and

⁴⁷⁷ Oğuzlu and Han, p. 62.

⁴⁷⁸ Ripsman et al., pp. 52-55.

⁴⁷⁹ Oğuzlu and Han, p. 62.

periodical, their value is more influential in short-term decisions or specific choices. The following section will clarify neoclassical realist assumption on the structural modifiers, the external threats and opportunities, and their clarity and restrictiveness imposed on Türkiye to assess its alliance behavior, its alignment decision, and its commitment to NATO.

4.1.2. Neoclassical Realist Assessment of Systemic & External Variables

So far, we have assessed, from a purely structural perspective, the expected implications and pressures of the Cold War international system and its power distribution on a medium-sized power like Türkiye. As Ripsman et al. explains, neoclassical realism defines polarity as the relative distribution of capabilities among the great powers within the system and is used to explain general patterns in international politics rather than specific patterns of alignment or alliance behavior among states.⁴⁸⁰ Similarly, as Stephen Walt has argued, Waltz's BoP theory clarifies “who seeks alignment”, not “who allies with whom”.⁴⁸¹ But despite the limitations, its value is considered primary as an independent variable to explain any outcome in terms of understanding the structure of the system and the constant pressures it generates.

4.1.2.1. Structural Modifiers

The first consideration of the neoclassical extension on systemic factors is “structural modifiers”, the term coined by Glenn Snyder. According to Ripsman et al., it refers to “a class of material variables” at the level of the international system or a regional subsystem. Such as geography, aggregate power imbalances, the rates of technological diffusion, and the offense-defense balance in the military.⁴⁸² These can modify the parameters of foreign policy behaviors of states. Basically, they modify the primary structural factors to assess state behavior in a more effective way.

⁴⁸⁰ Ripsman et al., pp. 43-45.

⁴⁸¹ Walt, *The Origins*, p. 9.

⁴⁸² Ripsman et al., pp. 40-41.

Regarding Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War; the first proposed structural modifier is the 'aggregate power imbalances'. As discussed already, Türkiye's capabilities as a medium-sized power were obviously far less than those of the rising great powers. This led the country to seek counterbalancing action, especially in times when external threats clearly existed. Even without going deep into material differences between the powers, Türkiye's capabilities are clearly far behind both technologically, militarily, and economically. Moreover, due to the economic difficulties it was experiencing, the country considered the external aid it would receive to be vital for its development, initially from the UK and subsequently from the US.⁴⁸³ However, the table below illustrates the difference in power, and even in the 1960s, when Türkiye already received both military and economic aid, shows a significant material difference in power.

Table 3: Comparative Overview of the Relative Power Measures (All Data from 1982)

Country	Population (millions)	GNP (\$ m)	# in Armed Forces (0000s)	Defense \$ (\$ m)
USSR	270.0	1715000	4400	257000
US	232.1	3071400	2108	196345
Türkiye	48.1	65252	638	3375

Source: Stephen M. Walt, BoWP, pp. 42-43. (All Data from 1982)

A purely power-oriented approach doesn't give any clue as to why Türkiye decided to align itself with NATO and not with the USSR. For example, in Waltz's BoP theory, the strongest one is assumed to pose the strongest threat⁴⁸⁴, which is contrary to Türkiye's decision to align with NATO. but it provides a valuable explanation in the first place for why it is expected for Türkiye to seek an insistent balancing/alignment decision with the imposed structural constraints.

Although other variables will clarify the decision later, the consideration of power imbalances suggests another outcome that influences Türkiye's choice to align

⁴⁸³ Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin and Steven Morewood, "Turkey's Reliance on Britain: British Political and Diplomatic Support for Turkey against Soviet Demands, 1943-47", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 40, No: 2, 2004, pp. 24-57; Üstün, pp. 31-52.

⁴⁸⁴ Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 54-55.

with the Western bloc. As illustrated in the table, the Soviet Union's relatively low GDP compared to its high military expenditure indicates that it would offer limited economic benefits to its potential allies. This dynamic can be interpreted as a factor shaping the perception among lesser states that aligning with the Soviet Union would yield relatively lower advantages in the distribution of power.

Furthermore, the US was perceived as the country that ended WW II with nuclear force and possessed relatively more material capabilities, particularly economic, compared to the Soviet Union. Similarly, Walt argues that aligning with the stronger side is often seen by leaders as offering relatively greater benefits for their countries. This makes such alignments more predictable and expected.⁴⁸⁵

It also refers to the Mearsheimer theory of buck-passing. By passing the buck, the perceived threat or a need for economic assistance, to the strongest one, it relatively provides more security and gains in the end.⁴⁸⁶ The second suggested structural modifier is 'geography'. Unlike the former, here one of the most explanatory modifiers is observable to explain why Türkiye perceived the Soviet Union as a significant threat while seeking an alliance with NATO and providing friendly relations with the US, even during WW II. It also provides an important explanation of why the US supports Türkiye's accession to the Alliance, while many others are initially skeptical and opposed. Walt also puts a similar assumption in his famous BoT theory.⁴⁸⁷

Considering the geographic proximity of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union, with its dominant military and technological capabilities, including nuclear power, was a neighboring country situated very close to Türkiye's borders. In contrast, the US was approximately 10,175 kilometers away. Naturally, the closer power posed a greater threat to Türkiye's security.⁴⁸⁸ Among various external and internal factors, geographic proximity probably is one of the most important modifiers for why the Soviet Union was perceived as the greatest threat to Türkiye.

From the US perspective, Türkiye's geography acted as a structural modifier that created the opposite dynamic. While proximity to the Soviet Union posed a

⁴⁸⁵ Walt, BoWP, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁸⁶ Mearsheimer, STR, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁸⁷ Walt, The Origins, p. 23-24.

⁴⁸⁸ Walt, Testing, pp. 281, 292.

threat to Türkiye, it offered a significant strategic advantage to the US. Türkiye's unique location provided valuable opportunities, particularly as a regional hub for potential military bases for the US and NATO in their competition with the USSR.⁴⁸⁹ It was a decisive factor influencing the US stance on Türkiye's accession to NATO, despite skepticism from other members.⁴⁹⁰

The third proposed structural modifier is the role of economic and technological diffusion as an advantageous factor in alliances since Türkiye was obviously in need of economic and technological assistance.⁴⁹¹ This dynamic also refers to the role of nuclear technology in shaping state behaviors. In a world divided into two blocs, Türkiye is highly keen on taking economic and military aid. As Walt assumes, the great powers in their competition use foreign aid and assistance as penetration, in a way to win the round and pull the country to their side, although for him this is a relatively weaker cause.⁴⁹²

Nevertheless, it can also be argued that the effectiveness is likely to depend on the economic conditions and the degree of subjected country to keen on getting proposed foreign assistance, given the general influence of Türkiye-Western relations and the degree of the aid and assistance throughout the Cold War era.

To illustrate the importance of structural modifiers, one case may be influential, referring to geography, the role of economic and technological diffusion, and all types of material exchanges in understanding foreign policy behaviors. Türkiye was in a deep economic crisis and in need of foreign aid especially throughout the Cold War period. As shown, The Turkish government reached an agreement with the IMF and OEEC for a US-led stabilization program.⁴⁹³ The US, on the other hand, was eager to leverage Türkiye's geostrategic location as a deterrent against the Soviet Union by establishing military bases and settlements within Türkiye.⁴⁹⁴ Türkiye's dependence on US military and economic assistance obviously played a central role in its acceptance of nuclear missile deployment and the

⁴⁸⁹ Akduman, p. 2953.

⁴⁹⁰ Yeşilbursa, pp. 76, 86.

⁴⁹¹ Üstün, p. 31-52; Ş. Yılmaz, p. 487.

⁴⁹² Walt, *The Origins*, p. 49.

⁴⁹³ Ayşe Y. Evrensel, "IMF Programs and Financial Liberalization in Turkey", **Emerging Markets Finance and Trade**, Vol. 40, No: 4, 2004, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁴ Leffler, p. 808; Akduman, p. 2954.

significant concessions and privileges granted to the US for establishing and utilizing military facilities. This decision can be interpreted both as a strategic measure to deter communist threats and as a gesture of gratitude towards its allies.⁴⁹⁵ It also demonstrated Türkiye's strong commitment to the alliance in the early period.

Structural modifiers also highlight how external threats shape leaders' perceptions and ultimately influence foreign policy outcomes. For instance, all the variables contributed to Türkiye's high-level commitment to US interests, and its misperception of eagerness to deploy the Jupiter missiles as its own national interest. The military facilities and nuclear weapons deployed on Turkish soil are among the important explanatory factors in the relations and alliance behaviors of both sides

However, this also has often put Türkiye in dangerous situations, as explored during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Both actors often utilized these material exchanges as leverage in the process. For example, in response to the 1974 Cyprus operation, the US Congress imposed an embargo on the US military grants and arms sales to Türkiye from 1975 to 1978. Consequently, Türkiye shut down the US defense and intelligence installations on its territory for the duration of the embargo.⁴⁹⁶ These structural modifiers and the material exchanges in the relationship were important variables in measuring the degree of their commitment to each other as well.

4.1.2.2. External Threats and Opportunities

The second consideration in the neoclassical realism extension of systemic factors is the clarity of signals and information about the external threats and opportunities presented by the international system to states. Neoclassical realism provides an assumption of clarity to evaluate the degree of visibility, which includes the intensity, the time frame, and other optimal options regarding the external threats and opportunities faced by states.⁴⁹⁷ Although this clarity is rarely apparent and difficult to measure, it provides a framework to evaluate the nature of external threats and opportunities and their relative degree of influence on state behavior.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ Criss, *Missiles*, p. 103.

⁴⁹⁶ Zanotti, p. 39.

⁴⁹⁷ Ripsman et al., pp. 46-50.

⁴⁹⁸ Ripsman et al., pp. 48, 51.

Given the time and scope limitations of this thesis, the thesis will emphasize more on the most visible external threats and opportunities as explanatory factors rather than measuring all of them in detail. The focus will be on assessing how these most visible threats and opportunities were influential on Türkiye's alliance behavior, its decision to join NATO, and its commitment to the alliance during the Cold War.

To achieve this, the thesis analyzes the Cold War by dividing it into three distinct periods to draw a more efficient and comprehensible assessment. Periodic analysis is essential because it allows for the evaluation of which variables are most effective in explaining specific outcomes and to what extent they are influential. The initial period offers valuable explanatory variables for understanding Türkiye's insistence on aligning with the Western bloc. In contrast, the subsequent periods focus on its level of commitment throughout the Cold War. This is also necessary to compare the country's degree of commitment with all other variables in the end.

Benefiting from Wohlforth's study,⁴⁹⁹ and integrating the historical process-tracing analysis presented above, the Cold War is generally divided into five distinct periods; generally due to whether the bipolar environment was rigid or calm and the key turning points in the process. The thesis also considers Türkiye's relative position within these periods and combines the second and third, as well as the fourth and fifth, to assess Türkiye's alliance behavior toward NATO with comprehensive integrity. As shown in the table below:

Table 4: Periodical Cold War Assessment for Türkiye's Alliance Behavior

Period	Overview
Early Cold War (1945-1955)	Toward Confrontation and Competition (1945–1953)
Mid-Cold War (1955-1979)	Recognized Power Positions and Crisis Years (1955–1968); Detente Period (1969–1979)
Late Cold War (1979-1991)	Return to Confrontation (1979–1986); End of the Cold War (1986–1991)

Source: Adapted from Wohlforth, *Power and Perception*, p. v, with Modifications by the Author.

⁴⁹⁹ William C. Wohlforth, **The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War**, Cornell University Press, (Power and Perception) 1993.

Here, the thesis continues to periodically evaluate the most visible and important external threats and opportunities faced by Türkiye during the Cold War.

In the early period from 1945 to 1955, Soviet actions and post-war activities across the continent, as discussed in the previous chapter, emerged as a decisive security concern that shaped the threat perceptions.⁵⁰⁰ While not all actions directly targeted Türkiye, they contributed to regional instability and increased the perceived risk of Soviet influence spreading to Turkish territory. The Soviet Union's strategy extended beyond territorial expansion; it actively interfered in the domestic politics of various countries to promote communism. This influence was particularly evident in Türkiye's immediate periphery and neighboring countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, and even Iran, especially through the early phase of the Cold War.⁵⁰¹

Indeed, one could argue that the US also employed similar strategies throughout the Cold War period. However, the ideological spread and infiltration of communism were likely perceived as more dangerous in Türkiye due to the other domestic factors inherent in the country's national identity, which will be analyzed in the following sections.

Furthermore, the methods employed by the superpowers in the early stages of the Cold War were key factors in shaping threat perceptions. While both powers arguably acted to serve their own interests; as Walt suggests, establishing spheres of influence or penetrating nations through foreign aid.⁵⁰² Their approaches differed significantly to shape the perceptions. In the early period, the Soviet Union relied on aggressive and overtly hostile actions, whereas the US adopted more strategic moves, such as initiatives like the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

This dynamic was especially evident for Türkiye in the immediate aftermath of WW II, even without accounting for the broader indirect influence of Soviet expansionism in the region. The critical external threat and the corresponding benefits that explain Türkiye's insistence on aligning with NATO became apparent during this period. Stalin's direct and hostile actions posed an immediate threat to

⁵⁰⁰ Gaddis, *History*, pp. 21-34.

⁵⁰¹ McCauley, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁰² Walt, *BoWP*, pp. 27-31.

Türkiye's security, while the US countered with strategic initiatives such as the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, offering economic and military support.⁵⁰³

As mentioned above, the most obvious of these hostile actions underlined in the literature were: the first and very imminent was the Soviet Union's cancellation of its 1925 Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Türkiye on March 19, 1945; then, Stalin's demands for the revision of the Montreux Convention; third, his demands for the granting of bases in the Turkish Straits; and finally, his threats regarding territorial claims to Kars and Ardahan provinces.⁵⁰⁴ The Soviets also escalated tensions by increasing naval activity in the Black Sea and troop movements in the Caucasus.⁵⁰⁵ As a response to these hostile actions, most of the scholars assumed that Turkish decision-makers opted to counter this threat by seeking protection from the Western bloc.

Both the rhetoric and the hostile activities of Stalin clearly demonstrated a direct threat to Türkiye's national security, considering the conflictual environment of bipolarity and geographic proximity of the Soviet Union. These hostile actions, likely to be the most obvious and imminent factors that have shaped the growing threat perceptions of Türkiye's decision-makers in the early period. Moreover, the Soviet Union's direct hostile actions, coupled with its acquisition of nuclear weapons on August 29, 1949, and its aggressive actions across the continent, underlined the magnitude and urgency of the threat. In this context, all these variables provide an evident example of a high level of clarity in the external threat imposed on Türkiye.

While the Soviet Union engaged in such actions that posed a clear and direct threat to Türkiye, the US adopted some strategic moves to counterbalance these actions. Additionally, the country showed decisive support for Türkiye's sovereignty over the Straits and made it clear that any attack on the Straits would prompt action by the UN Security Council, which signed a concrete stance on the matter.⁵⁰⁶ Plus, we already mentioned the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe, and directly subjecting its scope to Türkiye and Greece. These initiatives offered perceived external benefits as it makes alignment with the

⁵⁰³ Merrill, pp. 27-37; Ş. Yılmaz, pp. 483-484.

⁵⁰⁴ McGhee, pp. 11-14.

⁵⁰⁵ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 483.

⁵⁰⁶ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 484.

West an optimal choice for Türkiye during this period.⁵⁰⁷ Under these conditions, plus the perception of the Soviet threat and their aggressive intentions, the US Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were perceived by European leaders as the only solutions for the reconstruction and/or development of their countries.

During the initial period, another evident external threat and benefit occurred at the time of the Korean War. The important point here is that the war provided both an external threat and a benefit for Türkiye, which provides an important explanatory variable for Türkiye's commitment to NATO, whereas the first one was more influential in Türkiye's alignment decision. At that time, despite the initial refusals, Türkiye had already revealed its stance on persistently seeking to join the alliance. This highlights the country's strong commitment to the Western bloc.

The Korean War, as an external threat, demonstrated the extent to which the Cold War posed a threat on a global scale.⁵⁰⁸ How the sovereignty of nations could be jeopardized regardless of the distance, and such events could occur immediately. At the same time, the period coincided with one of the most intense periods of a competitive and confrontational bipolar environment. Although the level of clarity of the external threat and benefit dynamics for Türkiye, arguably, was not as high as in the first direct hostile actions of Stalin toward the country, the general strategic environment created by the war can still be considered restrictive due to the peaks in the intense bipolar competition. This dynamic compelled Türkiye to become more responsive to the external constraints and pushed the country for a persistent demand for NATO alignment.

It also resulted in a high level of commitment during the early Cold War, demonstrated by Türkiye's active participation in the Korean War on the side of the Western bloc to solidify its alignment with NATO. Indeed, Türkiye's participation in the Korean War created an opportunity for the country, since Turkish leaders sought to demonstrate their value and reliability to the NATO and allies, and they seized the opportunity by directly participating in the Korean War.⁵⁰⁹ The result, in the end, was evident when Türkiye achieved its persistent objective of joining NATO.

⁵⁰⁷ Criss, Tarihsel, p. 13.

⁵⁰⁸ Gaddis, History, p. 43.

⁵⁰⁹ M. Smith, p. 68.

Overall, during the early stage of the Cold War, Türkiye faced several external threats and benefits that significantly influenced its foreign policy behavior, among various other factors. Following its accession to NATO, the country obtained an important security umbrella against the perceived Soviet threat.⁵¹⁰ Additionally, structural modifiers such as the economic and military assistance provided to Türkiye, the strategic importance of military bases, and Türkiye's geopolitical location have already been identified as key factors in assessing the level of commitment between the parties throughout their relationship. However, these developments also set the ground for emerging challenges and contradictions that Türkiye would face in the following phases of the Cold War.

Firstly, following Türkiye's accession to NATO, the Soviet Union initially expressed its opposition through various notes and diplomatic reactions. It cannot be said that there was an imminent and very clear external threat from the Soviet Union due to its membership. This also refers to the fact that Türkiye received a certain deterrence by joining NATO.⁵¹¹ However, as an official member of the Western bloc, Türkiye was now in the opposite bloc of its Eastern counterparts, and the Soviets were close to the Turkish border. Although being a member of NATO provided a strong deterrent factor, the Soviet Union's aggressive stance continued as the competitive and conflictual environment was still prominent, and the Soviet military buildup, with advanced weapons close to Europe and Türkiye's borders were strengthening serious security concerns generally in Europe.⁵¹²

The first evident and important external threat and benefit existed in the period refers to the first crisis moment in the relations, the Cuban missile crisis. The period has already been explored and partly evaluated in the context of systemic modifiers. The assessment here is that, as the NCR assumes and shows its importance, the leaders cannot always perceive external threats correctly.⁵¹³

The Jupiter missile crisis is a great example of misperception and partly a security dilemma. It also shows why neoclassical realist consideration of leaders'

⁵¹⁰ Selin M. Bölme, "NATO-Türkiye Relations: From Irreplaceable Partner to Questionable Ally", *Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs*, 2022, (NATO-TR), p. 95.

⁵¹¹ Akduman, p. 2955.

⁵¹² W. Scott, H. Scott, pp. 8-13.

⁵¹³ Jervis, Perception, pp. 18-19, 28-31.

perceptions is a valuable explanation. Türkiye was highly eager to obtain the Jupiter Missiles on its soil as the leaders perceived them as a benefit for the country. Criss discusses that Türkiye's eagerness was a miscalculation. She emphasizes two important points: first, the possession of nuclear weapons in Türkiye, no matter what, was seen by decision makers as a deterrent against the Soviets. Second, the US lobbied hard for Türkiye to accept "special weapons," most likely referring to nuclear weapons, as part of a military modernization program.⁵¹⁴

In a sense, this was perceived as an increase in the country's military capabilities. However, the ultimate authority to use nuclear weapons rested with the US.⁵¹⁵ The initial move of the Soviet Union to deploy powerful weapons near the border of Europe increased the perception of the leaders in the first place as an external threat and pushed Türkiye to be eager for the US missile deployment on its soil. However, this triggered a direct and more imminent external threat to the Soviet Union and provoked the country. The initial misperception of the missile deployment further created more serious threats to Türkiye when the US agreed to withdraw the missiles and leave Türkiye vulnerable to the already annoyed Soviet Union.⁵¹⁶

And only after the US put its own interests before those of its allies, Turkish decision makers realize that Türkiye could become a direct Soviet target. Before the crisis, the general view was that Türkiye was already under Soviet threat, whether it deployed the missiles on its soil or not. However, as Criss put emphasis on, there is a difference between being a target and a nuclear target, which seems to have been realized only after the crisis occurred.⁵¹⁷

Considering, the level of clarity of this external threat was not as intense and imminent as the initial hostile actions for some reasons. First, NATO membership was offered to the country as a deterrent factor, no matter what. Second, Stalin's death, in 1953, brought about several positive changes in Soviet Turkish relations. For example, the country announced that it had dropped previous territorial claims or

⁵¹⁴ Criss, Missiles, pp. 100, 104.

⁵¹⁵ Criss, Missiles, p. 101.

⁵¹⁶ Criss, Missiles, p. 116.

⁵¹⁷ Criss, Missiles, p. 109.

other aggressions against Türkiye.⁵¹⁸ Third, since the US pursued its own interests over those of its European allies by trading Jupiter missiles without consulting Türkiye, the country was obviously perceived as betrayed by the US.⁵¹⁹ This created an external benefit for the Soviet Union to exploit this tension between the allies. Rather than posing a serious threat to Türkiye, the country adopted a strategic approach to pursue closer relations as an optimal option.⁵²⁰ This rapprochement further accelerated other problems between Türkiye and its Western allies.

Eventually, the process of fluctuations in the relations intensified further, especially with the effects of the Johnson letter and the Cyprus issue, which led to a period of low-level commitments to each other with unexpected behaviors. The process has already been discussed. The outcome of the issue also refers partly to the domestic factors, such as the country's high value on sovereignty, independence, and nationalism, which are inherent in the national identity,⁵²¹ whereas the missile crisis is driven and more understandable by the structural modifiers.

As part of the second assessment of external threats and benefits in the middle period, it refers to the deterioration of relations with NATO and the US with its possible consequences. Given the US' great interest in Türkiye, it has also chosen to remain partly neutral on the Cyprus issue.⁵²² Therefore, a possible exclusion from the alliance was not an optimal or reasonable option, except for the sanctions and embargoes imposed on the country. Although Türkiye was still in need of economic assistance, the process led to a significant decrease in foreign aid and loans. The amount fell from \$135 million in 1967 to \$40 million in 1969. From 1969 to fiscal year 1972, aid averaged \$42.5 million per year.⁵²³ After the Cyprus operation of Türkiye in 1974, the US Congress responded with an embargo on the US military grants and arms sales to Türkiye, lasted from 1975 until 1978.⁵²⁴ Another possible external threat that Türkiye could face was an extended direct war with Greece but

⁵¹⁸ Vefa Kurban, "1950-1960 Yıllarında Türkiye İle Sovyetler Birliği Arasındaki İlişkiler", **Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 14, No: 28, 2014, pp. 257-258.

⁵¹⁹ Graham Allison, "The Cuban missile crisis", **The American Political Science Review**, Vol. 63, No: 3, 1969, (crisis), p. 271.

⁵²⁰ Sakkas and Zhukova, p. 128.

⁵²¹ M. Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy", p. 177.

⁵²² Çolakoğlu, Cyprus, pp. 913-915.

⁵²³ The Comptroller General of the US, pp. 5-6.

⁵²⁴ Uslu, pp. 13-14.

considering both the material and rational aspects, that was also not an optimal or reasonable option. Thus, the main threat that Türkiye faced in the Cyprus issue was losing support and assistance from its Western allies. It also partly affected the progressive and broader integration process of the country with the Europe.⁵²⁵ However, in assessing the level of scope and clarity of this external threat to understand the unexpected foreign policy behavior of Türkiye, there are several factors that also limit the level of intensity, urgency, and clarity of the threat.

First, the US was already suffering from the growing burden of budget deficits, such as from the Vietnam War.⁵²⁶ Thus, Türkiye had already expressed dissatisfaction with the foreign aid it was receiving from the West and had already gone through a process in which, especially, the US aid was seen as problematic and insufficient.⁵²⁷ In short, Türkiye was looking for ways to reduce its heavy dependence on the US and NATO after past experiences. And it was creating an opportunity for the country to extend its choices and decrease its high level of dependence on its western allies. It was already apparent for the country to develop an independent defense industry and to reduce its economic dependence on NATO and the US during this period.⁵²⁸ For example, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit told the Turkish Senate that “Türkiye can no longer leave its national security only to its cooperation with the US and NATO.”⁵²⁹

Second, Türkiye also had another trump card to use against the embargoes and aid cuts. The country in turn closed the US defense and intelligence installations on Turkish territory throughout the period of the embargo and Türkiye already knew how important it was for the US and NATO, the unique location of Türkiye and the military bases on its soil.⁵³⁰ Even though it was in the period of détente, the competition with the Soviet Union was ongoing.

Third, to break the effect of reducing or cutting aid and embargoes, the country had an alternative option, which also refers to the external benefit of the period, since the country was able to use a new strategy of balancing between east

⁵²⁵ Krebs, pp. 343-344.

⁵²⁶ Walt, Testing, pp. 290-291.

⁵²⁷ Walt, Testing, p. 291.

⁵²⁸ Atmaca, p. 32.

⁵²⁹ Walt, Testing, p. 296.

⁵³⁰ Laçiner, p. 80.

and west and decreasing its high dependence to the western allies. In this period, Türkiye developed better relations with Moscow.⁵³¹ Given it achieved a security deterrence against the Soviet threat and since the Soviet Union arguably aims to use Turkish-Western differences to its own advantage.⁵³² Also, for S. Walt, this rapprochement did not involve significant Turkish concessions; instead, Türkiye received significant economic benefits. Accordingly:

*Türkiye obtained a \$200 million credit for industrial development in 1967, and Soviet-Turkish trade expanded rapidly. Meanwhile, cooperation with the Soviets continued to grow. These two countries established a Joint Economic Cooperation Committee at this time, and a ten-year agreement for economic assistance was signed in 1977. By 1980, the Soviet Union had pledged over \$3 billion worth of economic aid. Soviet-Turkish trade quadrupled between 1967 and 1977, and Türkiye began importing increasing amounts of energy from the Soviet Union as well.*⁵³³

Although the outcome was highly negative, as relations deteriorating between Türkiye and NATO/US, it also led to a crucial strategic shift in Turkish foreign policy, such as Türkiye's increasingly warmer relations with the Soviet Union, economic cooperation, and further aids provided by USSR. Türkiye also successfully secured Soviet support during the crises of 1967 and 1974. Furthermore, despite considerable pressure and threats from the West, Türkiye exercised its sovereign right and justified its actions by launching the Cyprus Peace Operations in 1974, even at the risk of jeopardizing the cohesion of NATO and potentially igniting a broader conflict between two NATO allies.

As a result, the mid-Cold War period created many challenges, threats, and new struggles, as well as potential benefits. It experienced for both sides a period of low-level commitment to each other, arguably especially by Türkiye. and the country was able to develop a more multi-dimensional foreign policy behavior and strategy as balancing between East and West, the benefits here was Türkiye during this process would be able to reduce its high level of dependence to the Western allies, especially the US. As it also gives a chance to use this ability as a trump card.

⁵³¹ Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, **Turkey - Challenges of Continuity and Change**, 1. ed, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 104.

⁵³² Sakkas and Zhukova, p. 133.

⁵³³ Walt, Testing, p. 295.

The late Cold War period was generally characterized by a resurgence of tensions, confrontations, and rivalries that eventually led to the collapse of the USSR.⁵³⁴ In the 1980s, rising tensions between Cold War superpowers and sub-regional conflicts like the Iran-Iraq War increased Türkiye's perceived security concerns once again. These developments were further exacerbated by the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵³⁵ Eventually, for Oğuzlu and Han, Turkish decision-makers and the Western allies rediscovered their strategic values each other. Türkiye's alliance behavior was re-strengthening the ties with the alliance during a period of renewed global instability and rigid bipolarity.⁵³⁶

In assessing the clarity of the signals in the external threats and opportunities, even if the rapprochement process between the Soviets and Türkiye improved the relations in a positive way. The last process presents relatively higher clarity in the indications of threats and benefits due to several reasons.

First, the rigid bipolarity and high level of competition between the superpowers were creating other and further security concerns above all other matters. Second, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan heightened threat perceptions in Türkiye, given its geographic proximity to the conflict and the potential for Soviet expansionism to spill over into the Middle East. The region is already in a high state of instability due to the Iran-Iraq War and the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.⁵³⁷ These developments particularly created a clear and imminent external threat to the country. The regional instability in the Middle East reminded Türkiye of its dependence and importance on NATO for security guarantees.⁵³⁸ Third, the Soviet Union increased its military presence in the region, including the Mediterranean. Considering, the proximity as always stated directly influences Türkiye. The high level of presence of Soviet forces in the region and the growing modernization of Soviet military capabilities.⁵³⁹ This presented a direct threat to Türkiye's national

⁵³⁴ Wohlforth, End of the CW, pp. 91-129; Garthoff, pp. 287-293.

⁵³⁵ Uslu, p. 19; Walt, Testing, p. 296; Atmaca, p. 27.

⁵³⁶ Oğuzlu and Han, pp. 67-68.

⁵³⁷ Uslu, p. 19.

⁵³⁸ Atmaca, p. 27.

⁵³⁹ Thomas H. Etzold, "The Soviet Union in the Mediterranean", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 37, No: 4, 1984, pp. 4-22; Pavel Podvig, "The Window of Vulnerability That Wasn't: Soviet Military Buildup in the 1970s—A Research Note", *International Security*, Vol. 33, No: 1, 2008, pp. 118-120.

security, as always, especially in a highly competitive bipolar environment. In the end, Türkiye was on the opposite side of the Western bloc and was a member of NATO, despite the rapprochement process observed during the process.

From the external benefits side, there was also a relatively high level of clarity that also shaped Türkiye's alliance behavior in this period. The US in a rigid bipolar environment, especially by the Reagan administration in 1981 was influential and brought about an escalation in Cold War tensions once again.⁵⁴⁰ As a result, The US responded, and increased support provided tangible benefits to its allies. This also refers to the threat perceptions all around the world created by the post-Cold War conflictual environment. The uncertainties and instability in the neighboring countries put renewed emphasis on Türkiye's reliability as the only trustworthy country in its region.⁵⁴¹ This assistance that was provided to Türkiye reached its peak during Ronald Reagan's administration and he prioritized Türkiye's strategic role for NATO's southern flank.⁵⁴² He also focused on military buildup, including nuclear armament, which influenced global dynamics, this reminded how valuable is Türkiye's position for the US, also strategically due to its pivotal role in implementing NATO's new military strategies. In the end, a new DECA was signed between the parties.

According to the report:

*The DECA includes a foundation agreement aimed at fostering economic and social developments, supplemented by agreements on (1) defense support, (2) defense industrial cooperation, and (3) installations. In 1979 and 1980 Türkiye received \$993.3 million and \$1.16 billion, respectively. However, the value of pledged economic assistance declined to about \$1 billion in 1981.*⁵⁴³

⁵⁴⁰ Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 105, No: 3, 1990, pp. 373-395; Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Reagan Administration and Coercive Diplomacy: Restraining More Than Remaking Governments", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 106, No: 1, 1991, pp. 57-82.

⁵⁴¹ Bölme, NATO-TR, p. 101.

⁵⁴² Bruce Kuniholm, "The Evolving Strategic Significance of Turkey's Relationship with NATO", **A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years**, Ed. Gustav Schmidt, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2001, (Evolving) pp. 339-357.

⁵⁴³ The Comptroller General of the US, "The Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement: U.S. Interests and Turkish Needs", **US General Accounting Office**, Washington D.C., 1982, <https://www.gao.gov/products/id-82-31>, (25.09.2024), (DECA), pp. 1-33.

In return of course, the US, granting full access to Turkish bases and facilities at the period by providing over \$500 million in military and economic aid.⁵⁴⁴

4.1.2.3. Strategic Environment

Finally, the last consideration in the neoclassical realism extension of systemic factors is the condition of the state's strategic environment. This refers to the urgency and magnitude of the visible threats and opportunities that states encounter. It encompasses the proximity, urgency, and intensity of these threats and opportunities.⁵⁴⁵ Essentially, the closer the threat or opportunity, the more dangerous it becomes. This results in either restrictive or permissive strategic environments in a state. A restrictive environment forces states to comply more tightly with systemic constraints and pressures, while a permissive environment allows for greater maneuvering capabilities for their foreign policy choices.⁵⁴⁶ Considering the relative position of Türkiye in terms of power and geography, even if the general environment doesn't provide any restrictions for other countries, for example, the US, it can provide for Türkiye due to the power status of Türkiye, its proximity to the Soviet Union, and the clarity of the indications, especially of the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Moreover, as always, the relative intensity of the conflictual environment of bipolarity will be considered in all assessments of this thesis since it puts the main and foremost emphasis on the structural and external factors.

Therefore, the thesis adopts a logic and combines strategic environment with the third implication of the distribution of power and bipolarity explored in the previous chapter, in which the more the international system was built on rigid bipolarity, the more sensitive and cautious Turkish decision-makers became in their interactions with their external counterparts.⁵⁴⁷ Because the system imposes a high level of systemic constraints and pressures on the states. Of course, not always when the competitiveness and conflictual environment is of rigid bipolarity and will make Türkiye's strategic environment restrictive. However, as discussed above, the

⁵⁴⁴ Walt, Testing, p. 296.

⁵⁴⁵ Götz, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁴⁶ Ripsman et al., pp. 52-56.

⁵⁴⁷ Oğuzlu and Han, p. 62.

expected implications of systemic factors vary according to the level of power possessed by the states. and because any potential and clear threat posed by the Soviet Union could be understood as an urgent, imminent and intense threat due to the relative position of Türkiye's proximity and its imbalanced power capabilities. which, means, in case the clarity of the threats and opportunities is apparent and high-level, and if the bipolarity is structured by great powers in a rigid sense, this directly imposes Türkiye's strategic environment is expected to be restricted. And as expected, this restrictive environment would constraints Türkiye to comply more tightly with the structural imperatives, while a permissive environment allows for more maneuvering capabilities for the foreign policy choices. As already we divided the cold war into three periods, the thesis will make some inferences on each of those periods as according to Türkiye's strategic environment as a final evaluation to understand how the structural imperatives are effective in its alliance behavior.

In the early period (1945-1953), imposed a highly restrictive strategic environment for the country due to its status as a lesser power, its proximity, power imbalances, and, as discussed, the high level of clarity in the indications of external threats from direct hostile actions, including territorial claims and revisions of the Montreux Convention, while the external benefits from Western provided aid and assistance. On the other hand, the Cold War period was in its initial stage, and the rigidity of the bipolar environment grew very rapidly to its peak. These urgent, imminent, and intense conditions made Türkiye's strategic environment highly restrictive, both at the international and regional levels. The country imposed mostly structural imperatives and limited its foreign policy options. In the end, it was one of the most influential factors in the country's decision to join NATO by forcing it to take a balancing action with the Western bloc.

The mid-period (1955–1979) saw a shift towards a more permissive strategic environment at the international level, particularly during the Détente era. but with some short-term restrictive elements due to regional conditions and crisis moments, especially at the sub-regional level. For example, Türkiye's Cyprus operation in 1974 radically changed the geostrategic balance in the Eastern Mediterranean and

reshaped the military and political dynamics in the region.⁵⁴⁸ The overall global context allowed for greater maneuvering, as well Türkiye's NATO membership provided a security umbrella against the Soviet threat.⁵⁴⁹ However, specific crises, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, introduced periods of heightened tension and misperceptions, leading to temporary restrictive conditions. But as also discussed above, the indication of the clarity elements was relatively lower since both the bipolar environment relaxed, and multiple other options existed for Türkiye in the international environment. The country both obtained NATO's security umbrella, and the overall international context allowed for greater maneuvering capability.

The late Cold War period (1979-1991) can be characterized as returning to a restrictive strategic environment for Türkiye, particularly in the initial years. As discussed above, the resurgence of Cold War tensions, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and regional instability in the Middle East renewed Türkiye's security concerns and restricted the country to the structural imperatives.⁵⁵⁰ The discussed clarity in the indications of both threats and benefits from the superpowers once again limited Türkiye's foreign policy options. In the end, it resulted in a high-level commitment to NATO and a closer alignment with the West.

It is also important to note that the restrictive environment faced by Türkiye was relatively less severe compared to the early Cold War period. The growing superiority of the Western bloc, particularly the US's economic and military dominance, became increasingly evident, shifting the perception of benefits to be more influential and making the threat side less restrictive. As the war ended, Türkiye's strategic environment, like the rest of the world, became more permissive. However, this new phase, alongside the changes in the global order following the collapse of the Soviet Union, introduced new challenges and uncertainties.

In conclusion, the strategic environment that Türkiye faced during the Cold War was not static but rather fluctuated in response to the changing dynamics of the international system and the clarity of indications of external threats and benefits. As these fluctuations significantly influenced Türkiye's foreign policy choices and its

⁵⁴⁸ Özdamar and Erciyas, pp. 457-477.

⁵⁴⁹ Oğuzlu and Han, pp. 65, 75.

⁵⁵⁰ Atmaca, p. 26; Kuniholm, *Evolving*, pp. 339-357.

alignment behavior throughout the Cold War, at the same time the relations between NATO/west and Türkiye also experienced many fluctuations and ups and downs. So far, the assessment of all structural and external factors provides the primary and foremost explanation of Türkiye's alliance behavior, its insistence to join NATO, and its evolving commitment to the alliance. Türkiye's strategic environment during the Cold War was assessed by this thesis across three distinct periods. The early period was highly restrictive due to already discussed factors, the mid-period was generally permissive with periodic and especially regional restrictions; and the late period, although initially restrictive, saw relatively lower levels of restriction due to the apparent superiority of the Western bloc in the ongoing process.

The general assessment of the systemic and external factors that the thesis proposed can be summarized as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Comparative Assessment of Systemic and External Factors Influencing Türkiye's Alliance Behavior During the Cold War Periods

Period	Strategic Environment	Clarity of External Threats	Clarity of External Benefits	Rate of Bipolarity
Early Cold War (1945-1955)	<u>Highly Restrictive:</u> especially after 1948	<u>High-level:</u> Soviet cancellation of the 1925 Friendship and Neutrality Treaty, Stalin's demands on Montreux Convention, Turkish Straits, territorial claims on Kars and Ardahan	<u>High-level:</u> the US support through Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan; offers for Western integration and several economic/military assistances	<u>Rigid Bipolarity:</u> especially after 1948
Mid Cold War (1955-1979)	<u>Fluctuating:</u> short-term and regional restrictions (1955-1968) Generally Permissive (1969-1979)	<u>Moderate:</u> Cuban Missile Crisis; high level of Western dependence. Cyprus issue and Johnson letter; aid and assistance decreased; embargoes imposed. (but alternative solutions appeared)	<u>Lower:</u> Nato membership provided a strong security deterrence. Soviet rapprochement with aid, assistance and trade agreements. (but unclear in efficiency)	<u>Fluctuating:</u> Mixed (1955-1968), Relaxed during Detente (1969-1979)

Late Cold War (1979-1991)	<u>Generally Restrictive:</u>	<u>Initially High-level:</u> Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, regional instability (Iran-Iraq War, Islamic Revolution in Iran)	<u>High-level:</u> Renewed Western support and assistance with DECA agreement as strategic importance of Türkiye for NATO increased.	<u>Rigid Bipolarity:</u> (1979-1986)
	Mixed (1979-1986) Final Phase (1986-1991)	<u>Gradually decreased</u> especially after 1986		<u>Dissolution of Bipolarity:</u> (1986-1991)

Source: Created by the author.

4.2. DOMESTIC INTERVENING VARIABLES

The thesis considers domestic intervening variables as complementary factors. They are especially important in periods of short-term influence or specific foreign policy choices. Structural and external factors, on the other hand, are considered as the primary and most influential determinants. The external factors also exert a strong influence on the domestic variables. This is why neoclassical realism refers to them as "intervening".⁵⁵¹ In addition, their value plays an important role in determining specific, unique, and unexpected foreign policy behaviors, especially over a certain period.⁵⁵² Moreover, domestic factors are expected to be more influential when structural imperatives impose fewer constraints and pressures on states. This influence becomes particularly notable during periods with a more flexible strategic environment and a less rigid bipolar setting, such as during the period of détente, when states are assumed to have greater maneuvering capabilities.

This chapter will not examine in detail every domestic-level factor. Instead, it focuses on the most influential domestic-level variables as complementary factors for addressing the primary research questions. The aim here is to analyze specific foreign policy decisions over distinct periods to assess Türkiye's evolving commitment to the Alliance. For instance, the Menderes era and the Democrat Party's (DP) role will be examined to explore how leaders and elites shaped Türkiye's decision to align with NATO. Similarly, this chapter highlights key

⁵⁵¹ Md Mahmudur Rahman, "A Review of Neo-Classical Realism and Its Assessment of Independent and Intervening Variables in Foreign Policy Analysis", **International Journal of Politics and Security**, Vol. 3, No: 2, 2021, pp. 24-47.

⁵⁵² Rose, p. 147.

domestic factors to provide a deeper understanding of Türkiye's overall commitment to the alliance. The chapter first examines key aspects of Türkiye's national identity and the enduring legacy of Atatürk, and it analyzes how the country's strategic culture has been shaped by centuries of historical experience. Second, it investigates the images and ideological/political orientations of key leaders and elites during specific periods that were most influential in the period. Finally, it examines the role of the military, state-society relations, and how these dynamics interacted with growing anti-Western sentiments in society.

4.2.1. National Identity, Strategic Culture, And Historical Experiences

Neoclassical realism assumes that strategic culture plays a crucial role in shaping foreign policy behavior. It refers to deep-rooted beliefs about the nation, identities, worldview, ideological orientations, and common cultural structure.⁵⁵³ The determinants of Turkish foreign policy in the context of national identity can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire and were subsequently shaped by the establishment of the Republic under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who implemented a series of reforms to modernize the country.⁵⁵⁴

This section does not provide a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's national identity or all the determinants that shape its foreign policy behavior. However, it will suggest a selection of elements inherent to national identity and strategic culture that can be considered as the most important influence in assessing Türkiye's alliance behavior. Finally, the section will discuss the relative influence of these elements on the country's relations with the Western alliance during the Cold War era.

4.2.1.1. National Identity: Debates on Westernization-Modernization, Atatürk's Legacy and Vision

The concept of Westernization has been debated in Turkish political history since the Ottoman Empire. It also played an important role in the establishment of

⁵⁵³ Meibauer, History, p. 355.

⁵⁵⁴ Bozdağlıoğlu, pp. 55-60.

the new Turkish Republic. The Westernization and/or modernization approach emerged from a long-standing desire for closer integration with the West.⁵⁵⁵ This ambition gained more momentum during the Ottoman Empire's decline, when defensive policies were adopted, and internal debates were intensified. It was rooted in the belief that modernization and Westernization were essential to achieving national strength and international recognition.⁵⁵⁶ Proponents of this approach generally view Western civilization as more advanced than the rest of the world.

Türkiye's orientation toward the West partly reflects a long-standing search for identity and a sense of belonging. Atatürk recognized early on that modernization's ultimate success required not only modernist elite but also an active engagement of secularized and modern society.⁵⁵⁷ Thus, the construction of Turkish national identity became a priority of the revolution and modernization efforts. The central element of the Kemalist vision of modernization is the goal of elevating the Turkish nation-state to the level of the world's most advanced nations, and ultimately surpassing them.⁵⁵⁸ Accordingly, Türkiye needed to look westward and internalize certain Western values to a certain extent as part of its modernization process.⁵⁵⁹ There is also a strong belief in science and the scientific method at the core of the modernization concept. This belief is reflected in one of Atatürk's frequently quoted statements: "Science is the truest guide in life..."⁵⁶⁰

The prevailing view in the literature is that Türkiye has long desired to be part of Western civilization. This ambition was an important factor in the country's decision to join NATO.⁵⁶¹ Thus, many scholars evaluated Türkiye's decision to join NATO was not driven solely by post- WW II concerns about the Soviet threat. This quest can be interpreted as Türkiye's search for belonging or its desire to secure an influential position in the new international order. It also highlights the country's

⁵⁵⁵ Bozdağlıoğlu, p. 56.

⁵⁵⁶ Bozdağlıoğlu, p. 56; Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey", **Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 54, No: 1, 2000, pp. 206-207.

⁵⁵⁷ Suna Kili, "Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey", **International Political Science Review**, Vol. 1, No: 3, 1980, p. 385.

⁵⁵⁸ Kili, p. 384.

⁵⁵⁹ Kubicek, p. 172.

⁵⁶⁰ Kili, p. 384.

⁵⁶¹ Abdulkadir Baharççek, "From Neutrality to Alignment: The Formation of Nato and Turkish Bids for Membership", **Akademik Yaklaşımlar Dergisi**, Vol. 1, No: 1, 2010, p. 57; Ş. Yılmaz, p. 482; Bozdağlıoğlu, p. 62.

long-standing desire for acceptance and recognition by Western nations since the Ottoman period.⁵⁶² Additionally, as discussed above, NATO's dual role as both a military and political organization relatively aligns with Türkiye's broader goals of Westernization and modernization. NATO membership was therefore viewed as an opportunity for the country to advance these ideals and ambitions.

Scholars generally assume that Türkiye's founding principles of modernization played a direct or indirect role in its decision to align with the Western Bloc over the Eastern Bloc. For Criss, while specific approaches to Modernization/Westernization varied, the fundamental idea of aligning with the "West" continued to be a powerful motivator for the Republic. Ultimately, ambitions such as the desire for recognition as part of the Western world played a crucial role in Türkiye's decision to join NATO and shaped its broader alliance behavior.⁵⁶³

However, the concepts of modernization and Westernization have also generated wide-ranging debates. Atatürk's vision for foreign policy emphasizes a balancing and neutralist strategy that is rooted in pragmatic and realistic approaches. It also has a strong focus on complete independence and anti-imperialism.⁵⁶⁴ This approach, to some extent, contradicts the idea of being direct part of any conflicting bloc, whether Western or Eastern. Yet, the extent to which Atatürk's vision was fully understood and properly implemented remains unclear and open to interpretation. Beyond these discussions, Bilgin and Yılmaz highlight another aspect of Türkiye's pursuit of Westernization. They argue that the ideal of modernization extended even beyond its original goals in the environment of the bipolar world. Through the efforts of political elites, intellectuals, and strategic alliances, Türkiye's Western identity was actively constructed and reinforced through the Cold War.⁵⁶⁵

This was particularly evident during the Menderes era of 1950–1960, which will be discussed further in the following section. For Bilgin and Yılmaz, Türkiye's statecraft intellectuals played a key role in the further construction of a stronger Western identity for the country. This sense of identity, in turn, allowed for the

⁵⁶² Criss, Tarihsel, p. 13.

⁵⁶³ Criss, Tarihsel, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁶⁴ Kili, p. 401; M. Aydın, p. 175.

⁵⁶⁵ Yılmaz and Bilgin, p. 39.

adoption of a pro-Western foreign policy.⁵⁶⁶ This also partly explains Türkiye's high level of commitment and the extensive privileges and concessions granted to the US in this period. This cultural dimension of the orientation was not different from that of the West. Williams and Neumann discuss the Cold War narratives about NATO. They describe the organization as "the military guarantor of Western civilization." they argue that NATO's own purpose also extended beyond countering the Soviet threat and emphasized cultural and civilizational ties among member states.⁵⁶⁷

Bilgin and Yılmaz also argue that the construction of a Western identity in Turkish politics is so strong that the country has somehow consistently maintained its cooperation with the West and remained committed to the alliance no matter what. Even when relations deteriorated or interests diverged, such as after the arms embargo in the 1970s or during the *détente* with the USSR, Türkiye's ties with the West were eventually re-strengthened, and commitments returned to their previous state.⁵⁶⁸ This pattern is likely to continue today, beyond the historical process.

Finally, this thesis adopts a similar perspective and assumes that the modernization ideal embedded in the founding principles of Türkiye is not similar with the pro-Western construction and orientation of the Cold War era, particularly from the early period until the Johnson letter. More importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, such a construction and ideological orientation are one of the key factors in explaining Türkiye's ambition and persistence to join NATO, despite its initial refusal, as well as the period of high level of commitment to the Alliance, especially to the US. This also partly explains the complex and evolving nature of fluctuations in the relations with NATO and the West. Some of the founding principles that are also rooted in national identity create a partial and relatively contradictory situation for being part of a conflicting bloc.

The modernization vision is unlikely to provide a clear explanation for Türkiye's persistent and intense desire to join NATO. However, given Türkiye's initial decision to turn its face to the West, it was a relatively influential factor in its

⁵⁶⁶ E. Yılmaz and Bilgin, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁶⁷ Michael C. Williams and Iver B. Neumann, "From Alliance to Security Community: NATO, Russia, and the Power of Identity", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 29, No: 2, 2000, pp. 358-362.

⁵⁶⁸ E. Yılmaz and Bilgin, pp. 51-52.

preference for the Western bloc over the Eastern, and ultimately, along with other factors, in its decision to join NATO.

Moreover, the founding principles of nationalism, complete sovereignty, anti-imperialism, and neutralist stance, which are relatively contradictory elements to be part of a conflicting bloc, have also been important determinants in shaping Türkiye's evolving commitment and alliance behavior toward the West throughout history. These conclusions lead to the second assumption of this section as the enduring legacy of Atatürk and his visionary approach in shaping Turkish foreign policy and its national identity, along with their relative influence on Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War.

First, the political and legal boundaries of the Republic of Türkiye were established through a victory over the Western powers in the War of Independence and an internal revolution against an outdated monarchy.⁵⁶⁹ This foundational achievement formed the groundwork for the core principles and ideology of the state. The national struggle symbolizes the "salvation of Türkiye" from foreign domination and its resistance against imperialism. Suna Kili clarifies that:

*Atatürk and his vision had a special meaning and influence for leaders of developing countries like Gandhi, Bourguiba, Nasser, especially for those who defend their independence against imperialism. The successful conclusion of the Turkish War of Independence inspired a new hope among oppressed nations worldwide as it demonstrated that the invincible imperialist West could, in fact, be defeated.*⁵⁷⁰

Furthermore, this struggle for its independence played a critical role in shaping Türkiye's national identity. Following the establishment of the Republic in 1923 and the reforms led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk marked the nation's most comprehensive and decisive modernization efforts since the Ottoman era.⁵⁷¹

Second, the Republic of Türkiye was built on some foundational principles, also known as Atatürk's main principles. The main goal of the Kemalist ideology was defined as the construction of a modern Turkish state and society with the aim of

⁵⁶⁹ Karaosmanoğlu, p. 207; Kili, p. 382; Feroz Ahmad, **Turkey: The Quest for Identity**, Reprinted, Oneworld, Oxford, 2005, pp. 80-90.

⁵⁷⁰ Kili, pp. 400-401.

⁵⁷¹ Bozdağlıoğlu, p. 62.

raising Türkiye above the level of contemporary civilization.⁵⁷² The basic and fundamental principles of these main principles, including Republicanism, Nationalism, Folkism (populism), Laicism (secularism), Etatism (Statism), and Revolutionism (reformism), were to serve as the guiding pillars in achieving these goals and became the core principles of the Republic.⁵⁷³

The table below shows these principles with their specific definitions, along with their potential influence on Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War:

Table 6: The Six 'Fundamental Principles' of Atatürk and Their Potential Influence on Alliance Behavior During the Cold War

Principle	Definition and Influence on Türkiye's National Identity	Potential Influence on Alliance Behavior
Republicanism	Transitioned Türkiye from an empire and monarchy to a nation-state by asserting the absolute sovereignty of the citizens over the state. Aims to strengthen democratic governance, citizens' participation in governance and their commitment to the nation. Reflects the idea of " <i>Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the Nation</i> ".	Positive: Reinforces Türkiye's commitment to democracy and state sovereignty; aligning it with the shared values of the West. Negative: Strong emphasis on sovereignty and the nation-state may, at times, lead to divergence from NATO, particularly on collective decisions.
Nationalism	Kemalist nationalism is anti-imperialist and recognizes the right of all nations to independence. Atatürk's nationalism rejects ethnic and racial definitions, instead it defines nationhood based on a shared/common culture and linguistic unity. It emphasizes anti-imperialism and complete independence.	Positive: Limited or no impact. Negative: Strong focus on complete independence, anti-imperialism, and a nationalist stance is likely to lead to divergence, especially in the case of excessive military or political commitments. It is expected to be an important factor in Türkiye's evolving commitment to NATO and the resulting tensions.
Folkism (Populism)	Focus on national sovereignty and its importance for both security and development. Envisions a society based on hard work. It rejects class distinctions and conflicts by refusing to grant special privileges to any individual, family, class, or organization.	Positive: Limited or no impact. Negative: Limited or no impact, but some influence could be inferred due to its shared elements with socialist ideology.

⁵⁷² Kili, p. 387; M. Aydın, p. 171.

⁵⁷³ Ahmad, p. 88; M. Aydın, p. 171.

Etatism (Statism)	The state will regulate the general functioning of economic activities in areas where the private sector is either unwilling or inadequate, or where national interests require it. The result is a mixed economic model. The role of the state is to support the economic freedom and entrepreneurship of individuals and commercial institutions, intervening in markets only when necessary.	Positive: Limited or no impact but following 1945, the Democratic Party) and later the Justice Party in the 1960s adopted a Western-style liberal economic approach. Negative: Central economic control by the state is likely to diverge from the Western preference for market-driven liberal economies. It differs from the traditional Western liberal perspective but is not incompatible with the capitalist system.
Laicism (Secularism)	The state treats all citizens equally, regardless of religion, belief, or philosophical view, and guarantees freedom of all beliefs. The religious approach is a system of faith and morality, while the state promotes enlightenment through reason and science.	Positive: Encourages alignment with NATO's secular and tolerant states, promoting shared values of equality. Negative: Limited or no impact.
Revolutionism (Reformism)	The dynamic principle not only acknowledges achieved reforms but also seeks to go beyond them. It gave flexibility to ideology; enabling adaptation to change and reform, promoting modernization and growth but without compromising core principles.	Positive: Positions Türkiye as a forward-thinking NATO member, encouraging alliance adaptability to evolving challenges by promoting modernization and growth Negative: Limited or no impact.

Source: Prepared by the author, using sources: Kili, pp. 387-392, and Ahmad, pp. 88-90.

These principles formed the foundation of the Republic, as they served as a guide for the ideological direction of the State and aimed to redefine the social construction of national identity.

Third, in defining the foreign policy perspective of Kemalism, the ideal of "peace at home, peace in the world" plays a central role. Kemalist foreign policy was based on the idea of all nations living together in peace. In Atatürk's rational and pragmatic view, there were no "eternal enemies." Throughout his presidency, he pursued a foreign policy that could be described as "active neutrality," with the primary aim of safeguarding Türkiye's national interests and maintaining balance in the international arena.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ Karaosmanoğlu, p. 208; Oğuzlu and Han, p. 64.

Atatürk recognized that a peaceful-neutral foreign policy was essential to the implementation of deep reforms within Türkiye. Thus, with his famous motto, "Peace at home, peace in the world," he linked domestic stability with international peace and order. Aydın clarifies that Atatürk's foreign policy vision was based on three core principles. Accordingly:

*The establishment and preservation of a fully independent nation-state shaped by Turkish nationalism; the advancement of Türkiye to the level of contemporary civilizations through Kemalist principles; and the adoption of a realistic and peaceful approach in foreign policymaking, neutrality is also a key aspect of this framework.*⁵⁷⁵

After the War of Independence, one of Atatürk's main foreign policy concerns was complete independence. The Ottoman Empire had lost much of its independence in its last years due to foreign intervention, the privileges granted to foreigners, and capitulations. After its defeat in WW I, the Turkish state faced the imminent threat of being erased from the map.⁵⁷⁶

Additionally, the founding principles and the enduring vision of Atatürk have very different interpretations, evolving assessments on different periods and socio-political levels.⁵⁷⁷ The thesis will focus on the central aspects of Atatürk's legacy and his visionary approaches, especially their relative influence for national identity, foreign policy behavior, and complex relations with the Western world.

The foundational legacy and Atatürk's vision, particularly the principles of complete independence, anti-imperialism, and a peaceful-neutral stance, is important determinants that shapes Turkish foreign policy and its alliance behavior with the West. It is obviously influential from the establishment of the Republic to the present day.⁵⁷⁸

NATO membership was sought not only to ensure Türkiye's security, but also to strengthen its relations with the West and establish a clear position for country in the international arena. However, this move also introduced some relatively

⁵⁷⁵ M. Aydın, p. 171; Ramazan Kılınç, "İdeoloji ve Dış Politika: Türkiye'de Kemalist (1930-1939) ve İslamcı (2011-2015) Dış Politikaların Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analizi", *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, Vol.: 13, No.: 52, 2016, p. 75.

⁵⁷⁶ M. Aydın, p. 177.

⁵⁷⁷ Kili, p. 389; Ahmad, p. 88.

⁵⁷⁸ Kili, p. 383.

influential contradictions with the founding principles. In particular, the Kemalist ideals of anti-imperialism, full independence, and a neutral-peaceful foreign policy stance can be seen as a controversial aspect, but not an obstacle, to the dependence and external influences inherent in joining a military alliance such as NATO.

Nevertheless, another important characteristic of Turkish foreign policy is its modernization aim and its orientation towards the West. Although Türkiye fought against the Western powers during WW I, it chose to establish close relations with the Western world after its independence. Initially, this orientation manifested itself as a cultural preference, but after WW II, it also became evident in the political and military spheres.⁵⁷⁹

Therefore, it can be argued that the "complete independence" aspect was not completely imposed by the state to engage in military and political cooperation with other countries; rather, it implies that such cooperation is acceptable if those countries respect the state's right to exist, and the state seeks to balance its own power against potential threats. Indeed, Atatürk played a leading role in establishing the Balkan Pact in 1934 and the Sadabad Pact in 1937, and he accepted economic aid from the Soviet Union.⁵⁸⁰

Kemalism's "reformist-revolutionary" principle and modernization ambition, on the other hand, can be viewed as a supportive element in Türkiye's pursuit within the Western integration process. This principle refers to the changes aimed at ensuring Türkiye's Western integration while preserving the national identity of Türkiye. Despite numerous disagreements and different interpretations of the principles of Kemalism, Atatürk's legacy and vision for Turkish foreign policy continue to influence Turkish politics, policymakers, and intellectuals as they reflect the founding philosophy of the Republic of Türkiye.⁵⁸¹

As a result, decision-makers at the time, primarily influenced by structural and external pressures, approached Türkiye's ideal of Westernization and NATO membership from a reformist perspective. They believed that aligned with Atatürk's vision of modernization. However, this approach in fact introduced some

⁵⁷⁹ M. Aydın, p. 160.

⁵⁸⁰ M. Aydın, p. 177.

⁵⁸¹ Kili, p. 403.

contradictions with certain founding principles of Kemalism. These contradictions became more evident and subject to criticism especially after the 1960s, when Türkiye's national interests began to diverge from those of the West.

In this context, one of the central arguments of this thesis is that Atatürk's legacy and visionary principles should be considered as a fundamental framework for understanding the complex dynamics of Türkiye-NATO/Western relations and the country's shifting commitments. The period of Türkiye's deep commitment to the Alliance with excessive privileges and concessions to the US, and at certain times even its positioning within a conflicting bloc as a direct part, have created some contradictories with the ideals such as complete independence, anti-imperialism and a neutral-balancing stance of the founding principles.

These contradictions have led to further criticism and questioning of the true motives and objectives of the alliance, especially at times when interests diverge. However, they were not obstacles in Türkiye's decision to join the alliance. Moreover, principles such as modernization and revolutionism facilitated Türkiye's integration into the Western alliance. Analyzing how these complex dynamics were balanced in Türkiye's alliance behavior, and how the founding principles influenced its foreign policy, highlights the enduring importance of Atatürk's legacy as an essential element of Türkiye's national identity.

4.2.1.2. Strategic Culture and Historical Experiences: Balancing Policy and the Legacy of Ottoman-Russian Rivalry

The first proposition in this section is the concept of a "balance policy." It refers to a strategic foreign policy culture inherited from the Ottoman Empire. According to Oguzlu and Kasim, the Ottoman Empire developed a unique BoP strategy to maintain its territorial integrity in its late stages. The strategy was a response to growing security threats from European rivals. When a European power posed a threat to the empire, it pursued a balancing strategy by aligning with other

European powers that were in competition with the threatening state.⁵⁸² This strategy was also inherited by the new republic as a traditional approach to security.

The historical tradition of balancing was not abandoned with the establishment of the new Republic; rather, it was adapted to the realities of the modern international system. Scholars suggest that during the Turkish War of Independence, the leaders strategically exploited the divisions between the great powers. They took advantage of their power struggles and conflicts with each other, such as those between the Soviets and the Western powers.⁵⁸³ In this way, the Republic was able to secure diplomatic and military advantages to a certain extent, which contributed to its survival. The success of this pragmatic approach highlighted the importance of the balancing strategy for the country, both historically and in the Republican era.

Overall, in the highly competitive environment of the Cold War between the two superpowers, Türkiye sought to develop a balancing strategy toward the West in response to the Soviet threat. Its desire for NATO protection and its eagerness to receive aid and assistance partly reflect this pragmatic foreign policy culture inherited from the Ottoman period.

The second assumption is the historical experience of past trauma and rivalry with the Russians. In her article, Criss analyzes Türkiye's decision to join NATO through the framework of learning theory, which suggests that the foreign policy behavior of states reflects their learning from historical experiences.⁵⁸⁴ She discusses how historical experience serves as a crucial determinant in shaping leaders' perceptions of security threats and benefits, which ultimately influence their decisions about, for example, alliance formation. The NCR also shares a similar perspective, as strategic culture is shaped by past historical experiences.⁵⁸⁵

Criss also explores the perceptions of Turkish leaders between 1940 and 1950. Many of the leaders had lived through the last years of the Ottoman Empire and had experienced the disadvantages of the country's military, diplomatic, and

⁵⁸² Oğuzlu and Han, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁸³ Karaosmanoğlu, pp. 201-202; Oğuzlu and Han, p. 64.

⁵⁸⁴ Criss, *Tarihsel*, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁸⁵ Meibauer, *History*, p. 355.

political isolation.⁵⁸⁶ Thus, Criss argues that one of the primary motivations of the country was to get away from its long political, diplomatic, and military isolation.⁵⁸⁷

Türkiye's military leadership in the early Cold War period consisted of highly experienced individuals, many of whom had lived through WW I and its aftermath. This collective experience profoundly shaped their understanding of the strategic and geopolitical realities facing Türkiye. As a result, key decision-makers, including figures like Foreign Minister Köprülü, supported the country's NATO membership. They believed that given the complex social and political dynamics of the post-war period, Türkiye could not be left alone politically, diplomatically, and militarily.⁵⁸⁸

Although, Türkiye's neutrality during WW II was widely considered as a success story. The decision-makers likely perceived that the post-war period required a different strategy. At that time, the US also had emerged as the dominant global power and was seen as the nation that had brought an end to the war. For these reasons, aligning with relatively the most-powerful country was likely perceived by Turkish leaders as a pragmatic choice that would serve the country's long-term development and security interests. This alignment also allowed Türkiye to be part of the victorious side without having directly participated in WW II.

Moreover, Bilgin and Yılmaz argue that the Soviet Union was long perceived as a deep-rooted threat to the Republic of Türkiye. Even Türkiye's founding leaders, Atatürk and İnönü, regarded Türkiye-Soviet relations as a cornerstone of foreign policy. They understood the strategic necessity of maintaining cordial relations with the Soviet Union while acknowledging its power and potential threat. Although Türkiye pursued friendly ties with major European powers, it was careful to balance these relations with strategic cooperation with the Soviets.⁵⁸⁹

This sentiment was also rooted in the country's historical experience dating back to the Ottoman period. Throughout history, the Russians have been seen as a feared adversary, as the Ottoman Empire and Russia clashed many times, and the country suffered significant territorial losses. This marked the beginning of the

⁵⁸⁶ Criss, Tarihsel, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁸⁷ Criss, Tarihsel, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁸⁸ Criss, Tarihsel, pp. 17-19.

⁵⁸⁹ E. Yılmaz and Bilgin, p. 49.

empire's decline. Scholars assert that these centuries-long conflicts left a profound psychological impact and collective trauma on Turkish society.⁵⁹⁰

This historical background points to a general explanation in the literature for why the perceived Soviet threat remained central to Turkish foreign policy thinking, especially during the Cold War. Many scholars discuss that the fear of Soviet expansionism and Türkiye's geopolitical vulnerability led policymakers to seek security guarantees from the West and resulted in Türkiye's alignment with NATO. Thus, another important factor explaining Türkiye's postwar approach to the West and its alliance behavior can be seen as a reflection of its long-standing perception of competition and rivalry with Russia. After Stalin's death, although the Soviet government officially acknowledged that its policy toward Türkiye had been wrong and declared that the Soviet Union had no territorial claims on Türkiye,⁵⁹¹ Türkiye's historical mistrust of Russia, rooted in centuries of conflict and often resurfaced.

4.2.2. Leader Images, Ideological and Political Orientations

This section examines the perceptions, images, ideological orientations, and political stances of key Turkish leaders and parties during the Cold War. It aims to highlight specific cases and their influence on Türkiye's alliance behavior. As discussed, the thesis prioritizes structural and external factors. It assumes that these structural imperatives also shape the perceptions and images of the political leaders. While acknowledging the importance of other variables such as leader perceptions, the primary importance will remain in the influence of the structural factors.

Given the limitations and the rapidly changing nature of domestic variables, the focus will be on specific periods and specific cases. It will examine the roles, political positions, and ideological orientations of prominent leaders and the dominant political parties of the time.

In addition, this section will continue to analyze the Cold War era in three distinct phases, in line with the thesis's earlier periodic and case-focused

⁵⁹⁰ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Turkey and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation, Conflict and Asymmetric Interdependence in a Turbulent Region", **Third World Quarterly**, Vol. 37, No: 1, 2016, p. 4; M. Aydın, p. 164.

⁵⁹¹ Kurban, pp. 257-258.

methodology. Each phase will highlight key events and decision-making mechanisms that reflect the broader dynamics of Türkiye's alliance behavior, with particular emphasis on how political leaders and institutions shaped responses in the evolving Cold War context.

4.2.2.1. Early Cold War period (1945-1955)

During the early Cold War period (1945-1955), Türkiye's domestic and ideological dynamics were largely shaped by its historical experiences. The initial and key factor influencing the country's relations and alliance behavior was the domestic transition from a one-party to a multiparty system. This shift not only marked a transformative moment in domestic politics, but also reflected the country's desire to be part of the Western alliance.⁵⁹²

This process is likely accelerated democratic reforms and the adoption of a multi-party system, as policymakers recognized that alignment with Western democratic norms could bolster Türkiye's strategic value to NATO.

The table below gives details about the key events, prominent leaders, and government types in the early Cold War period, 1945–1955:

Table 7: Turkish Domestic Political Context in the Early Cold War Period (1945–1955)

Period	Event	President	Prime Minister	Government Type
1945	Soviet Union Annulment of the 1925 Treaty	İsmet İnönü	Şükrü Saraçoğlu	Single-Party Government (CHP)
1947-1948	Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan	İsmet İnönü	Recep Peker (1946-1947) Hasan Saka (1947-1949)	Majority Government (CHP)
1949	Türkiye's Initial Application to NATO	İsmet İnönü	Hasan Saka (1947-1949) Şemsettin Günaltay (1949-1950)	Majority Government (CHP)
1950-1951	Türkiye's Decision to Join NATO and Formal Application	Celal Bayar	Adnan Menderes	Majority Government (Democrat Party)

⁵⁹² Karaosmanoğlu, p. 216; Ahmad, pp. 99-100.

1950-1953	Korean War Participation	Celal Bayar	Adnan Menderes	Majority Government (DP)
1952	Türkiye's NATO Membership	Celal Bayar	Adnan Menderes	Majority Government (DP)
1951-1955	Establishment of Military Bases and Defense Agreements, 'SOFA' and other bilateral agreements with the US	Celal Bayar	Adnan Menderes	Majority Government (DP)

Source: Created by the Author, Utilizing the Following Sources: “T. C. Hükümetler ve Başbakanlar Listesi”, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Cumhurbaşkanları,” **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**, 16.04.2013 <https://www.tdpkrizleri.org/2013/04/16/list-turkish-governments-pms/> (22.10.2024); “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Cumhurbaşkanları,” **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**, 17. 04. 2013, <https://www.tdpkrizleri.org/category/tuerk-dis-politikasi-karar-alma-suereci-aktoerler-listesi/> (22.10.2024).

In the early period, İsmet İnönü, Celal Bayar, and Adnan Menderes were clearly the most influential and prominent political leaders. This section will focus on their roles and ideological-political stances regarding Türkiye's decision to join NATO, its initial application, and the path by which the country became an official member.

The first consideration will be the decision-making process and initial applications to NATO, with an emphasis on Türkiye's domestic political dynamics. In fact, the process began under the leadership of the founding party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), with figures such as İsmet İnönü and other key leaders. Notably, the Soviet Union's annulment of the 1925 treaty and other direct hostile actions,⁵⁹³ coupled with the US proposals for economic and military assistance, took place during the single-party period.⁵⁹⁴ Thus, one of the most influential external pressures that pushed Türkiye toward the Western bloc emerged at this early stage under the significant influence of İsmet İnönü and the CHP's strategic orientation.

Indeed, it can be assumed that Türkiye developed closer ties with Western countries even before NATO's establishment during WW II. In the final stages of the

⁵⁹³ Atmaca, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁹⁴ Satterthwaite, pp. 74-84; Üstün, pp. 31-52.

war, it was observed that particularly closer relations were already established with the US.⁵⁹⁵ In the previous chapters, the necessary assessments on this issue have already been made. For example, in the early post-war period, during the US visit to Missouri, President İnönü emphasized the pragmatic aspects and stated Ankara's desire to secure a \$500 million loan from the Export-Import Bank.⁵⁹⁶

After that, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Treaty were approved under the significant influence of prominent leaders during the CHP rule, and the opposition parties also strongly supported both agreements by voting in favor of them.⁵⁹⁷ Also in 1948, under the Hasan Saka government, Türkiye expressed its desire to form an alliance with the US and wanted to formalize it. US Secretary of State Marshall gently rejected this proposal, stating that the US was already helping Türkiye.⁵⁹⁸

Another observation is that under pressure from the public and opposition parties, Türkiye's first NATO application came in the last days of the CHP's rule.⁵⁹⁹ After this first application was rejected, subsequent efforts to join NATO continued under the DP, which came to power following the May 1950 elections.⁶⁰⁰ In addition, during a visit by İsmet İnönü to Celal Bayar after his election as president. Bayar expressed the idea that the need for Türkiye's NATO membership was crucial for national security. İnönü agreed, and both leaders reached a consensus on the necessity of NATO membership for Türkiye's security.⁶⁰¹

Overall, these early efforts suggest that while the CHP may not have had the same overtly pro-Western stance as the subsequent DP, a broad consensus already existed in Türkiye. There was widespread political and intellectual support for Türkiye's alignment with the Western bloc.⁶⁰² As analyzed throughout this thesis, the

⁵⁹⁵ Cossaboom and Leiser, p. 73.

⁵⁹⁶ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 483.

⁵⁹⁷ Abbas Balcı, "Demokrat Parti ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Dönemlerinde Türkiye'nin Nato'ya Giriş Denemeleri ve Türkiye'nin Nato'ya Girişi 1945-1960", **Siirt Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi**, Vol. 7, No: 13, 2019, (DP & CHP) p. 267.

⁵⁹⁸ Oral Sander, **Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri, 1947-1964**, Sevinç Matbaası, 1979, p. 68.

⁵⁹⁹ Ayşe Erkmen, "Türkiye'nin NATO Üyeliği ve Üyeliğin TBMM'de Kabulü", **Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi**, Vol. 17, No: 2, 2020, p. 1031.

⁶⁰⁰ Barın Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945-52: Cold War in the Aegean", **Cold War History**, Vol. 9, No: 3, 2009, p. 334.

⁶⁰¹ A. Balcı, DP & CHP, p. 267.

⁶⁰² E. Yılmaz and Bilgin, pp. 41-43.

perceptions and responses of Turkish decision makers were largely shaped by structural imperatives, external threats, and potential benefits within Türkiye's strategic environment.

However, leaders cannot always accurately perceive these external factors; their views are often constrained by ideological biases and, importantly, by the pressure to gain public support during elections. This illustrates another important domestic dynamic that shapes leaders' perceptions and images.⁶⁰³ As will become clearer in the following discussions, domestic factors play a critical role, especially in shaping short-term foreign policy behavior.⁶⁰⁴ For example, the strong pro-Western orientation of the Menderes government contributed to Türkiye's insistence on joining NATO and its high level of commitment to the West and NATO during this period. This commitment cannot be fully understood without considering the domestic variables that intervened, even if their value only effective for a certain period.

The DP emerged as a prominent political force in Türkiye during the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1950s. Under Adnan Menderes's leadership, the party adopted a conservative, democratic, and pro-Western stance that set it apart from its political opponents.⁶⁰⁵ Ironically, this ideological positioning was closely aligned with the broader anti-communist and conservative movements that were prominent in Western countries at the time. After Türkiye's transition to a multi-party system and the first controversial election in 1950, the DP emerged as the winning party in parliament, defeating the founding CHP.⁶⁰⁶

Following the elections, the US expressed its satisfaction that Türkiye had established a functioning democracy. American officials reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining "very close and friendly relations" with Türkiye and pledged to continue their supportive policies. Scholars generally agree that the DP is

⁶⁰³ Ripsman et al., pp. 20-21.

⁶⁰⁴ Ali Şevket Ovalı and İlkin Özdikmenli, "Ideologies and the Western Question in Turkish Foreign Policy: A Neo-Classical Realist Perspective", **All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace**, Vol. 9, No: 1, 2019, pp. 109-110.

⁶⁰⁵ Ahmad, pp. 103-107; Kemal H. Karpat, "Political Developments in Turkey, 1950-70", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 8, No: 3, 1972, pp. 367-370.

⁶⁰⁶ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 489.

known to be more eager to foster closer ties with Western nations.⁶⁰⁷ This tendency is also evident in various actions and statements that will be discussed below. For example, Türkiye's new foreign minister, Fuat Köprülü, signaled a more proactive foreign policy stance toward the Western bloc, as he stated: "Our foreign policy, which has been oriented toward the West since WW II, will now take a more energetic and proactive stance."⁶⁰⁸

Moreover, participation in the Korean War was one of the first decisions of the Menderes government in this period, which aligned Türkiye more closely with the Western alliance and paved the way for its accession to NATO. Under the leadership of the DP, the Turkish cabinet decided to send about 4,500 soldiers to support South Korea in the Korean War. However, this decision was strongly criticized by the opposition led by İsmet İnönü.⁶⁰⁹ In 1950, Türkiye decided to send troops to the Korean War within a short period of time, even without consulting or get an approval of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM).⁶¹⁰

According to Barış Doster, an overtly positive atmosphere was structured in Turkish public opinion regarding both the Korean War and Türkiye's alliance with NATO. To illustrate, even Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, the President of Religious Affairs at the time, became involved in the matter. In 1950, he publicly supported the DP government's decision to send troops to Korea. Additionally, the Presidency of Religious Affairs declared that: "Participation in the Korean War is a form of jihad, and those who die in this war will be martyrs."⁶¹¹

For Bilgin and Yılmaz, from an identity-based perspective, Türkiye's participation in the Korean War was more than a military engagement; in a broader sense, it symbolized Türkiye's commitment to defending Western collective values against adversarial communist forces. This action also shows Türkiye's clear determination to join the Atlantic Alliance.⁶¹²

As discussed, the general view reflects that Türkiye's participation in the Korean War was showing its high-level commitment to NATO membership and used

⁶⁰⁷ Criss, *Missiles*, p. 102; Karpas, p. 368.

⁶⁰⁸ Baharççek, p. 62.

⁶⁰⁹ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 490.

⁶¹⁰ Doster, p. 35.

⁶¹¹ Doster, p. 35.

⁶¹² Yılmaz and Bilgin, "Constructing Turkey's 'Western' Identity during the Cold War", p. 46.

the conflict strategically to advance this goal. Already eager to prove its value to the West, Türkiye quickly seized the opportunity presented by the Korean War. It was the second nation to respond to the UN call for troops and the country achieved a successful record on the battlefield in Korea.⁶¹³ This determination can be attributed to the fact that Turkish policymakers viewed the war as a strategic opportunity to secure NATO membership. Another influencing factor was the concern among policymakers that Türkiye might eventually suffer a similar fate like that of Korea.⁶¹⁴

Finally, Türkiye officially joined NATO in 1952⁶¹⁵, As Türkiye's membership was formalized during the rule of the DP, PM Adnan Menderes expressed his gratitude to show Türkiye's high-level commitment to the Alliance:

The decision we have learned about, regarding Türkiye's acceptance into the Atlantic Pact as an equal member, is naturally met with great satisfaction by the government... Within the Atlantic Pact community, our country will always be guided by the principles of goodwill, sincerity, and loyalty, which constitute the essence of our foreign policy, in its cooperation with other member states.
⁶¹⁶

Fuat Köprülü also stated in his address at the DP's Third Grand Congress:

The Atlantic Pact... is not only a military and political alliance but a union of civilizations, a community of democratic nations. We are rightfully pleased with the outcome that ensures the security of our homeland and people... The Atlantic Pact extends across all of Türkiye's territories—there could be no other way.
⁶¹⁷

These statements marked a period in which Türkiye, under the leadership of the DP and Prime Minister Menderes, demonstrated a strong commitment to the Western alliance and finally adopted an overtly pro-Western stance. Numerous developments during this period support this perspective. Among the most significant were likely to be the military agreements on bases and facilities.

Another indication of Türkiye's high level of commitment to NATO during the DP period, and its highly compromising stance toward the US was the subordination of the Turkish Armed Forces' chain of command to NATO and

⁶¹³ Karpas, p. 353.

⁶¹⁴ Baharççek, p. 62.

⁶¹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Türkiye 1952.

⁶¹⁶ Criss, Tarihsel, p. 15.

⁶¹⁷ A. Balci, DP & CHP, p. 271.

Western control. Particularly in this early period of peak commitment, NATO exercised significant influence over the Turkish military and naval command.⁶¹⁸ Furthermore, this decision was made without consulting or informing opposition groups in parliament.

4.2.2.2. Middle and Late Cold War period (1955-1979, 1979 - 1991)

These developments, along with Türkiye's official NATO membership, bring us to the second key consideration: bilateral agreements, the establishment of military facilities, and defense agreements, particularly those with the US outside of NATO, and the influence of Turkish decision-makers. These factors extended into the mid-Cold War period, especially during the Cuban Missile Crisis. To ensure comprehensive integrity in the analysis, the thesis will assess these factors within the mid-Cold War period.

The table below represents a summary of key events, Turkish leadership, and government structures during the mid-Cold War period:

Table 8: Turkish Domestic Political Context in the mid-Cold War Period (1955–1979)

Period	Event	President	Prime Minister	Government Type	Coalition Partners
1955	Türkiye joins Baghdad Pact (CENTO)	Celal Bayar	Adnan Menderes	Majority Government (DP)	–
1960	1960 Military Coup	Cemal Gürsel	Cemal Gürsel (1960-61, Military) Emin Fahrettin Özdilek (1961, Military)	Military Government	–
1962-1963	Cuban Missile Crisis and Jupiter missiles in Türkiye	Cemal Gürsel	İsmet İnönü (CHP)	Coalition Government	Republican People's Party (CHP), Justice Party (AP) + CHP, New Türkiye Party (YTP), Republican Villagers Nation Party (CKMP)

⁶¹⁸ Doster, p. 37.

1964	Johnson Letter regarding Cyprus	Cemal Gürsel	İsmet İnönü (CHP)	Coalition Government	CHP + Independent
1971	1971 Military Memorandum	Cevdet Sunay	Nihat Erim	Military Government	–
1974	Cyprus Operation	Fahri Korutürk	Bülent Ecevit (CHP)	Coalition Government	CHP, National Salvation Party (MSP)
1975	US arms embargo on Türkiye	Fahri Korutürk	Süleyman Demirel (AP)	Coalition Government	AP, MSP, MHP, Republican Reliance Party (CGP)

Source: Created by the author, utilizing the following sources: “T. C. Hükümetler ve Başbakanlar Listesi”, **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**; “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Cumhurbaşkanları”, **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**.

From 1950 to 1960, during the DP’s rule under the Menderes government, several agreements were signed with both NATO and the US to cover both economic and military fields. In 1955, Türkiye also extended its integration by joining the Baghdad Pact, later known as CENTO.⁶¹⁹

According to Caner Sancaktar, the exact number of bilateral agreements signed with the US during this period is unknown, except for those signed with NATO. Most of these agreements were "secret" and were not submitted to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. Estimates of the number vary. For instance, Suleyman Demirel stated in 1966 that 54 bilateral agreements were signed with the US between 1952 and 1960, in the 1970s many suggested even higher numbers.⁶²⁰

The agreements provide for certain privileges and concessions to the US. They allowed American forces to use the facilities as their own.⁶²¹ As discussed above, an important claim of this thesis is that the high level of commitment to the Western bloc also mirrored that toward the US. This also led to increased American involvement in Türkiye through military and economic aid as well as training programs. During this period, US influence was evident in almost all areas of the

⁶¹⁹ Walt, Testing, p. 294.

⁶²⁰ Caner Sancaktar, “Demokrat Parti Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası’na Marksist Yaklaşım”, **Bilge Strateji**, Vol. 3, No: 5, 2011, p. 36.

⁶²¹ Bölme, Askeri Üsler, pp. 51-71.

country's socio-political structure. Moreover, political elites and decision-makers did not view such dependence and strong pro-Western stance toward the US and the Alliance as restrictive or harmful, but rather as a pragmatic opportunity for Türkiye's development.⁶²²

For Barış Doster, except for the Workers' Party (TİP), which was founded in 1961 and entered parliament in 1965. There was no strong opposition in parliament against the extensive privileges and concessions granted to NATO and the US.⁶²³ According to him, in the early stages, when the number of bilateral agreements was limited and the perception of restrictions on Türkiye's independence was also less evident in society. However, as the number of agreements increased and their conditions became more rigid, along with deteriorating economic conditions, Türkiye became increasingly dependent on foreign dollars, wheat, weapons, spare parts, loans, technical expertise, and intelligence provided by the US. For Doster, this high-level dependence eventually led to a significant loss of political, economic, judicial, military and cultural independence.⁶²⁴

In the process, the DP proved by both in its statements and with evident actions that it was decisively anti-communist and would pursue a pro-Western stance in foreign policy, especially pro-American. Accordingly, in the 1950s, under the Menderes government and with the efforts of Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, Türkiye strongly opposed communism and actively cooperated with the US. Zorlu publicly confirmed that Türkiye had accepted the US request to use Incirlik Air Base and other military facilities in 1958.⁶²⁵ This also reflected Türkiye's assertive and pro-Western foreign policy at the time, along with many others.

In her article, Bilge Criss evaluates Zorlu's primary mission as integrating Türkiye with the West. This integration aimed to strengthen the country's economic and technological position so that Türkiye could become a leading regional power. Zorlu was keen to present Türkiye as a "bulwark" against communism and a loyal NATO ally.⁶²⁶ As discussed above, the neoclassical realism suggests that leaders

⁶²² Ş. Yılmaz, pp. 488, 491.

⁶²³ Doster, p. 38.

⁶²⁴ Doster, pp. 37-38.

⁶²⁵ Criss, Missiles, pp. 101-102.

⁶²⁶ Criss, Missiles, p. 102.

cannot always accurately perceive external factors. The Jupiter missile crisis was a notable example of misperception by the Menderes government. This incident also demonstrates the value of neoclassical realist analysis in examining leaders' perceptions as an explanatory framework. Menderes saw the deployment of nuclear missiles as an element of deterrence, as he stated in the NATO Council speech:

*If it is assumed that Muslim countries will not fall under communist influence, this is very wrong. The situations in Afghanistan and Syria are enough to prove otherwise. The Soviet Union carries out its clandestine infiltrations in accordance with the specific characteristics of each country... Currently, most countries in NATO do not have missiles carrying nuclear warheads. This situation causes great unease, especially in countries bordering Soviet Russia and its satellites. It will be too late for NATO to come to aid in the event of a sudden attack.*⁶²⁷

Türkiye was highly eager to host the Jupiter missiles, because Turkish leaders perceived it as a strategic advantage for the country. This eagerness also contributed to the acceptance of nuclear missile deployment on Turkish soil, along with other extreme privileges and concessions granted to the US.

For N.B. Criss, particularly Zorlu's eagerness to sign the treaty as soon as possible seems overzealous.⁶²⁸ She also points out that the decision to deploy the Jupiter missiles was taken by the Menderes government without much consideration of the opposing views, as in the other examples. The potential opposition could have come from İsmet İnönü. But once the deal was done, he kept quiet, probably to avoid possible anti-modernist accusations or because it was too late to change course.⁶²⁹

Turkish policymakers at the time were highly influenced by perceptions, or misperceptions, by strategic moves to counter perceived Soviet threat and seize economic and military benefits for technological and infrastructural advancement. This perspective also reflects a desire of Türkiye's high-level commitment to the allies. It refers to seeking recognition and approval from the alliance to secure the country's desired financial, military, and technological assistance.

Ultimately, this perception (or misperception) combined with the strong influence of Turkish decision-makers at the time, resulted in Türkiye granting

⁶²⁷ Criss, *Tarihsel*, p. 19.

⁶²⁸ Criss, *Missiles*, p. 106.

⁶²⁹ Criss, *Missiles*, p. 99.

significant privileges and concessions, particularly to the US. The initial bilateral agreements permitted the US to use military facilities freely, often with minimal consideration of Türkiye's own interests. This created further problems and challenges.

For instance, during the deployment of Jupiter missiles, Türkiye hosted these missiles on its soil; however, the nuclear warheads and any decisions regarding their use remained under US control. As discussed above, when Turkish policymakers realized that the US prioritized its own interests over those of its allies, they recognized that Türkiye could become a direct Soviet target. Nonetheless, as Criss emphasized, "being a target" and "being a nuclear target" are threats of an entirely different scale. Such a distinction became apparent only after the crisis.⁶³⁰

Another key aspect of the extreme privileges and concessions granted to the US involved the economic sphere. Türkiye's pursuit of alliance objectives, along with its reliance on economic and military assistance, led to an increasing dependence on US aid. Under the DP's rule, this aid increased significantly, and the investments ran parallel to the US's European recovery plan. It proposed to invest mainly in the agricultural sector to overcome the food shortage in Europe. For the first 5 years, the results were quite successful; the country's economy grew by almost 45 percent due to economic aid.⁶³¹

Although the general sentiment toward US aid among the public and elites was initially highly positive, criticism within Türkiye grew as food revenues declined in subsequent years. Apart from other factors, much of this criticism centered on the perceived influence of the US in directing investments under the Marshall Plan to serve its own interests. Many argued that the US aimed to keep Türkiye as a supplier of raw materials for the industrialized European nations. Therefore, it was criticized that economic aid was intended to exploit the country.⁶³² Ş. Yılmaz clarifies that:

Under Menderes's leadership, the DP especially focused on rural development. However, this strategy alienated the traditional urban power centers, including the military. It was one of the preconditions for the military coup of 1960, along with many other factors beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, in addition to its

⁶³⁰ Criss, Missiles, p. 109.

⁶³¹ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 487.

⁶³² Ş. Yılmaz, p. 488.

*economic impact, the high level of commitment, extreme privileges and concessions to the US also had some indirect political consequences for Türkiye, which eventually undermined its fragile democracy.*⁶³³

As a result, while Menderes and the DP heavily emphasized aid and support from Western allies in their political propaganda, Türkiye received approximately \$3 billion in aid from the US, \$2 billion in military aid, and \$1 billion in economic aid. Ironically, despite this assistance, Türkiye's national debt ratio soared to record levels between 1950 and 1960. In the last nine years of their rule, the national debt rose dramatically from 2.4 billion liras in 1950 to 19.7 billion liras in 1960.⁶³⁴

Additionally, Türkiye's heavy reliance on the US economic aid continued into the subsequent period. The country faced a deepening economic crisis and remained in need of sustained Western support. In 1958, Türkiye agreed to a new US-led economic stabilization program, and its requests for increased military aid were justified by its growing role in the collective defense burden.⁶³⁵

All these observations, along with that discussed in the Process Tracing chapter, shows that the Menderes period and its ideological orientation were strongly aligned with a pro-American stance. Although Türkiye maintained a high level of commitment and integrity within the Western alliance, his approach ultimately heightened the country's dependence on the US through extensive privileges and concessions granted by the Menderes government. It can be argued that such a pro-US/Western orientation was relatively influenced by the government's own misperceptions and strategic miscalculations.

Notably, despite this strong commitment, there was no imminent and strong Soviet threat, as Türkiye had already secured a measure of deterrence by joining NATO. These factors, along with forthcoming crises, triggered additional challenges and a period of rising anti-American sentiments in the country. In the subsequent period, this shift would be reflected socially, politically, and in Türkiye's foreign relations, which will be examined in detail.

⁶³³ Ş. Yılmaz, pp. 487-488.

⁶³⁴ Recep Murat Geçikli, "Demokrat Parti Dönemi Türkiye - ABD İlişkileri", **Atatürk Ansiklopedisi**, 12.10.2023, <https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/demokrat-parti-donemi-turkiye-abd-iliskileri/>, (26.11.2024).

⁶³⁵ Evrensel, p. 11.

The 1960s in Türkiye were marked by a highly complex domestic political structure. Following the 1960 military coup, the country experienced two more coup attempts, two unsuccessful coalition governments, and a short-lived third coalition led by İsmet İnönü with independents.⁶³⁶ Türkiye also faced a series of crises moments in the relations, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Johnson Letter and the Cyprus issue. This complexity makes it difficult to accurately assess the influence of various factors. Thus, understanding the dynamics of domestic political authority and its impact on Türkiye-NATO relations during these years is especially challenging. The thesis will focus partly on the influence of İsmet İnönü and the new generation of political leaders as prominent figures during key moments of the crises, and in the following part will briefly examine the role of the military.

İsmet İnönü was a national hero and one of the founding figures of the Republic. As a prominent statesman, he was a central figure after Atatürk during the nation's founding and developmental phases. He is respected not only for his military expertise and achievements during the Turkish War of Independence but also for his diplomatic skills and pivotal contributions during key events in the country's political history.⁶³⁷ Notably, his role in the Lausanne negotiations, which established the modern borders and sovereignty of Türkiye, and his efforts to maintain the country's neutrality during WW II stand out as major accomplishments. These achievements, among others, earned him the title of "National Chief."⁶³⁸

With such an extensive experience, İnönü was arguably the most reliable and suitable leader to guide Türkiye through the political turmoil and instability of this period to minimize further complications. This relative moderation of transitional period can largely be attributed to his leadership. In times of crisis, such as the missile crisis, the Johnson Letter and the Cyprus issue, İnönü's response to the national traumas, especially in defending the Türkiye's national interest was relatively rational. For Fuat Aksu, Prime Minister İnönü prioritized rational decisions

⁶³⁶ Murat Kasapsaraçoğlu, "The Search for Economic and Military Aid in the Shadow of Crises: Turkish-American Relations during İnönü Governments (1961–1965)", **Middle Eastern Studies**, 2024, (Aid) pp. 1-3; Karpat, p. 361.

⁶³⁷ Fuat Aksu, "Türk Dış Politikası Krizlerinde Hükümetler, Cumhurbaşkanları ve Başbakanlar", **Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi**, Vol.15, No:59, 2018, p. 79; John M. Vander Lippe, "Review: Metin Heper, İsmet İnönü: The Making of a Turkish Statesman", **International Journal of Middle East Studies**, Vol. 32, No: 4, 2000, (İnönü) pp. 554-555.

⁶³⁸ Lippe, İnönü, p. 556.

that aligned with the dignity and survival of the state. Although his approach faced some criticism, it prevented further problems and an adventurous foreign policy.⁶³⁹

During this transitional period, considering the mistakes of the previous era and the impact of internal and external pressures, İnönü sought both to protect the country's domestic reputation and to uphold its independent stance. He pursued a balanced approach to relations with the West and avoided extreme decisions that might further strain the relations.

The Johnson Letter had a profound impact on the domestic political scene, especially among opposition parties that criticized the government's foreign policy. The Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP) and other opposition groups emphasized that the government was still under American influence and failed to protect the state's reputation.⁶⁴⁰ Thus, political leaders were constrained by further electoral pressures, and they needed public support in the upcoming elections. There was a clear opportunity to strengthen their stance on national sovereignty.

Consequently, these domestic variables, along with the primary structural factors, contributed to a period of crisis and turmoil. This ultimately marked a shift from a period of high commitment to the Alliance to one of lower. The era after İnönü was shaped by these complex internal and external factors. Arguably the strong pro-Western stance, along with the extensive privileges and concessions granted to the US during the Menderes period, also indirectly influenced the internal and external dynamics of the new era. This legacy affected the perceptions of the new generation of leaders, as well as all parts of Türkiye's socio-political dynamics.

Amid these complex dynamics, new political figures who succeeded İnönü became more active and visible on the Turkish political scene. Among them, Süleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit emerged as particularly influential leaders who would shape Turkish politics in the subsequent period. Moreover, "National Vision" (Milli Görüş), a religious-political movement led by Necmettin Erbakan, also gained an important influence.⁶⁴¹ Erbakan is widely regarded as an inspiration for contemporary political Islam movements and parties. His party at the time, the

⁶³⁹ Aksu, p. 79.

⁶⁴⁰ Erdem, pp. 312-313.

⁶⁴¹ Laçiner, pp. 66-68.

National Salvation Party (MSP), was rooted in Islamic sentiments and traditions. To some extent, it symbolized the legitimization of Islam within republican politics. This legitimization was further strengthened by the coalition between the Welfare Party and the NSP in 1974.⁶⁴² Notably, Erbakan also played an important role in the decision-making process of the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation, along with Ecevit.⁶⁴³

Public expectations and pressures will be evaluated in the following section. However, it can be observed that the increasing anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in society, along with the polarization between right and left movements in domestic politics during this period, reflected a further competition between two prominent leaders of the new era: Demirel and Ecevit. This new generation, also influenced by the characteristics of this competition and the new era. They were more assertive and energetic in its foreign policy decisions and especially in pursuing Türkiye's national interests on the international stage.⁶⁴⁴

Süleyman Demirel is widely recognized as a conservative and leader of the center-right movements who emphasized the importance of stability and gradual change.⁶⁴⁵ In this regard, he prioritized Türkiye's strategic interests within the Western alliance Laçiner argues that:

*Demirel understood that neither the Muslim world nor the Third World could serve as viable alternatives for Türkiye's relations with the West. Similarly, improving relations with Eastern Europe was nearly impossible due to its communist regime. As a result, Western Europe and the US became Türkiye's primary focus in foreign policy.*⁶⁴⁶

During this period, Demirel's political path was significantly influenced by his ongoing conflict and rivalry with Ecevit. The central focus of Demirel's right-wing governments was the fight against communism and Ecevit's "Centre-Left"

⁶⁴² Ahmad, pp. 132, 139.

⁶⁴³ Ovali and Özdikmenli, p. 117.

⁶⁴⁴ Ovali and Özdikmenli, p. 119; Ahmad, pp. 138, 141.

⁶⁴⁵ Baki Erken, "Merkez Sağ İdeolojisi Çerçevesinde Süleyman Demirel ve Askerî Müdahaleler", **Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi**, Vol. 12, No: 2, 2012, pp. 32-33, 40.

⁶⁴⁶ Laçiner, p. 67.

ideology. In the 1960s, the AP, a center-right party, grew closer to the far-right MHP, particularly in the late 1970s. Ecevit and the CHP were Demirel's main rivals.⁶⁴⁷

Bülent Ecevit emerged as a prominent advocate for leftist ideals during this period. In the mid-1960s, CHP began to update and systematize its six Kemalist principles through a new socioeconomic policy labeled "democratic left." Ecevit became a central figure in this movement and gained significant support. He also advocated for a more independent Türkiye in external affairs.⁶⁴⁸ His criticisms often mirrored the anti-Western and anti-American sentiments prevalent among the public. Furthermore, certain aspects of the CHP's "democratic left" theory reduced the role of some foundational principles such as the role of the state in economic development.⁶⁴⁹

What these two rival leaders, Ecevit and Demirel, have in common is their shared anti-communist stance, their effort to reduce strong dependence on the West while maintaining relations and commitment, and their focus on preserving democracy in the relationship between the military and politics.⁶⁵⁰ As noted above, the period was characterized by complex dynamics and frequent crises with the West. Despite their different approaches and ideological orientations, both leaders were often compelled to prioritize Türkiye's national interests over those of the Alliance, especially during certain periods and crisis moments. This necessity also reflects the electoral constraints and public pressures that defined the spirit of the period.

To illustrate, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the political analysts observed Türkiye's intensified rapprochement with Islam and its Islamic identity in both domestic and international spheres.⁶⁵¹ During the 1967 Arab Israeli War, Demirel asserted that NATO bases could not be used without Türkiye's permission, and the ongoing crises with the Alliance strongly influenced this stance. At that time, Türkiye refused the US requests to use its bases and reinforced their NATO-specific

⁶⁴⁷ Murat Kasapsaraçoğlu, "Amerikan Belgelerinde Türkiye'nin İç Politikası: Ecevit ve Demirel Hükümetleri Dönemi (1974 - 1980)", **Gazi Akademik Bakış**, Vol. 14, No: 28, 2021, (Belge), p. 33.

⁶⁴⁸ Laçiner, pp. 64-65; Walt, Testing, p. 296.

⁶⁴⁹ Kili, p. 399.

⁶⁵⁰ Kasapsaraçoğlu, Belge, p. 33.

⁶⁵¹ M. Aydın, p. 153.

status.⁶⁵² This may also reflect his ideological orientation as a more conservative leader and his sensitive approach to the issue.

Similarly, Ecevit's strong emphasis on Türkiye's independence was evident during the Cyprus crisis, where he advocated for an independent and relatively assertive foreign policy that emphasized Türkiye's right to act without Western pressure to defend its own interests. This did not mean, however, that Türkiye severed its ties with the West; rather, it sought to balance its interests by gradually reducing its heavy dependence on the US.

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and his coalition partner, Necmettin Erbakan, were the key figures behind the decision to intervene in Cyprus in 1974.⁶⁵³ They justified the intervention as urgent and necessary to prevent the genocide of Turkish Cypriots. Ecevit and Erbakan argued that Türkiye, as a guarantor power under the 1960 Treaty, had a responsibility to protect Turkish Cypriots from the inhumane actions of the Greek Cypriot junta and the EOKA-B paramilitary forces.⁶⁵⁴

In addition, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the US adoption of a final, firm political strategy against the Soviets to end the Cold War resulted in the return of the conflictual and competitive environment. Therefore, these conditions forced both Türkiye and NATO and the US to regulate their relationship and reassess their commitment to each other.⁶⁵⁵

The table below gives details about the key events, prominent leaders, and government types in the late Cold War period, 1979–1991:

⁶⁵² Bölme, Askeri Üsler, p. 63.

⁶⁵³ Ovali and Özdikmenli, p. 117.

⁶⁵⁴ Özdamar and Erciyas, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁵ Walt, Testing, p. 296; Atmaca, p. 27.

Table 9: Turkish Domestic Political Context in the Late Cold War Period (1979–1991)

Period	Event	President	Prime Minister	Government Type	Coalition Partners
1979–1980	Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, Iranian Revolution & Iran-Iraq War, Renewed US-Soviet Tensions	Fahri Korutürk	Bülent Ecevit (1978-79) Süleyman Demirel (1979-80)	Coalition Government (1978-79) Minority (1979-80)	CHP, Independent (1978-79) AP (1979-80)
1980–1983	Military Coup in Türkiye, Renewed Western aid, DECA Agreement, Reagan's Doctrine and Hardline Administration, Bipolarity rigid	Kenan Evren	Bülend Ulusu (Military)	Military Government	Military
1983–1986	Re-establishment of Civilian Government in Türkiye, Rising Influence of Right-Liberal Pro-Western Orientation	Kenan Evren	Turgut Özal	Majority Government	Motherland Party (ANAP)
1985–1989	Gorbachev Reforms and administration, Final phase and Dissolution of Bipolarity	Kenan Evren	Turgut Özal	Majority Government	ANAP
1989–1991	Fall of the Berlin Wall, End of Bipolarity and CW,	Turgut Özal	Ali Bozer (1989) Yıldırım Akbulut (1989-1991) Mesut Yılmaz (1991)	Temporary (1989) Majority Government (1989-91)	ANAP

Source: Created by the author, utilizing the following sources: “T. C. Hükümetler ve Başbakanlar Listesi”, **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**; “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Cumhurbaşkanları”, **TDP Karar Alma Süreci Aktörler Listesi**.

Another point is that the left-right polarization that prevailed until the 1980s was relatively influenced by the founding principle of complete sovereignty and independence. This divide reflected the Turkish public's strong anti-imperialist and anti-Western/American sentiments. During the middle and later stages of the Cold

War, Türkiye experienced intense social unrest, military coups, and widespread instability.⁶⁵⁶ As Türkiye entered the final phase of the Cold War, the 1980 coup exploited social turmoil and instability to legitimize its intervention.⁶⁵⁷ Ironically, the coup also marked the beginning of a new era characterized by renewed high-level commitment to the West and NATO.

The governments formed in the aftermath of the coup introduced several new political figures, including Turgut Özal, Mesut Yılmaz, and Tansu Çiller.⁶⁵⁸ During the final phase of the Cold War, new political figures generally reaffirmed a high-level commitment to NATO. This renewed emphasis also initiated a period in which center-right, liberal, and partially conservative ideologies became dominant forces in shaping Türkiye's political dynamics.

Barış Doster clarifies that:

*An analysis of the ideological and political orientation of the right-wing parties reveals also that nearly all segments of the right, including the center-right, nationalist right, and conservative-Islamist right, were generally supportive of NATO's alignment throughout the Cold War era. The Western bloc was viewed as strategically beneficial for Türkiye. Ideologically, this alignment can be seen as a response to the perceived threat of communism and the Soviet Union. In addition to right-wing political parties and their affiliated groups, prominent right-wing organizations such as the Association for the Struggle against Communism, the National Union of Turkish Students, and the Quarry of Intellectuals also supported NATO alliance due to their strong opposition to communism and the USSR.*⁶⁵⁹

Consequently, throughout the Cold War, it would be inaccurate to assert that a clear anti-NATO stance existed among mainstream Turkish political parties, particularly within the center-right, center-left, or nationalist right camps. Instead, anti-NATO sentiments influenced specific decisions at specific times, often in combination with other factors. However, no distinct anti-Western or anti-NATO position was observed among the mainstream parties during this period.

⁶⁵⁶ Kubicek, p. 168.

⁶⁵⁷ Hakkı Uyar, "Türkiye'de Askeri Darbeler ve Nedenleri Üzerine Bir Analiz Denemesi", **Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 20, No: 15, 2020, p. 87.

⁶⁵⁸ Ahmad, pp. 161-162.

⁶⁵⁹ Doster, p. 38.

4.2.3. Domestic Institutions, State-Society Relations, and the Military

During the Cold War, Türkiye's complex domestic political structure was shaped by an early transition to a democratic multi-party system and a series of military coups. Under this complexity and fragility, it would be hard to figure out the relative influence of each domestic institution and other social groups, like civil society organizations. These variables also offer very limited explanatory value, as the democratic transition itself remained fragile and uncertain throughout the process. As discussed above, widespread anti-NATO sentiment was largely absent among mainstream political parties, except for certain social segments among the population and some socialist left parties, such as the Workers' Party which held no significant governmental power.⁶⁶⁰ Most of the political spectrum and decision-makers generally maintained a supportive stance toward NATO, despite occasional criticism of specific policies.

This approach reflects Türkiye's complex geopolitical position during the Cold War, as it balanced Western alliances with regional interests and domestic political considerations. While there have been occasional tensions and disagreements with NATO policies, a clear opposition has remained limited to specific political groups rather than becoming a mainstream political stance. In this regard, given the characteristics and limitations of the period, this section will briefly focus on the relative role of the military, the rise of anti-American/Western and anti-imperialist sentiments, and the left-right polarization within society. These factors played a relatively more important role in shaping the country's trajectory during this period. This relative role can also be assumed in shaping other domestic variables such as the leader's images and perceptions. Thus, they are indirectly influenced by Türkiye's foreign policy decisions and alliance behavior.

4.2.3.1. Role of the Military and Coups

During the Cold War, Türkiye experienced three successful military interventions: the coup on May 27, 1960; the military memorandum on March 12,

⁶⁶⁰ Doster, p. 32.

1971; and the coup on September 12, 1980. Additionally, there were two failed coup attempts in 1962 and 1963.⁶⁶¹ This section will not detail the specific impact of all these events on domestic political dynamics or the underlying causes. Instead, it will outline their broader consequences and assess the military's role in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior and foreign policy choices. The military's significant role in Turkish history during this period is well established. For example, during the DP era, the Turkish Chief of General Staff, General Rüşdü Erdelhun, was known to support the DP and collaborated closely with the cabinet.⁶⁶² This suggests that both the political and some military elites were partly shared the DP era's pro-Western orientation. Furthermore, this political-military cohesion indicates that key military figures supported Türkiye's integration into NATO during the Cold War.

While it may be neither possible nor practical to measure the exact influence of the military on foreign policy decisions, some evident inferences can be identified. For instance, each military coup demonstrated signs of commitment and loyalty to the transatlantic alliance. A strong dedication and commitment to NATO and the West was highly evident immediately following all the coups during the Cold War. The coup leaders prominently emphasized maintaining strong relations with NATO and the West.⁶⁶³ This orientation was particularly evident following the 1980 coup when Türkiye directly reaffirmed its high level of commitment to the Western alliance, among other priorities and organized the socio-political structure to align with this goal.⁶⁶⁴ Despite economic challenges and other contributing factors, this consistent commitment to the alliance was a common characteristic of all the coups.

To illustrate this high level of military commitment, in the 1960s, Fahri Korutürk, then Commander of the Naval Forces and later elected President, stated:

All ships of our navy are under NATO command. From the smallest ships to the largest, their positions are constantly monitored by NATO Supreme Command.

⁶⁶¹ Uyar, p. 84.

⁶⁶² Criss, Missiles, p. 102.

⁶⁶³ Uyar, p. 92; Mürsel Bayram, "Soğuk Savaş Dönemi Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Sürekliliğinde Askerî Darbelerin Rolü", **Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi**, Vol. 2, No: 1, 2015, pp. 37-39; Emre Feyzi Çolakoğlu, "Soğuk Savaş Dönemi Askerî Darbeleri ve ABD: Türkiye ve Yunanistan Örnekleri", **Ulusa: Uluslararası Çalışmalar Dergisi**, Vol. 2, No: 1, 2018, (Darbe) p. 82.

⁶⁶⁴ Atmaca, p. 26; Bayram, pp. 39-41.

If any of our ships leave their assigned areas, it is immediately noticed and investigated. This could reveal our arms activity. ⁶⁶⁵

One may argue that, given the inherent characteristics of the militaries in general, their primary focus is on ensuring security and stability within the country. For example, although those behind the 1960 coup believed that the ruling Democrats had surrendered the country's sovereignty to the US, the coup leaders directly announced their continued commitment to NATO and CENTO. ⁶⁶⁶ Additionally, Criss notes that military elites in the 1960s viewed the presence of Jupiter missiles as a natural component of Türkiye's commitment to NATO. She also highlights that mutual visit plans between the Soviets and Türkiye were canceled due to the 1960 military coup, after which the coup plotters reaffirmed Türkiye's commitment to NATO and CENTO. ⁶⁶⁷

Notably, as discussed above, in the 1960s, Türkiye pursued a degree of rapprochement with the Soviets in line with the détente process of the era. However, this was largely due to the country's disappointment with the level of US aid and other crises in its relations with the West.

Ironically, despite the high dependence on the US during the Menderes era, General Cemal Gürsel also sought US assistance immediately after the 1960 coup. The Treasury lacked sufficient funds to pay civil servant salaries. This request highlighted that the close relationship with the West and economic reliance on the US would continue without significant changes during the early 1960s. ⁶⁶⁸ The military coups were also likely to put a lot of pressure on political leaders in both their decisions and perceptions, as they were under the ongoing threat of further coups.

The emphasis on commitment to NATO and, especially to the US, became even more evident following the September 12, 1980, coup d'état. In his coup declaration, broadcast on radio and television, Kenan Evren underlined Türkiye's direct commitment to NATO, like the previous coups. The declaration stated:

⁶⁶⁵ Doster, p. 37.

⁶⁶⁶ Criss, *Tarihsel*, p. 20.

⁶⁶⁷ Criss, *Missiles*, p. 113.

⁶⁶⁸ Geçikli, "Demokrat Parti Dönemi Türkiye - ABD İlişkileri".

*The Republic of Türkiye, adhering to all alliances and agreements, including NATO, is determined to develop economic, social, and cultural relations with all countries, especially our neighbors, on the basis of mutual independence and respect, under equal conditions, provided that they do not interfere in each other's internal affairs.*⁶⁶⁹

An interesting aspect of the September 12, 1980, coup was that neither the US nor NATO allies, in general, took a negative stance against the coup or the following military regime in Türkiye.

In his initial statement, US State Department spokesperson John Trattner noted that Türkiye was facing serious economic challenges, and that the coup took place in response to these domestic turbulences. He also announced that the US assistance to Türkiye would continue and communicated this decision to all NATO and OECD member states via the State Department. According to Murat Özata, this served to legitimize the coup to some extent.⁶⁷⁰ Additionally, the Turkish General Staff contacted the US Embassy before the coup and informed them that a coup would take place in Türkiye that was not anti-American or anti-NATO.⁶⁷¹

Following the September 12 coup, NATO officials in Brussels emphasized the importance of stability of Türkiye. Their statement remarked: “The bloodless coup in Türkiye is an internal matter, yet a strong, stable, and conflict-free Türkiye is vital to the Western alliance”⁶⁷²

During his visit to Türkiye in May 1982, US Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig stated that US-Türkiye relations had strengthened in recent years and the military and economic assistance would continue to Türkiye. In his meeting with Haig, Kenan Evren expressed his gratitude for the support and understanding shown by the US during this process.⁶⁷³ Along with various other factors, Türkiye ultimately returned to a high level of commitment and maintained its relations with the West, the US, and NATO throughout the 1980s. Given the primary influence of

⁶⁶⁹ Aslaner, Serhat, “27 Mayıs’tan 15 Temmuz’a Metinlerle Türkiye Darbe Tarihçesi,” *Mecmua BSV Bülten*, 2016, https://bisav.org.tr/userfiles/yayinlar/makaleler/mecmua__ek_1611.pdf, (27.10.2024)

⁶⁷⁰ Murat Özata, “ABD ve 12 Eylül Darbesi: Bir Demokrasinin Darbeye Bakışı”, *Asia Minor Studies*, Vol. 5, No: 9, 2017, p. 53.

⁶⁷¹ Özata, p. 54.

⁶⁷² Özata, p. 55.

⁶⁷³ Bernard Gwertzman, “Haig Ends ‘Warm’ Talks in Turkey”, *The New York Times*, 15.05.1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/15/world/haig-ends-warm-talks-in-turkey.html>, (26.10.2024).

systemic and external factors and complexities, an emphasis on the complementary and relative role of the military is summarized here.

4.2.3.2. The Role of Society: Left-Right Polarization and Growing Anti-American/Western/Imperialist Sentiments

The role of social groups in domestic dynamics varies widely. The NCR suggests that leaders' perceptions are shaped by social expectations and pressures.⁶⁷⁴ This thesis also assumes that society's relative influence imposes electoral pressures and constraints on leaders' images. Therefore, this section focuses on the role and expectations of society in shaping perceptions of leaders, as well as the influence of electoral pressures and political propaganda. This influence is assumed to be interrelated and reciprocal between society and political leaders.

During Türkiye's transition to a multi-party system in the early Cold War period through the 1960s, Western aid and assistance were widely used as positive propaganda tools by political leaders. Domestic political competition for power was intense, and economic development was a crucial propaganda tool.⁶⁷⁵ Thus, the need for a strong economy became an important factor in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior, as discussed above.

According to Ş. Yılmaz, almost every politician in Türkiye during this period sought public approval through economic growth and viewed American aid as essential to their success. This was an important factor that further solidified Türkiye's alignment with the Western bloc.⁶⁷⁶ Particularly, The DP era emphasized economic development through Western integration as a central element of its political discourse. Ultimately, the desire to be part of the Western bloc and its

⁶⁷⁴ Foulon, p. 645; Ripsman et al., p. 3.

⁶⁷⁵ İmren Aydın, "Türkiye'ye Yapılan Amerikan İktisadi Yardımları Bağlamında Menderes'in ABD Ziyaretleri: Dış Politika İç Politika Etkileşimi Üzerine Vaka Çalışması", **History Studies**, Vol. 15, No: Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılı Özel Sayısı, 2023, pp. 3-11; Figun Dinçer, "Reflections of The Marshall Aid and The USA: Fakir Baykurt's Amerikan Sargısı (American Bandage)", **International Journal of Media Culture and Literature**, Vol. 7, No: 1, 2021, pp. 46-47, 55-57.

⁶⁷⁶ Ş. Yılmaz, pp. 487-488.

international institutions became an important aspect of Turkish foreign policy behavior during this early period.⁶⁷⁷

President Celal Bayar's speech in Bolu on April 24, 1954, exemplifies this emphasis on NATO during the general election campaign:

*...It is because we have entered the defense and peace organization called NATO that we are sitting side by side with the greatest states and negotiating world affairs on equal terms. And because of this, the Turkish nation is respected everywhere...*⁶⁷⁸

This also indicates that there was a strong consensus among the public and social expectations to join the Western bloc to achieve economic development. As discussed, this sentiment was shared by the elites and leaders in general. However, with the subsequent shifts in dynamics already discussed, these expectations and public opinion began to reverse, accompanied by changes in domestic political discourse and gradual decline in commitment to NATO and the West.

This shift first became evident after the DP era, as expected economic improvements failed to materialize and instability increased. Public opinion on Western alignment began to deteriorate. Criticism mainly focused on economic aid and assistance. For example, some viewed the Marshall Plan as an American strategy to dominate the global economy centered on post-war free trade, foreign exchange, and open markets.⁶⁷⁹ As economic dependence on the US deepened and conditions deteriorated, further criticism emerged. For example, Mehmet Ali Aybar, editor of *Zincirli Hürriyet*, condemned American aid as a “new Sèvres”.⁶⁸⁰

The crisis period, particularly marked by the Cyprus issue, had a profound impact on Türkiye's political and social dynamics. The leak of Johnson letter and its controversial content created deep mistrust among the Turkish public toward the US. Rising anti-American sentiments further strengthened the leftist ideologies and movements. University students, academics, and union members organized massive protests on American and Western policies.⁶⁸¹ In the social sphere, anti-NATO/US movements share a common perspective: “NATO is an element of concealment and

⁶⁷⁷ Criss, *Tarihsel*, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁸ Erkmen, p. 1041.

⁶⁷⁹ Özer, p. 438.

⁶⁸⁰ Ş. Yılmaz, p. 486.

⁶⁸¹ T. Balçı, p. 44.

extension of US hegemony". According to this view, integration into NATO was a means to subordinate Turkish national forces to the control of the US and the West.⁶⁸² Additionally, it was widely believed that Türkiye's NATO membership had transformed the country into an advanced outpost of the US.

Furthermore, many leftist-socialist circles embraced the six principles of Kemalism and the founding ideals in general, with a shared belief that these principles should be maintained through socialism. They argued that being under US hegemony through NATO membership undermined this ideal.⁶⁸³ In this context, some argued that the Kemalist revolution remained incomplete and focused on anti-imperialism, full independence, a nationalist and independent foreign policy, and stronger relations with Third World countries. For instance, counter-NATO movements like Dev Genç placed a strong emphasis on anti-imperialism across ideological, political, and organizational levels.⁶⁸⁴

As previously discussed, Türkiye's direct involvement in a conflicting bloc created a somewhat controversial situation regarding its founding principles, particularly the ideals of complete independence, national sovereignty, and neutrality. However, only certain segments of society, notably the socialist left, voiced strong opposition to this orientation, especially during times of crisis as right-left polarization in Türkiye has intensified. On the other hand, Mainstream political parties supported NATO membership in line with Türkiye's strategic interests, except during some specific moments of crisis when public pressure was intense.⁶⁸⁵

The youth known as the "Generation of '68" were among the pioneers of anti-American and anti-NATO sentiment within Turkish society. Türkiye's 68 Generation argued that opposition to NATO began even before the country's membership. They never forgot the heavy costs paid by the defendants in the case known in political history as the "Turkish Association of Peace-Lovers," who opposed Türkiye's NATO membership.⁶⁸⁶ Following the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation and the subsequent the US-imposed embargoes, these sentiments and reactions within society deepened and

⁶⁸² Doster, p. 40.

⁶⁸³ Kili, p. 397.

⁶⁸⁴ Kili, p. 396; Doster, p. 40.

⁶⁸⁵ Doster, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁸⁶ Doster, p. 39.

intensified further. This development was also expected to put more constraints on leaders' images and perceptions by increasing electoral pressure. The process was widely perceived by the Turkish public as a form of foreign hostility and interference in the country's internal affairs.⁶⁸⁷ The growing mistrust ultimately contributed to right-left polarization and increasing more anti-American, anti-Western, and anti-imperialist sentiments in society.

According to Criss, between the late 1960s and the 1980s, communist-socialist ideas and movements began to spread in Türkiye, especially among the youth. The "Bloody Sunday" incident of 1969 and subsequent events exemplify this trend. Additionally, the perception that the government was directly influenced by the US and the CIA, as seen in the Bloody Sunday incident, became widespread. Such incidents contributed to the belief among certain segments of society that the government was serving foreign interests rather than prioritizing Türkiye's sovereignty and the well-being of its own citizens.⁶⁸⁸ On the other hand, this situation heightened the perceived threat of communist ideology becoming a dominant force in Türkiye's domestic political dynamics. The escalating internal turmoil and right-left polarization, especially in the 1970s, can also be attributed to divisions based on this perceived threat.

In the late 1970s, the political polarization and instability became other factors that reinforced Türkiye's commitment to the Western alliance, particularly within the confrontational environment of the Cold War. The dominance of the state and the military in responding to the perceived Soviet threat prevented leftist and communist movements from gaining further socio-political influence. . These movements, along with rightist and nationalist factions, were largely suppressed by force, particularly during the 1980 military coup.⁶⁸⁹

As a result, the right-left polarization within Turkish society was both reflected and shaped by the ideological spirit of the era. For Doster, this division centered largely on the conflicts of "NATO/US versus the Soviet Union" and "communism versus capitalism/imperialism." Thus, right-wing factions accused the

⁶⁸⁷ Barutçugil, p. 147.

⁶⁸⁸ Criss, *Tarihsel*, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁸⁹ Laçiner, pp. 62, 93; Bayram, pp. 37-38.

socialist left of being pro-Soviet and pro-communist. Conversely, the socialist left labeled them as "pro-NATO, pro-American, and collaborators of imperialism".⁶⁹⁰

Given such a deep social polarization and the electoral pressures on political leaders, it is reasonable to consider this influence as an important complementary factor in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior and commitment to NATO, either positively or negatively. The strong reactions of political parties, leaders, and even the military illustrate how the atmosphere of the period significantly shaped the decision-making process. This dynamic played a crucial role in forming Turkish policy during the Cold War and was influential in understanding both Türkiye's domestic political dynamics and its evolving alliance commitments.

In conclusion, opposition to NATO and the US in Türkiye has ideological, historical, and political foundations that are also closely linked to the country's founding philosophy, such as anti-imperialism, nationalism, complete independence, and peaceful-neutral stance. This stance, which is also rooted in the War of Independence, has to some extent found representation in various segments during the era, including groups associated with communism, the socialist left, and left-wing Kemalist intellectuals.⁶⁹¹

These ideological and political orientations solidified anti-NATO sentiment at an organizational level. Beyond these groups, however, there was no strong and consistent opposition to NATO among mainstream parties during the Cold War. Such opposition was observed only in response to specific events and for limited periods. During certain times, societal sentiments created electoral pressures on politicians, thereby affecting the level of commitment to the alliance.

The table below shows the most influential domestic intervening variables that influence Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War era, it is also important to note that these periodical domestic variables were highly influenced by the external threats and structural factors of the relevant periods:

⁶⁹⁰ Doster, p. 32.

⁶⁹¹ Doster, p. 41.

Table 10: Assessment of Domestic Variables in shaping Turkish Alliance Behavior in CW

Cold War Period	National Identity & Strategic Culture	State Leadership & Elites	State-Society Relations	Domestic Institutions & Military
Early Cold War (1945-1955)	<u>Strong emphasis on modernization and secular identity</u> inherited from Atatürk's legacy and founding principles. <u>Balancing policy and past trauma-rivalry with the Russians</u> inherited from the Ottoman Empire. <u>Re-construction of a Stronger Western Identity.</u>	<u>Pro-Western, conservative and rightist political-ideological orientation</u> of Menderes and DP's rule, eager to align with NATO and gain US support.	<u>High-level of public and intellectual support</u> for modernization and western/the US's aid and assistances. <u>Leftist voices mostly marginalized by political authority.</u>	<u>Military's strong emphasis on NATO membership</u> Military consider it as crucial for national security.
Middle Cold War (1955-1979)	<u>Strong emphasis on complete independence anti-imperialism, and nationalism</u> inherited from Atatürk's legacy and founding principles.	<u>Destabilization of democratic representation</u> with series of military coups. <u>Ideological orientations are mixed and unclear,</u> highly influenced by specific cases and certain periods. <u>The new generation of political leaders</u> more courageous and assertive characteristics.	<u>Growing anti-NATO/Western/US Sentiments and movements</u> at social level. <u>Ideological polarization</u> Left vs. Right on NATO, West and the US <u>Rising opposition to NATO</u> especially among youth and labor groups.	<u>Reaffirmation of commitments to NATO</u> Military coups in 1960 and 1971; sought stabilization amid internal divisions and emphasized their commitment to NATO.
Late Cold War (1979-1991)	<u>No visible additional effect</u>	<u>Center-right, liberal, and partially conservative ideological orientations</u> became dominant, including new prominent figures; Turgut Özal, Mesut Yılmaz, Tansu Çiller. <u>Pro-Western alignment, economic liberalization, a stronger NATO commitment</u> particularly emphasized by Özal's leadership	<u>Repressive environment and limited democratic representation</u> Limited or negligible social effect due to the repressive environment created by military coups.	<u>Reinforcement of a very high-level commitment to NATO</u> Solidified military control, suppressed democratic representation and social influence, reinforced a strong commitment to NATO, and maintained a pro-Western orientation.

Source: Prepared by the author.

4.3. A Final Assessment: The Alliance Behavior of Türkiye

A final assessment of all variables is briefly presented in the table below to determine the dependent variable of Turkish alliance behavior during the Cold War era in comprehensive integrity.

Table 11: An Integrated Final Assessment of the Dependent Variable: Turkish Alliance Behavior During the Cold War

Cold War Period	Independent Variable (Structural and External Factors)	Domestic Intervening Variables (highly influenced by Independent Variables)	Dependent Variable (Outcome: The Alliance Behavior)
Early Cold War (1945-1955)	Strategic Environment: <u>Highly Restrictive</u> (1945-1955) especially after 1948 Clarity of External Threats: <u>High-level</u> Soviet cancellation of the 1925 Friendship and Neutrality Treaty, Stalin's demands on the Montreux Convention, Turkish Straits, and territorial claims on Kars and Ardahan Clarity of External Benefits: <u>High-level</u> the US support through Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan; offers for Western integration and several economic/military assistances Rate of polarity: <u>Rigid Bipolarity</u> especially after 1948	National Identity & Strategic Culture: <u>Strong emphasis on modernization and secular identity</u> inherited from Atatürk's legacy and founding principles. <u>Balancing policy and past trauma-rivalry with the Russians</u> inherited from the Ottomans. <u>Re-construction of a Stronger Western Identity.</u> Leaders & Parties: <u>Pro-Western and conservative-rightist ideological orientation</u> of Menderes and DP's rule, eager to align with NATO and gain US support. Public & Social: <u>High-level of public and intellectual support</u> for modernization and western/the US's aid and assistances. <u>Leftist voices mostly marginalized by political authority.</u> Military & other inst: <u>The military's strong emphasis on NATO</u> consider it crucial for national security.	Alignment Decision: <u>Strong emphasis and insistence on joining NATO</u> Türkiye actively and persistently pursued NATO membership, ultimately achieved in 1952, despite having previously fought for its independence and had a neutralist stance toward the West. Alliance Commitment: <u>High-level</u> Türkiye demonstrated a high level of commitment to NATO, actively pursued membership and ultimately achieved in 1952. Solidified its alignment with the West against the perceived threat to Soviet aggression and the perceived benefits from Western aid.

Cold War Period	Independent Variable (Structural and External Factors)	Domestic Intervening Variables (highly influenced by Independent Variables)	Dependent Variable (Outcome: The Alliance Behavior)
Mid Cold War (1955-1979)	Strategic Environment: <u>Fluctuating</u> (1955-1968) Short-term and regional restrictions. <u>Generally Permissive</u> (1969-1979) Clarity of External Threats <u>Moderate</u> Cuban Missile Crisis; high level of Western dependence. Cyprus issue and Johnson letter; aid and assistance decreased; embargoes imposed (but alternative solutions appeared) Clarity of External Benefits: <u>Lower</u> Nato membership provided a strong security deterrence. Soviet rapprochement with aid, assistance and trade agreements. (but unclear in efficiency) Rate of polarity: <u>Fluctuating</u> Mixed (1955-1968), Relaxed during Detente (1969-1979)	National Identity & Strategic Culture: <u>Strong emphasis on complete independence, anti-imperialism, and nationalism</u> inherited from Atatürk's legacy and founding principles. Leaders & Parties: <u>Destabilization of democratic representation</u> a series of military coups. <u>Ideological orientations are mixed and unclear</u> highly influenced by specific cases and certain periods. <u>The new generation of political leaders</u> more courageous and assertive characteristics. Public & Social: <u>Growing anti-NATO/ Western/US Sentiments and movements</u> at social level. <u>Ideological polarization</u> Left vs. Right on NATO, West and the US <u>Rising opposition to NATO</u> especially among youth and labor groups. Military & other institutions <u>Reaffirmation of commitments to NATO</u> Military coups in 1960 and 1971; sought stabilization amid internal divisions. and emphasized their commitment to NATO.	Alliance Commitment: <u>Flexible and Fluctuating, Moderate to Lower than usual</u> Türkiye did not seek to damage its ties with NATO but engaged in selective diplomacy with the USSR and asserted a more independent foreign policy; especially during the Cyprus crisis, along with other crisis moments. This reflected a more flexible and fluctuating commitment from moderate-to-lower than usual at certain period of times along with specific cases that balanced NATO obligations with regional autonomy and national interests.

Cold War Period	Independent Variable (Structural and External Factors)	Domestic Intervening Variables (highly influenced by Independent Variables)	Dependent Variable (Outcome: The Alliance Behavior)
Late Cold War (1979-1991)	Strategic Environment: <u>Generally Restrictive Mixed</u> (1979-1986) Final Phase (1986-1991) Clarity of External Threats <u>Initially high-level</u> Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, regional instability (Iran-Iraq War, Islamic Revolution in Iran); <u>Gradually decreased</u> especially after 1986 Clarity of External Benefits <u>High-level</u> Renewed Western support and assistance with DECA agreement as strategic importance of Türkiye for NATO increased. Bipolarity: <u>Rigid bipolarity</u> (1979-1986); <u>Transformation and dissolution of bipolarity</u> (1986-1991)	National Identity & Strategic Culture <u>No visible additional effect</u> Leaders & Parties: <u>Center-right, liberal, and partially conservative ideological orientations</u> became dominant, including new prominent figures; Turgut Özal, Mesut Yılmaz, Tansu Çiller. <u>Pro-Western alignment, economic liberalization, a stronger NATO commitment</u> particularly emphasized by Özal's leadership Public & Social: <u>Repressive environment and limited democratic representation</u> Limited or negligible social effect due to the repressive environment created by military coups. Military & other inst <u>Reinforcement of a very high-level commitment to NATO</u> Solidified military control, suppressed democratic representation and social influence, reinforced a strong commitment to NATO, and maintained a pro-Western orientation.	Alliance Commitment: <u>High-Level and Reaffirmation of NATO and pro-Western commitment</u> Türkiye demonstrated a high level of commitment to NATO during the late Cold War (1979-1991), primarily driven by a restrictive environment of Cold War tensions, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and regional instability. Heightened security concerns about Soviet proximity reinforced NATO alignment. <u>The critical role of the military's strong commitment to NATO</u> along with <u>Dominant ideological orientations of center-right, liberal, and partially conservative powers.</u> as well as the dominance of the West, especially the US, is increasing.

Source: Prepared by the author.

The final and integrated assessment of Turkish alliance behavior during the Cold War reveals that external structural imperatives and domestic factors were deeply intertwined in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy behavior. In the early Cold

War period (1945–1955), clear and immediate threats in a highly restrictive strategic environment, exemplified by aggressive Soviet actions, combined with the promising Western economic and military support to drive Türkiye's decisive move toward NATO membership. This alignment was further reinforced by an emphasis on Atatürk's secular and modernist legacy and the pro-Western orientation of the political leadership, as well as a military institution that recognized the strategic value of NATO. Together, these factors ensured a resolute and committed alignment with the West during a period of rigid bipolarity.

In contrast, the mid- to late-Cold War period (1955-1979) illustrates fluctuating external conditions and a dynamic evolution in Türkiye's alliance behavior. During the mid-Cold War period, Türkiye faced varying external pressures, a process of détente between the superpowers, and a growing sense of national assertiveness, such as a strong emphasis on complete independence and anti-imperialist sentiments that were also deeply embedded in its national identity and the legacy of Atatürk's founding principles. These factors, combined with domestic political instability and ideological polarization, led to a more flexible and occasionally ambivalent commitment to NATO. By the end of the Cold War (1979-1991), however, renewed external threats and regional instability in neighboring countries, combined with the reassertion of pro-Western, center-right political leadership and a reinforced strong military loyalty to NATO, culminated in a robust reaffirmation of a high level of commitment to the Alliance. Revived Western support under a renewed rigid bipolarity also further cemented this orientation.

Finally, the last assessment of this study is that domestic factors influencing foreign policy decisions tend to have short-term effects, while external pressures and structural factors have longer-term effects. Therefore, although Turkey's NATO relations have experienced fluctuations and occasional turbulence over time, they tend to return to a stable and normal course in the long run.

CONCLUSION

This thesis offers a comprehensive analysis of Türkiye's relations with NATO and its alliance behavior throughout the Cold War. The study examines two important phases: (1) Türkiye's initial insistence and determination to join NATO and (2) its evolving commitment to the transatlantic alliance during the Cold War period. This distinction is critical as it recognizes that the Türkiye-NATO relationship has not been static but has evolved in time due to both internal and external factors.

The thesis argues that neoclassical realism offers the most effective framework for understanding Türkiye's alliance behavior during this period. It examines the interaction between structural constraints and pressures, external factors, and domestic variables to provide an integrative approach. In this context, the study explores multi-dimensional motivations, ideological, political, and social, etc., alongside pressuring security concerns that shape Türkiye's alliance behavior.

The first part of the thesis provides an extensive review of realist tradition, establishing a general theoretical framework and arguing about the suitability of neoclassical realism in addressing the main research questions of the thesis. Classical realism explains state motivations through power and self-interest, while neorealism highlights structural constraints and pressures within the international system. Neoclassical realism integrates these two approaches with domestic variables to provide a more coherent and integrated framework for understanding Türkiye's position in the alliance.

An analysis of Türkiye's historical trajectory reveals its complex web of relations with the West. It varies from a neutral stance to a persistent desire for integration into the Western bloc. This trajectory likely began with Türkiye's struggle for independence and extended through its alignment efforts during the Cold War. Notably, relations have evolved along a fluctuating path, largely because of certain moments of crisis and specific cases. This complex pattern has created a unique character in Türkiye-NATO relations and Türkiye's broader interactions with the West. The comprehensive and integrative framework of neoclassical realism is suggested to understand this complexity. Because, just like the unique character of

the period and the relations, Türkiye has a unique national identity that distinguishes it from other Western allies. This approach also reveals how Türkiye's foreign policy preferences and alliance behaviors have been shaped by urgent security needs while considering both primary structural factors and the complementary domestic variables, such as ideology, leadership, and national identity.

The second part dealt with the historical background of the Cold War, the origins of NATO, and the developments that shaped Türkiye's accession process to the Alliance. This chapter provided a basis for analyzing Türkiye's relationship with NATO in the Cold War era. In this context, the economic devastation of post-war Europe required a massive reconstruction effort. This provided an opportunity for the US to shape the post-war order and increase its global influence. The country played a central role in the creation of international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, with its distinct ideological stance, became a powerful actor in the post-war landscape as another victory country. Beyond mere power struggles, the Cold War period also highlighted the deepening ideological divide between the US and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the period saw the rise of two superpowers, with each seeking to shape the world order under their hegemony and due to their ideological principles and priorities. This dynamic largely contributed to the polarization and general characteristics of the Cold War.

From part of Türkiye and NATO, the emerging post-war world order and the shifting BoP within the international system created a foundation for NATO's establishment and influenced decisions of middle-power states, like Türkiye. In this context, NATO's formation, origins, and objectives are examined within this framework of the Cold War. While NATO primarily aimed to counter the Soviet threat through a collective security approach, it also pursued broader objectives such as promoting political integration in Europe. The important point here is that NATO served not only as a military alliance against the Soviet Union but also as a political organization with an existential purpose to promote Western values and cooperation. Türkiye's decision to join NATO thus reflected its enduring aspirations for being part of Europe and modernization.

In general, Chapter 2 described the historical process leading to Türkiye's accession to NATO in 1952. Türkiye, with its unique location at the crossroads of

Europe and Asia, its control of the strategically critical Straits, and its relatively strong military, had serious strategic value to both the US and the Soviet Union. In the historical narrative, Türkiye faced economic instability and a perceived threat from growing Soviet pressure. To counter these challenges, it began to receive aid from the US under the Truman Doctrine, which strengthened its ties with the West. The country sought security guarantees and economic assistance especially from the US, and eventually became a member of NATO to formalize its alignment with the Western bloc. The chapter also highlighted the key role played by the US in Türkiye's accession to NATO. The US actively supported the accession process as it recognized Türkiye's strategic importance in countering Soviet influence in the region. Despite the skepticism of other members, this determination of the US was likely the decisive factor in Türkiye's approval of the Alliance. This also reflects the dominant influence of great powers in shaping global political developments compared to other states.

Finally, Türkiye's strategic location between Europe and the Middle East, particularly its control over the Turkish Straits, offered a major geopolitical advantage for the security of NATO's southern flank. The US had recognized this critical advantage even before the Cold War. It had already been taken to bring Türkiye closer to the Western world during WW II. For its part, Türkiye leveraged its strategic position as a safeguard against the perceived Soviet threat during the Cold War and ultimately opted to join NATO in the face of economic difficulties. Türkiye's path to NATO membership is thus examined within the context of great powers' prevailing influence, the recognition of Türkiye's strategic value, and NATO's broader objectives. This historical foundation establishes a framework for the following chapters, which analyze Türkiye's alliance behavior and its evolving relationship with NATO in greater detail.

The third chapter of the thesis presented a process-tracing methodology to examine the strategic motivations, key events, and crisis moments that defined the complex and evolving nature of Türkiye-NATO relations throughout the Cold War. The chapter served as a critical foundation and implication for the theoretical assessment of the following chapter.

In general, Türkiye's decision to join NATO resulted from a complex interplay of structural factors, external threats/opportunities, and domestic dynamics. This chapter is built on the themes discussed above. It explored Türkiye's strategic importance to NATO and the US, alongside NATO's specific significance for Türkiye. Türkiye's contributions to the Alliance and its unique strategic role are defined as follows:

First, Türkiye's geostrategic location, situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, with strategic control over the Turkish Straits, made it a crucial ally for countering potential Soviet influence in the region. Second, Türkiye's military capacity substantially strengthened the Alliance, with its relatively large armed forces and young population, which reinforced NATO's southern flank. Third, Türkiye's cultural and religious importance as a Muslim-majority country with a secular and democratic system, which provided symbolic importance for the West during the Cold War. This aspect positioned Türkiye as a counter-narrative to communism's appeal in the Muslim world and enhanced its role as a bridge between the West and the broader Muslim world.

Finally, by hosting numerous US military bases and facilities, Türkiye offered strategic value for the US regional power projection. These bases provided US forces with logistical support, intelligence gathering, and strategic positioning. However, the presence of the bases also led to intense debates in the country, as their operations sometimes prioritized the US's own interests that did not always align with NATO's collective objectives.

It then identified three primary strategic interests that motivated Türkiye's decision to join NATO and maintain its commitment. These interests are as follows:

First, Türkiye sought security guarantees and protection for its national defense as it faced pressure and potential threats from the Soviet Union, particularly during the early Cold War. NATO membership offered a framework to counter the perceived Soviet threat through collective defense mechanisms and military support from Western allies. The desire to protect national security and territorial integrity is considered the primary factor driving Türkiye's decision to join NATO.

Second, Türkiye sought economic assistance to support its modernization efforts and address ongoing economic instability. This partnership also provided the

US with an opportunity to reinforce its strategic relationship with Türkiye. Financial aid, trade opportunities, and technological cooperation enabled Türkiye to engage more deeply with Western economic systems. However, increasing dependence on the US, particularly through initiatives like the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, later triggered intense domestic debate.

Third, Türkiye sought political integration with the West. This was a longstanding aspiration rooted in the Ottoman period, even before the establishment of the Republic. NATO membership symbolized this orientation by providing closer ties to Western institutions, promoting democratic values, and strengthening Türkiye's relations with European countries. Overall, the desire for Western integration is considered a central factor shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior.

While Türkiye-NATO relations are generally characterized by cooperation and shared interests, Chapter 3 also explored periods of crisis when their interests diverged, and tensions increased. These moments reflect the evolving nature of partnership. In this context, three prominent Cold War crises in the relationship are examined.

The first is the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, which occurred during Türkiye's first decade as a NATO member. This crisis marked the first instance in which NATO membership was perceived as a potential threat to Türkiye's own security. The installation and subsequent removal of Jupiter missiles by the US, without prior consultation with Türkiye, led to widespread concern and debates. Turkish leaders felt betrayed as the country was left vulnerable to potential attacks. It was assumed that the US was prioritizing its own interests over Türkiye's security. This perception triggered a broader debate on the effectiveness of Türkiye's alliance with NATO and its commitment to the West.

The second was the Johnson letter of 1964, sent by US President Lyndon B. Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü regarding Türkiye's potential military intervention in Cyprus. Turkish leaders and the public viewed the letter as an insult to the country for its lack of diplomatic ethics. The letter's implicit threats triggered further anti-American sentiment in Türkiye and strained its relations with both the US and NATO. This incident reflected the complexities Türkiye faced in balancing its alliance commitments.

Finally, the Cyprus issue and Türkiye's 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation marked another pivotal moment in Türkiye's foreign policy and its relations with NATO. The disagreements between NATO allies, Türkiye and Greece, led to serious tensions within the Alliance. It revealed the limits of collective defense when member states conflict with each other. This crisis also showed the complexity of Alliance dynamics and Türkiye's determination to prioritize its national interests and sovereignty, even if it meant directly opposing other NATO members. Türkiye's stance on this issue is further explored in the following sections, with a particular focus on its national identity.

Periods of crisis demonstrated that while Türkiye's commitment to NATO is strong, it is not unconditional. Given the effects of the *détente* period and the easing of Cold War tensions, it has been argued that Türkiye has adopted a more flexible foreign policy approach. This shift allowed Türkiye to improve its relations with the Soviet Union and other non-aligned countries while assuming a more active role in the region. Furthermore, the strong reactions from political parties, leaders, and the public emphasized the importance of crisis moments in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior. This process not only transformed Türkiye's domestic political dynamics but also influenced its foreign policy strategies. Consequently, Türkiye was able to pursue a more independent foreign policy and develop a new strategic approach that more effectively balanced East and West.

Türkiye is clearly willing to prioritize its independence and national interests when deemed necessary. The thesis evaluates this tendency through a complementary domestic variable that emphasizes the dynamic nature of Türkiye's alliance behavior. It points to the country's tendency to uphold the ideal of complete independence as a founding principle whenever its national interests diverge significantly from those of the alliance.

This detailed process tracing of Türkiye-NATO relations establishes a solid foundation for the theoretical assessment in the following chapter. It provides a rich empirical base that enhances the explanatory power of neoclassical realism by detailing the evolution of this relationship, highlighting moments of cooperation and tension, and identifying key strategic interests.

This chapter's assessment of external threats, strategic opportunities, and domestic political dynamics in Türkiye provided strong emphasis into the complexities that influenced Turkish alliance behavior during the Cold War. It highlighted the interplay between systemic pressures and domestic factors that shaped the country's foreign policy choices. These insights are essential for understanding Türkiye's decision-making processes and the complexities that allowed its commitment to evolve within the broader context of the Cold War.

The fourth and final chapter addressed the main research questions of the thesis and provided a theoretical assessment. The chapter sought to explain why and how Türkiye shifted from neutrality to NATO and the Western bloc during the Cold War, as well as the complex and fluctuating nature of Türkiye-NATO and broader Western relations throughout this period. The neoclassical realist framework emphasized the impact of structural pressures on state behavior as the primary factors, while considering the complementary domestic variables to provide a more integrative account.

The chapter begins by examining the structural imperatives of the Cold War international system, particularly the consequences of bipolarity and the distribution of power for a medium-sized power like Türkiye. Based on the general approach of neorealism, the anarchic nature of the international system and the rigid bipolarity of the Cold War limited Türkiye's foreign policy options. The intense rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union created a system in which neutrality was increasingly difficult to maintain. Smaller states were often compelled to choose a side, and Türkiye was pushed to adopt an external balancing strategy by aligning with the Western bloc due to its security concerns and its inability to balance these concerns on its own. Thus, as a medium-sized power, Türkiye lacked the capacity to balance the perceived Soviet threat independently. Aligning with NATO, particularly the US, would strengthen its security and provide a deterrent against potential threats.

Another important implication of structural imperatives is that the level of bipolar rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union influenced the systemic constraints and pressures on lesser states. To illustrate, the intense rivalry in the early Cold War created a more restrictive environment and pushed the country toward

closer alignment with NATO. In contrast, periods of *détente* offered Türkiye greater maneuverability and opportunities to pursue a more multidimensional foreign policy.

While these structural imperatives do not fully explain Türkiye's specific alliance behavior, they provide an essential foundation for understanding the structural constraints and pressures on its decision-making process. This sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of further external variables within the neoclassical realist framework.

The first assessment focuses on "structural modifiers" as an extension of the neoclassical approach to systemic factors. These are basically the material elements to specify Türkiye's alliance behavior. While acknowledging the huge power gap between Türkiye and the great powers, the analysis begins with the implications for the distribution of power between the SU and the US. The Soviet Union's low-level GDP, despite its high military spending, has shown that it can offer fewer economic benefits to potential allies, which is seen as a modifier in the distribution of power that creates a relatively low perception of benefit for smaller states. In contrast, the US, with its relatively higher economic power, offers a higher perception of benefits.

Another important structural modifier is geography and proximity. Türkiye's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union contributed to its perception of the Soviet Union as a greater threat than that of the US. Finally, the role of economic and technological spillovers as an advantageous factor in alliances is assessed. Türkiye's own conditions and the West's strategic approach to the country against Stalin's threats in the first period are evaluated. Accordingly, there was a perception that the aid and opportunities offered by the West would be more beneficial in terms of economic and technological development.

These material-oriented structural modifiers, when considered with the distribution of power in the bipolar system, provide a broader interpretation of why Türkiye chose to align with NATO and the US.

The second approach in the neoclassical realist framework is the clarity of signals and information that the international system provides to states about external threats and opportunities. This can be evaluated together with the third and final assessment, the impact of the changing strategic environment of Türkiye. The strategic environment refers to the proximity, urgency, and intensity of the apparent

threats and opportunities that states face. Essentially, the closer the threat or opportunity, the more effective it becomes. According to the NCR, a state's strategic environment is defined as either restrictive or permissive. A restrictive environment forces states to respond more strictly to systemic constraints and pressures, while a permissive environment provides more maneuverability for foreign policy choices.

In this context, to provide a more effective analysis, the thesis continued by analyzing the Cold War period in three periods. This periodic methodology helps to show how the changing international environment affected Türkiye's perceptions of external threats and benefits, its strategic calculations, and ultimately its alliance behavior.

First, it is argued that the early Cold War period (1945-1955) represented a highly restrictive strategic environment for Türkiye. In the early Cold War, the international system was characterized by "rigid bipolarity" with intense competition. The clarity of external threats was very high, based on actions such as the Soviet Union's annulment of the 1925 Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality, Stalin's demands regarding the Montreux Convention and the Turkish Straits, and territorial claims over Kars and Ardahan. On the other hand, the external benefits of alignment with the West are also obvious. The US encouraged this alignment with its commitment to provide economic and military assistance to Türkiye through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. As a result, these developments encouraged Türkiye's desire to join the Western bloc to secure its territorial integrity and economic development.

The mid-Cold War period (1955-1979) is characterized by a more relaxed strategic environment and marked by moments of crisis with the alliance and Türkiye. The process, which took place over a long period of time, is defined as a "fluctuating" strategic environment for the country. It marked a period in which the international environment was more permissive. The détente process reduced the confrontational nature of bipolarity in the international system, as it decreased the structural pressures. This allowed for greater flexibility and maneuverability in its foreign policy choices as external threats became less imminent and restrictive. Consequently, Türkiye was able to explore opportunities for balance between East and West under its growing dependence on the US.

Finally, the late Cold War period (1979-1991) witnessed a return to a restrictive strategic environment for Türkiye, as the rivalries and conflicts intensified. Events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran, along with increasing regional instability, created a heightened threat perception for Türkiye. The US also adopted a firmer stance against the Soviet Union, which in turn increased the clarity of external threats. Furthermore, the West, particularly the US, reaffirmed its economic and military assistance for Türkiye through the DECA agreement. However, compared to the early Cold War, there was less clarity regarding the direct impact of both external threats and benefits. Consequently, Türkiye responded by reaffirming its commitment to NATO.

In sum, structural and external factors are assessed by examining how the changing strategic environment influenced Türkiye's threat perceptions, strategic calculations, and ultimately its alliance behavior. Notably, Türkiye's decision to join NATO was largely shaped by the highly restrictive environment of the early Cold War, when imminent threats from the Soviet Union and attractive support from the West were clear. It is argued that this restrictive strategic environment, also characterized by Türkiye's middle power status, its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, and the intensity of the bipolar rivalry, led Turkish decision-makers to adopt a more cautious and responsive approach. In contrast, the more relaxed strategic environment of the détente period allowed for greater maneuverability and a less restrictiveness in Türkiye's interactions with the West. Overall, this conclusion refers to the dynamic and evolving nature of Türkiye's Cold War alliance behavior.

The study's analysis of structural and external factors highlights the critical role of systemic pressures and constraints in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior with NATO during the Cold War. Key external elements, such as the bipolar international system, fluctuating levels of external threats, and varying degrees of Western support, influenced Türkiye's alliance preferences at different stages of the Cold War.

The second part of the chapter emphasized that, beyond external factors, Türkiye's internal dynamics served as complementary elements that significantly influenced its decision to join the Alliance and its commitment to NATO. Türkiye's national identity, particularly rooted in the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and its

desire for modernization formed the foundation of its foreign policy decisions. This section argues that, while external factors are the primary and dominant forces shaping foreign policy choices, domestic variables play a complementary role and are particularly influential when the strategic environment is less restrictive. Furthermore, it is explained that external factors shape not only outcomes but also the complementary domestic factors themselves. However, the impact of domestic dynamics has often been more pronounced during certain periods and events.

First, it is emphasized that there has been a long-standing sentiment in Turkish political circles indicating a widespread desire for modernization and alignment with the West. This aspiration, especially prominent after the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, has been a key factor in shaping the country's foreign policy choices. It was based on the belief that modernization and Westernization would bring economic development, technological progress, and political stability. The decision-makers of the period saw NATO membership as a means to achieve these goals. In this context, as emphasized throughout the thesis, NATO was seen not only as a military alliance but also as an organization with broader political objectives, including European integration.

Another important point is that Atatürk's vision of Westernization and modernization differed from the pro-Western orientation developed by the DP during the early Cold War period. In fact, even Türkiye's integration into a directly confrontational bloc introduced inherent contradictions with its foundational principles to some extent. Evidence presented throughout this thesis also indicates that Türkiye's identity during the Cold War was further reconstructed around Western values. Influenced by these and other factors, Türkiye has consistently maintained long-term cooperation with the West and remained committed to the alliance, even under challenging circumstances. When relations occasionally deteriorated or interests diverged, in the end, Türkiye's Western ties were re-strengthened and commitments renewed. Thus, as observed throughout the process, the low-level of commitment between the Alliance and Türkiye generally refers to the short-term periods marked by divergent interests. The thesis proposes this outcome as a broader argument for understanding Türkiye's relations with NATO and the West more generally, beyond the specific historical process.

More importantly, to address the main research questions of this thesis, such a re-construction of Türkiye's Western identity and its ideological orientation emerge as a key complementary factor that explain Türkiye's persistence in seeking NATO membership, despite initial rejections from the Western bloc against which it had once fought for independence. This orientation also helps to explain Türkiye's periods of high-level of commitment to the alliance, including the privileges and concessions granted to the US. The debates on modernization and Westernization are central in understanding the complexities, ups and downs and fluctuations in Türkiye-NATO and broader Western relations. Nevertheless, Türkiye's foundational desire to turn its face toward the West is also considered an influential factor in its preference for the Western bloc over the Eastern. Ultimately, this inclination, alongside other factors, accounts for Türkiye's decision to join NATO.

After these inferences, the second section explores Atatürk's enduring legacy and visionary approach in shaping Turkish foreign policy and national identity, as well as its influence on Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War. This section examines how Atatürk's principles of republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and revolutionism have shaped Türkiye's national identity and worldview to assess their relative influence on decision-makers of the period. It also highlights that Kemalism has been subject to varying interpretations and evaluations across different periods and socio-political contexts.

The 'reformist-revolutionary' principle of Kemalism and its aspirations for modernization were key factors in Türkiye's integration with the West. At the same time, Atatürk's foundational principles, particularly nationalism, complete independence, anti-imperialism, and a peaceful-neutral stance have played another important role in shaping Turkish foreign policy. It is argued that while some of these principles, deeply embedded in Türkiye's national identity, create inherent contradictions with direct alignment to a conflicting bloc, they do not constitute an obstacle to it.

Given the high level of dependency and external influences inherent in being part of a conflicting military alliance, Türkiye's foundational philosophy can be seen as a controversial and contradictory aspect rather than a barrier to joining. This became particularly evident after the 1960s when diverging interests led to increased

criticism and questioning of the alliance's true objectives by wide segments of society. The thesis argues that these founding principles, particularly nationalism, complete independence, anti-imperialism, and a neutral-peaceful stance, have played a central role in shaping Türkiye's fluctuating alliance behavior and its evolving commitment to NATO throughout history.

In this context, one of the main arguments of the thesis is that Atatürk's enduring legacy and visionary principles provide a fundamental framework for understanding the complex dynamics of Türkiye-NATO/Western relations and the country's evolving commitments. However, this has not prevented Türkiye from having doubts about joining and remaining part of the Alliance; on the contrary, it has been seen as an incentive factor for the decision to join. These dynamics are likely to continue influencing Türkiye's foreign policy behavior today.

As mentioned above, another important aspect of Turkish foreign policy is the goal of modernization and the desire to turn towards the West. Although Türkiye fought against the Western powers during WW I, it preferred to establish close relations with the Western world after gaining its independence. This orientation, which initially began as a cultural preference, also extended into the political and military spheres after WW II. Furthermore, principles such as modernization and revolutionism played a significant role in facilitating Türkiye's integration into the Western alliance. Ultimately, primarily due to structural and external pressures, decision-makers at the time approached Türkiye's ideal of Westernization and NATO membership from a reformist perspective, believing it aligned with Atatürk's vision of modernization.

In assessing the impact of the country's strategic culture in the broader historical context of Turkish foreign policy, the thesis first emphasizes the concept of "balancing policy" inherited from the Ottoman Empire. It then highlights the historical rivalry and trauma between the Ottoman Empire and Russia and argues that this experience has instilled Turkish foreign policy with a deep-rooted sense of caution and pragmatism. This historical context also shaped Türkiye's alliance behavior during the Cold War, including its approach to the Soviet Union and the West.

The second section examines how leaders' perceptions and ideological-political orientations play a complementary role in Turkish foreign policy. The thesis argues that these perceptions and orientations are often shaped by primary structural and external factors. To illustrate, the crisis moments in the Cold War led to the rise of nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments and paved the way for the perception of a more independent foreign policy to the extent that the structure of the system allowed, such as the attempt to balance relations with the Soviet Union.

In this framework, it is argued that the perceptions and ideological orientations of key leaders such as İsmet İnönü and Adnan Menderes played an important role in Türkiye's decision to join the Alliance during the early period of the Cold War. The influence of leaders will continue to be analyzed through periodic analysis, in line with the previous section.

First, during the early Cold War period (1945-1955), İnönü, while initially adopting a relatively more cautious approach, embraced the strategic necessity of rapprochement with the West. Menderes, on the other hand, was a strong advocate of NATO membership and closer ties with the US. Moreover, Türkiye's transition to a multi-party system further strengthened the desire for integration and NATO membership. While Türkiye's NATO membership process had begun under the Republican People's Party (CHP) leader İnönü, the DP leader Menderes was a stronger advocate of integration with the West and saw it as an important tool for modernization and economic development. The DP, under Adnan Menderes, which came to power in 1950, had a conservative right-wing ideology and a strictly pro-Western orientation. This orientation further strengthened the move toward NATO membership and led the DP to sign various agreements granting the US extensive military and economic privileges in Türkiye. This chapter emphasizes the role of the pro-Western stance of Menderes and the DP government in strengthening Türkiye's commitment to NATO.

Second, the mid-Cold War period (1955-1979) was generally characterized by a series of military coups and instability. This led to frequent changes in government and the destabilization of democratic representation. İnönü, who returned to power in 1961, adopted a more pragmatic and cautious stance in times of crisis in Türkiye-NATO relations. Particularly, a new generation of political leaders

such as Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, and Necmettin Erbakan adopted a relatively more proactive and assertive approach, especially in moments of crisis. It was precisely during this period that the rising nationalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-NATO-American sentiments in Turkish society increased electoral pressures, which were seen as another important domestic factor shaping the perceptions of leaders and ultimately the country's alliance behavior. The young political leaders of the period, such as Süleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit, defended Türkiye's membership in NATO but emphasized a more independent position within the Western bloc. Ecevit and Erbakan, in particular, are seen as important political figures of this stance due to their active role in the 1974 Cyprus intervention.

The late Cold War period (1979-1991) was marked by renewed competition and rivalry between the superpowers and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. After the 1980 military coup, Türkiye's commitment to NATO was re-emphasized and reinforced. During this period, the dominance of center-right and liberal ideologies along with leaders such as Turgut Özal, Mesut Yılmaz, and Tansu Çiller came to the fore in the Turkish political scene. These leaders, who generally represented the right wing, supported economic liberalization and a strong commitment to NATO and the West. The ideological cohesion of the right-wing parties is likely to influence their view of NATO as a strategic defense mechanism against communism and the Soviet threat. The right-wing political tradition's stance against communism in general strengthened Türkiye's commitment to the NATO alliance in general.

In the final phase of the Cold War, it was the coup leaders who initiated the strengthening of high-level commitment to NATO. This was further followed by Turkish political leaders and governments, who reaffirmed their strong commitment to the West. This renewed emphasis also coincided with a period in which center-right, liberal, and partly conservative ideologies emerged as dominant forces in reshaping Türkiye's political dynamics.

An analysis of the ideological and political orientations of right-wing parties reveals that nearly all segments of the right-wing, including the center-right, the nationalist right, and the conservative Islamist right, generally supported alignment with NATO during the Cold War. Ideologically, this alignment was often a response to the perceived threat of communism and the Soviet Union. The right-wing political

tradition, along with its affiliated groups, tended to support NATO due to their strong opposition to communism and the USSR. Furthermore, it would be inaccurate to claim that mainstream Turkish political parties, including the center-left, maintained a clear anti-NATO, anti-US, or anti-Western stance throughout the Cold War. Instead, such positions were often influenced by a combination of factors, shaping the decisions of leaders in response to specific incidents at certain times. However, no clear anti-Western or anti-NATO stance was observed among mainstream political parties during this period.

Finally, the thesis analyzes the complex interaction between domestic institutions, state-society relations, and the role of the military in shaping Türkiye's alliance behavior. The role of the military and coups in Turkish politics is first examined because of their significant influence during the Cold War. This period was marked by three successful military interventions in 1960, 1971, and 1980, as well as two failed coup attempts. The military with its security-oriented approach, strong ties to the US military establishment, and pro-NATO stance, has played a crucial role in maintaining Türkiye's alignment with the West. Despite internal tensions and social upheavals, including the 1960 coup, the military has consistently reaffirmed Türkiye's commitment to NATO, even in its coup declarations. The thesis also argues that military coups have had a profound influence on the Turkish political scene since they exerted pressure and constrained the actions of governments, politicians, and society.

The critical role of the military is followed by an examination of social movements and public opinion. Türkiye's complex domestic political structure during the Cold War was shaped by an early transition to a multiparty democratic system and a series of military coups. Given this complexity and fragility, it is difficult to determine the relative influence of domestic institutions and other social movements, such as civil society organizations. The explanatory power of these factors is also limited because democratic representation itself remains fragile and uncertain throughout the process.

In this part, while the existence of anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in Turkish society is already mentioned, there was also a consensus among mainstream political parties and the military on the importance of NATO

membership. This consensus arguably led to the suppression of opposing voices to a certain extent. During the Cold War, anti-American/Western and anti-imperialist sentiments were widespread, especially among left-socialist groups. The thesis also emphasized that social movements and public opinion have become important factors that influence the perception and decision-making of political leaders by creating electoral and voting pressures on them.

Particularly in the mid-Cold War period, Türkiye experienced a profound social polarization. The thesis discusses that this polarization is an important complementary factor influencing its NATO commitment and alliance behavior. Another point made here is that Türkiye's evolving commitment to NATO and the US has an ideological, historical and political foundation. These sentiments are likely linked to the country's founding philosophy, which includes anti-imperialism, nationalism, complete independence, and a peaceful-neutral stance. These foundational ideals contributed to a degree of skepticism toward a strong alignment with external powers. While they did not prevent NATO membership, they contributed to an enduring caution in Türkiye's alliance commitments.

This position, rooted in Türkiye's War of Independence, found varying degrees of representation among different groups, notably left-Kemalist intellectuals, communist-affiliated groups, and the socialist-left of the period. These ideological and political orientations strengthened the organizational opposition to NATO and the West. However, outside these circles, mainstream political parties generally did not maintain a strong or consistent opposition to NATO. Instead, opposition among these parties emerged primarily in response to specific incidents and remained limited and short-lived. The thesis suggests that at certain times, public sentiment and opinion partially influenced Türkiye's alliance commitment, particularly by exerting electoral pressure on political leaders.

Finally, domestic factors significantly influenced Türkiye's alliance behavior throughout the Cold War. In sum, during the early Cold War, there was a common consensus in favor of NATO membership, which was also rooted in a shared national identity, leadership perceptions, public opinion, and the pro-Western stance of political parties and the military. In the mid-Cold War, however, periods of crisis reinforced nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-Western, and anti-American sentiments

within various segments. These led to a degree of opposition to NATO, and eventually to a more flexible and lower level of commitment to the Alliance. By the end of the Cold War, Türkiye experienced a resurgence of high-level commitment to NATO, with a strong pro-Western orientation fostered by political leaders, major parties, and the influential role of the military, as the opposition and dissenting voices were suppressed.

It has been generally argued in the thesis that external pressures, security concerns, and the desire for modernization and Westernization were the prominent factors in Türkiye's decision to remain a NATO member. Later in the Cold War, however, evolving dynamics within the international system, domestic political contexts, national identity, and specific moments of crisis led to fluctuations in Türkiye's commitment to the Alliance.

The importance of the thesis has been partially mentioned. The study offers important perspectives for several reasons. First, the findings of the thesis provide a historical insight that can illuminate the current and future geopolitical dynamics of Türkiye-NATO and broader transatlantic relations. Given the continuity in the complex nature of the relationship, it is crucial to examine its origins in order to comprehensively understand and illuminate the current dynamics of the interactions, as fluctuations, ups and downs still prevail. Secondly, it will contribute to the literature on the practical application of the neoclassical realist approach in explaining the alliance behavior of states. The aim here is to comprehensively examine the origins of Türkiye-NATO relations through a neoclassical realist approach by giving primary importance to external and systemic factors and combining them with internal factors such as national identity, state political and ideological orientation, and leaders. The rationale for focusing on Türkiye's alliance behavior and examining it along with complementary domestic factors is based on the country's national identity. This identity has also been shaped by the ongoing debates over "Westernization-modernization" and "belonging" that even predate the country's founding, which is also likely to reflect the complexity of the bilateral relationship. Finally, the most important point that this research seeks to address is that the findings are important not only for historical analysis, but also for understanding how these dynamics persist and remain relevant today.

This study contributes to a better understanding of Türkiye's foreign policy decision-making processes at the time of major global transformations during the Cold War. By analyzing Türkiye-NATO relations from a historical perspective, it provides an insight and valuable implications for contemporary relations. Moreover, by examining Türkiye's alliance behavior through a neoclassical realist approach, the thesis provides a comprehensive perspective and practical application of how systemic pressures, external threats and opportunities, and domestic factors interact to shape Türkiye's alliance behavior.

Another important claim of the thesis is that some of the dynamics observed during the Cold War period partially continue to influence Türkiye's foreign policy today and its alliance behavior with the West. This overarching historical research also emphasizes the continuing relevance in contemporary relations. The findings of the study are also providing a valuable insight into recent shifts in Turkish foreign policy behavior. Türkiye's alignment with NATO is contextualized not only as a security-oriented decision but also as part of a process of integration with Western values, thus providing an in-depth analysis of alliance behavior shaped by both urgent security needs and ideological, political commitments.

The study has several limitations due to its scope and methodology. First, its historical context relies heavily on secondary sources and archival material. In this regard, some of the primary sources and accurate information are particularly difficult to access. This limitation may partly affect the depth of interpretation of Türkiye's policy-making processes. Second, the inclusion of various domestic variables, such as national identity, political ideology, and leadership influence, makes it difficult or sometimes impossible to analyze these factors across multiple time periods and creates a great deal of complexity as it requires overcoming various data limitations and subjective perspectives. For this study, which covers a relatively broad historical process, there are various variables from many different periods, making it difficult to identify a specific foreign policy decision for each of them.

Given the complex dynamics of Türkiye-NATO relations, this study also points to several potential areas for further research.

First, future studies could benefit from a deeper examination of primary sources, especially declassified documents from the Cold War era. Such research

would enrich the understanding of the decision-making processes that shaped Türkiye's NATO alignment and the specific choices that led to an evolving commitment.

Second, further studies could explore in more detail the impact of domestic factors, particularly how changes in Türkiye's national identity and ideological orientation have affected its foreign policy choices. In the future, especially with the emergence of new ideological approaches such as political Islam and other political traditions, the scope of the research could be extended beyond the historical process to the contemporary period.

Finally, it may be useful to broaden the theoretical framework. While neoclassical realism provides a solid foundation, integrating perspectives from social constructionism or other approaches could provide alternative insights into Türkiye's alliance behavior. Analyses of these internal elements may reveal additional layers of complexity in Türkiye's alliance behavior, particularly in its interactions with Western institutions. A multidisciplinary approach can increase analytical depth and capture the interplay between Türkiye's identity aspirations and its strategic interests with NATO. Furthermore, as an alternative to this study, which is primarily focused on analyzing Türkiye's alliance behavior, it could also be extended from a western perspective.

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