EVALUATION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF REALISM AND LIBERALISM

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INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on the evaluation of Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War, specifically between the years 1939 and 1945, within the frameworks of realism and liberalism. It examines how Türkiye's strategic preferences, diplomatic initiatives, and neutrality policies can be understood through the theoretical assumptions of these two dominant approaches in international relations. While realism interprets the system through power struggles and security concerns, liberalism emphasizes cooperation, international institutions, and shared values. The wartime environment provides a significant historical background to assess how these theories intersect with state behavior. During the war, Türkiye found itself in a highly fragile geopolitical position, situated between the influence of the Allied and Axis powers. From a realist perspective, Türkiye's insistence on neutrality, its military preparations, and its efforts to maintain a balance between major powers reflected its focus on survival and security. These policies reveal how external threats, and systemic pressures shaped the country's foreign policy in line with realist assumptions. On the other hand, liberal interpretations become visible through Türkiye's multilateral diplomatic engagements, its pursuit of closer cooperation with Western powers, and ultimately its participation as a founding member of the United Nations at the end of the war.

The research further investigates the ways in which Türkiye managed to combine realist and liberal tendencies throughout the war years. While short-term survival was secured by strategies rooted in realism, long-term integration into the international order was shaped by liberal expectations of cooperation and institutionalization. This dual approach highlights the adaptability of Turkish foreign policy during a period of global crisis.

The aim of this research is to provide a theoretical evaluation of Türkiye's foreign policy in the Second World War by applying realism and liberalism as analytical lenses. In this context, the study argues that Türkiye's wartime diplomacy cannot be fully explained by a single theory but rather reflects a multidimensional character that combines both power-oriented and cooperation-oriented strategies. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on Turkish foreign policy and demonstrate how theoretical frameworks in international relations can be applied to concrete historical cases.

This study aims to examine Turkish foreign policy between 1939 and 1945 within the theoretical frameworks of realism and liberalism. It seeks to analyze how Türkiye's neutrality, balance policies, and security concerns reflected realist assumptions, while its multilateral diplomacy and

post-war participation in international institutions illustrated liberal tendencies. By doing so, the research intends to provide a deeper understanding of Türkiye's strategic preferences during one of the most critical periods in world history.

Another objective of this study is to assess the factors that shaped Türkiye's decision-making during the Second World War, such as geopolitical pressures, security threats, and the influence of major powers. At the same time, the study aims to evaluate the extent to which international cooperation and institutional commitments guided Türkiye's foreign policy orientation towards liberal approaches in the aftermath of the war. One of the most important purposes of this research is to highlight the dual nature of Türkiye's diplomacy during the war years, demonstrating how realist and liberal elements coexisted within a multidimensional foreign policy strategy. The study also intends to contribute to the theoretical debate in international relations by applying realism and liberalism to a historical case and assessing their explanatory power. As a result, the purpose of this study is to shed light on Turkish foreign policy in the Second World War, to identify its realist and liberal dimensions, and to evaluate the implications of this dual orientation for both Türkiye's historical trajectory and international relations theory.

Türkiye's foreign policy during the Second World War reveals a multidimensional structure. Despite the fragile geopolitical conditions of the period, Türkiye managed to remain outside the war for a long time by pursuing a policy of neutrality. However, this neutrality was not absolute; it was shaped by the constant pressure of both the Allied and Axis powers, and by the country's urgent need to ensure its own security and survival.

From a realist perspective, Türkiye's policies highlight the priority of safeguarding national sovereignty, balancing between great powers, and strengthening its military capacity in anticipation of possible threats. The central hypothesis here is that Türkiye's wartime foreign policy was primarily guided by security concerns, consistent with the assumptions of realism.

Nevertheless, liberal elements are also visible, especially in the final stages of the war and its aftermath. Türkiye's willingness to align with the Western bloc, its participation in multilateral diplomacy, and its role as a founding member of the United Nations show that liberal tendencies were also present. These steps illustrate that Türkiye was not only concerned with short-term survival but also with long-term integration into the international order.

In this study, the research problem is to understand how Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War can be explained through realism and liberalism. The main question is whether one of these theories

alone is enough, or if both need to be considered together to explain the complex strategies Türkiye followed at that time. On the one hand, realism helps us see how Türkiye focused on its own security, stayed neutral for most of the war, and tried to balance between the Allied and Axis powers. On the other hand, liberalism explains Türkiye's efforts in multilateral diplomacy, its closer ties with the Western bloc, and finally its place as a founding member of the United Nations. For this reason, the problem of the research is not only about choosing between two theories but about showing how they can be combined to give a fuller picture of Türkiye's foreign policy between 1939 and 1945.

The scope of this study covers the period between 1939 and 1945, which corresponds to the years of the Second World War. The beginning of the study is determined as 1939, since this year marks both the outbreak of the war and the rise of new strategic challenges for Türkiye after the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the presidency of İsmet İnönü. The end of the scope is 1945, because the conclusion of the war also brought fundamental changes to the international system and to Türkiye's foreign policy orientation with the foundation of the United Nations and the start of a new global order. By focusing exclusively on this six-year period, the study aims to provide a clear and in-depth theoretical evaluation of Türkiye's diplomatic strategies without extending into the Cold War years, which would require a separate framework.

The research is designed as a comparative theoretical analysis based on the assumptions of realism and liberalism. Realism is employed to examine Türkiye's neutrality, security-driven policies, and balance among great powers, while liberalism is used to assess Türkiye's involvement in multilateral diplomacy and its eventual orientation towards international cooperation. This choice of framework sets a theoretical limitation, as alternative perspectives such as constructivism or critical approaches are not included in the analysis.

In this study, both primary and secondary sources in English and Turkish have been examined to collect data. The methodology of the research is mainly historical and analytical, supported by a descriptive design that aims to clarify the theoretical interpretations of Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War. Two methodological approaches have been utilized. The first one is the historical narrative method, which focuses on reconstructing Türkiye's foreign policy actions between 1939 and 1945 within the global context of the war. The second is the descriptive and analytical method, which evaluates Türkiye's neutrality policy, balance strategies, and participation in international institutions by applying the theoretical frameworks of realism and liberalism. Sources of information include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, archival

documents, official reports, newspapers, and relevant online resources. These materials provided both theoretical insights and historical data that support the comparative analysis of Turkish foreign policy in terms of realism and liberalism.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MAINSTREAM INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES: REALISM AND LIBERALISM

REALISM

Although the term "realism" remains popular in colloquial speech even today, its roots date back to the 19th century. It is the oldest known theory in the history of its field. The dominance of the Realism theory, assumed to have begun with the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, in explaining international events started after World War I. Despite this assumption, some researchers trace the origins of the theory to earlier periods. Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Carr, Morgenthau, and Waltz are recognized as the founders of the theory. Although these thinkers, who made significant contributions to historical thought, reached different conclusions under the same theory, they are collectively categorized under the umbrella of Realism.

Although its intellectual foundations and existence as Classical Realism date back to earlier periods, as mentioned above, the theory became dominant after World War I due to its critical stance toward decisions and regulations made during that time. Realism is a theory that seeks to understand human nature and explains the system accordingly. Concepts such as power, interests, and human nature are fundamental to Realism.

Theoretical Explanation of Realism

After World War I, Realism began to be embraced as a reaction to the perceived failure of decisions and planned regulations influenced by liberal thought. Realist theory emerged in modern International Relations as a reaction to the dominance of idealist thought after World War I. The inability of idealism to foresee or prevent the outbreak of the Second World War led to a search for a more realistic framework to explain the political behavior of individuals and states, as well as the anarchic structure of international politics. Within the context of the "First Great Debate," realism positioned itself as a critique and alternative to the liberal perspective, which emphasized self-determination, collective security, democratization, the establishment of common legal frameworks, and the rationality of the individual (Aydın, 2004, p. 34).

E. H. Carr, one of the key figures in shaping the conceptual

framework of Realism within international relations theory, viewed Realism not only as a theoretical approach but also as a historical response to the practical failure of idealist thought. Carr summarizes this transition as "the collapse of post-World War I regulations and the collapse of liberal utopianism." According to *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, Carr argues that sound political thinking must rely on both utopian and realistic elements. When utopianism becomes an empty and intolerable illusion—serving merely as a cover for the interests of the privileged—the realist performs a necessary function by exposing its true nature. However, Carr also emphasizes that utopianism and realism belong to fundamentally different planes and are not easily reconciled. (Carr, 2020, p. 137) The perception of failure resulting from actions taken under liberalism, combined with Realism's approach of explaining the international system based on human nature, led to its broader acceptance as a theory. 'Definitions of realism vary considerably in their details but reveal a striking family resemblance. Realists tend to coverge around four central propositions, which are, groupism, egoism, anarchy, and power politics.' (Wohlforth, 2008, s. 132)

Realism is a theory that seeks to understand human nature and explains political outcomes through this lens. It regards states as the primary actors and therefore interprets both national and international politics as struggles between competing groups. The interests and conflicts of these groups determine their position within the system. While cooperation and solidarity may emerge within groups to achieve better conditions, this often leads to conflict with other groups or external actors. Realism emphasizes the selfish nature of human beings, arguing that individuals are inherently driven by their own interests. One of the key thinkers shaping this foundation is Thomas Hobbes, who introduced concepts such as insecurity, competition, and the pursuit of power. In his seminal work *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes portrayed human beings as selfish and conflict-prone by nature, describing the "state of nature" as a constant state of war. In this condition, the strong dominate and eliminate the weak, resulting in an anarchic system.

According to Hobbes, this destructive nature of humanity cannot be fundamentally altered. Hence, people require a supreme authority or hierarchical political power to restrain their behavior. Hobbes proposed the state—symbolized as the *Leviathan*—as the solution to control this perpetual conflict. However, he also maintained that the international system remains in a condition of anarchy, as no overarching authority exists beyond states. Hobbes's notions of anarchy, selfishness, and the perpetual state of war have become essential pillars of realist theory. (Keyik & Erol, 2019, s. 16). When sources on Realism are examined, it is observed that although definitions may vary, the concept of anarchy appears in all of

them. Realism argues that unless there is a universally accepted superpower in the system, states will constantly be in conflict to establish authority. According to Realism, since there is no central power with authority over states, the international system is anarchic. There is no binding authority above states. In this environment of anarchy, each state must secure its own safety and protect its interests, which results in a continuous struggle for power and a sense of insecurity. Here, anarchy should not be understood as chaos, but rather as the absence of a central authority at the international level. According to the theory, a state's military power and security are paramount, and any threat to these renders the methods proposed by civil society organizations or international organizations insignificant and irrelevant. To achieve its goals, Realism also emphasizes the concept of the statesman. It considers insecure, fearful, suspicious, fame-seeking, and prestige-driven leaders as unsuccessful.

According to realists, leaders face constant constraints and limited opportunities for cooperation. Therefore, escaping the reality of power politics is nearly impossible. For realists, acknowledging this reality is not pessimism—it is prudence (Antunes & Camisao, 2018). Realist thinkers have also provided explanations regarding how the perspectives of those who govern states should be shaped in order to achieve all these objectives. According to the theory, moral values must be set aside when it comes to the state's security. It asserts that political actions cannot be aligned with morality. The political realist acknowledges the existence and potential importance of non-political modes of reasoning, but from a realist perspective, these standards must ultimately take a backseat to political considerations. When other intellectual traditions try to apply standards appropriate for non-political domains to the political arena, realism deviates from those traditions. Political realism now opposes what Morgenthau refers to as the "legalistic–moralistic" approach to international relations. *(Morgenthau, 1948/2006, p. 14)* A statesman must prioritize their state and its interests, representing it in the international system. While doing so, they must not act on emotions, as the theory holds that emotions have no place in the international system. According to Machiavelli in The Prince, "my view is that it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both, and if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved." (Machiavelli, 2008, p.59) Realism suggests that in international politics, states behave in line with Machiavelli's well-known dictum that the pursuit of goals legitimizes any means. (Gözen, 2008, s. 210) Another key realist thinker, Morgenthau, argues that reason and morality function only as tools for gaining and legitimizing power. Reason operates by choosing among competing impulses or goals within a particular struggle for power. It also identifies the most suitable means to reach predetermined objectives and seeks to align

conflicting means with those aims. (Griffiths, 1992, p. 40)

Realism, as a state-centered theory, does not attach significance to non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations, corporations, or international institutions. These actors may influence the agenda, yet they do not hold ultimate decision-making authority, nor are their contributions decisive. Any domestic or international body lacking economic or military power is not recognized as a determining actor in the struggle for security and power. Different periods of realism have produced different representatives. While classical realism explains state behavior through the inherent human drive for power, later realists, including Kenneth Waltz, emphasized the position and capabilities of states within the international system. Nevertheless, both perspectives regard states as the main actors in international relations and place the pursuit of security within an anarchic order at the center. According to Waltz's defensive realism, states primarily act to survive and maintain security. They tend to preserve the existing balance of power rather than pursue excessive aggression, since such behavior increases risks instead of enhancing security. Should a state seek to expand excessively or accumulate disproportionate power, it will likely provoke counter-alliances formed by other states. (Waltz, 1979, s. 114)

In conclusion, realism is a theory that considers states the principal actors in international relations and argues that, due to the anarchic structure of the system, an ongoing struggle for power and security exists among them. States behave rationally to safeguard their interests and security, while cooperation can only be temporary and limited. Hence, realism interprets international order not through cooperation and institutions, as liberalism suggests, but through power balances and conflicts of interest.

Foreign Policy Analysis of Realism

Realism is one of the oldest and most influential theories that explains international politics through the concepts of power, interest, and anarchy. Many other theoretical approaches use realism as a benchmark to define their own identities and contributions. The uniqueness of these viewpoints and the importance of their assertions would be much harder to distinguish in the absence of realism as a comparative framework. (Wohlforth, 2008, s. 131). It argues that the distribution of power among states determines international relations. Realism acknowledges the existence of relationships between states; however, it does not evaluate these relationships positively and associates their sustainability with the concept of power. It asserts that political reality in the international arena can be explained by examining and comparing inter-state conflicts, state behaviors, and state capacities. Almost all characteristics of Realism that are theoretically explained should also be analyzed from a foreign policy

perspective. Firstly, its view of human nature as evil and selfish leads to the belief that states, when examined collectively, are also selfish and self-centered. According to Shimko, researchers have made an effort to track down the origins of the nature-nurture divide throughout history, specifically the question of whether social and cultural factors or biological or instinctual forces have a greater influence on human behavior. Some explanations offer modern, scientific reinterpretations of previous philosophical or theological assertions, attributing human aggression and warfare to innate biological drives. For example, Sigmund Freud suggested that people have two instincts: the death instinct (Thanatos) and the life instinct (Eros). He believed that acts of aggression were manifestations of this underlying death instinct, whether they were internalized as suicide or externalized as violence. Freud clarified his harsh assessment of human nature in his Civilization and Its Discontents, even though he later reexamined some aspects of this theory: "Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowment is to be reckoned with a powerful share of aggressiveness… [this instinct] manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast." (Shimko, 2009, p.142). As a result, to understand realism from with foreign policy perspective; it argues that the international system consists of ambitious and self-interested states. States shape their foreign policies to maximize their own interests. Realism assumes that the acquisition of wealth is an indispensable goal for all states, because in doing so they increase their military power and thereby ensure their security. (Düzgün, 2020, p.260) Thus, from a foreign policy perspective, Realism portrays states as rational actors that constantly seek security, maximize their interests, and shape their strategies in accordance with the balance of power.

Furthermore, it maintains that civil society organizations have no role in decisions affecting the existence and security of the state in domestic politics. Similarly, in the international order, Realism does not recognize the existence or decisions of any international organization when it comes to its state.

Realism observes the struggles of states against each other in the international system. Just as the theory explains individuals in society as selfish and greedy, it also argues that the actors in the international system are selfish, constantly monitoring each other, and remaining on standby to prevent one actor from surpassing another. An important example of this can be seen in the works of Thucydides. Thucydides views the decision of Sparta and its allies to resort to war as a necessity in response to Athens' rise in power and its potential to disrupt the balance of power. According to this

understanding, just as it is necessary to remove a tumor as soon as it is detected in the body while it is still small, the same necessity applies here. (Arı, Theories of International Relations, p.161) "Military power constitutes a fundamental element for states, as it enables them to preserve their autonomy and safeguard their security through the mobilization of national resources." Within realism, the balance-of-power policy begins with certain assumptions about states: they are unitary actors that, at the minimum, strive for survival and, at the maximum, seek universal domination. States—or those acting on their behalf—attempt to employ available means in more or less rational ways in order to achieve their objectives. These means can be categorized into two types: internal efforts (such as enhancing economic capacity, strengthening military power, or developing sophisticated strategies) and external efforts (such as reinforcing and expanding alliances or undermining and reducing the strength of rival alliances) (Waltz, 1979, p. 118). In this context, the theory explains that states closely monitor each other, and when a state or bloc becomes disproportionately powerful, it poses a threat to the security of others. Consequently, states try to counterbalance potential threats either by increasing their own capacities (internal balancing) or by forming alliances with other states (external balancing). From the perspective of foreign policy, this realist approach translates into building alliances, engaging in diplomatic relations, and pursuing activities that maintain power equilibrium in order to take positions in the international arena against situations perceived as threats.

The theory, which argues that if there is no superpower in the international arena, conflict will be inevitable in the pursuit of becoming one, also explains that actors driven by emotions will remain in the background within the system. It suggests that considerations of whether the decisions made align with moral boundaries or are implemented with respect should not be of primary concern. Instead, what matters is whether these implementations serve their purpose in the system, regardless of whether they are deemed right or wrong. Realism's strong emphasis on the concept of anarchy explains its perspective on the international system. As stated above, in an environment prone to conflict due to the absence of a superpower, the efforts of actors trying to dominate by surpassing one another demonstrate the anarchic nature of the system. Despite all this, Realism acknowledges that cooperation can still occur in the international system. If an actor collaborates with another in line with its interests or chooses to form an alliance in response to a common threat, Realism accepts this. According to Realism, both individuals and states engage in cooperation solely for the sake of achieving specific goals.

In addition to classical realism, another approach called

neorealism (or structural realism) was later developed. Unlike realism, which often explains state behavior through human nature or leaders' choices, neorealism focuses on the structure of the international system itself. Neo-realists recognize the importance of economic problems and growing interdependence in world politics, but they also emphasize that each state's policies are mainly shaped by the desire to maximize its relative power (Aydın, 2004, p.49). Because there is no central authority above states, the system is described as anarchic. In this setting, the distribution of power—whether the world is unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar—shapes how states act and interact. From this view, states seek security not only through their own capabilities but also by balancing against stronger powers, showing that systemic pressures rather than individual motives often guide foreign policy.

Finally, Realism highlights the uncertainty of the international system. This unpredictability keeps states constantly on alert. The future behaviors of states cannot be accurately predicted by others, leading them to perceive each other as untrustworthy.

LIBERALISM

Among international relations theories, liberalism is regarded as one of the most optimistic approaches to both human nature and the conduct of states in foreign policy. From a liberal perspective, the well-being, freedom, and security of individuals should be safeguarded not only within domestic boundaries but also at the global level. Liberal thinkers emphasize that states are capable of establishing a peaceful international order, not merely through competition for power, but by relying on shared values and cooperative institutions. Unlike realism, liberalism views human nature positively and interprets state behavior and interstate relations through this more hopeful lens.

Theoretical Explanation of Liberalism

In international relations, liberalism is a theory that explains how independent states can cooperate, exercise restraint, and behave according to rules even in the absence of a global government. It stems from a long intellectual tradition that prioritizes individual liberties and rights (Locke, 1988, p. 271). Arguments that government is only legitimate by consent and that its primary function is to protect life, liberty, and property rather than to rule society for its own sake are examples of this tradition that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Locke, 1988, p.330-331). Only when a government is supported by the consent of the people is it considered legitimate. Instead of running society for its own sake, its main responsibility is to protect people's lives, liberties, and property.

Foreign policy is sensitive to rights, revenue, and predictable rules because the liberal perspective treats a state as an authority that combines

the interests of groups that bear the costs and benefits of external policy, rather than as a single entity that is cut off from society (Locke, 1988, p. 331). A state does not make decisions alone; it combines the interests of those who pay for and benefit from external policy (taxpayers, traders, soldiers, etc.). Foreign policy must therefore take into account public finances, rights, and stable legal norms. Careful, rule-guided decisions typically win out because rash, ad hoc actions can be costly. Because liberty only endures when rulers are subject to institutional checks and legal review under a separation of powers, the same tradition maintains that power must be divided and subject to general rules (Montesquieu, 1989, p.155-156). Practically speaking, regular trade and legally binding agreements curb ambition, increase the cost of conflict, and create predictable behavioral patterns that can be carried over international borders as trade grows (Montesquieu, 1989, p.338). Therefore, consistent business practices and legally enforceable contracts limit overreach and discourage dangerous conduct. They increase the cost of war and create reliable, predictable habits, which spread internationally as trade increases. By arguing that public debate enhances judgment and accountability by testing weak claims both before and after decisions are made, liberal writers also support open discussion as a working method for error correction (Mill, 1879, p.18-20).

According to Kant, each state's civil constitution is republican at the national level and is based on the freedom of its citizens, their reliance on a single body of law, and their equality as citizens (Kant, 2006, p. 74). According to Kant, peace is based on two pillars and international rights should be founded on a federalism of free states that form a federation of peoples rather than a state of peoples (Kant, 2006, p. 80–81). States at home require republican constitutions, which guarantee equal rights and freedoms under the common law. A voluntary federation of free states (with shared rules and no global super-state) should be used to organize peace abroad. Durable peace is more likely when republican orders and federative laws are combined.

Kant's stance is neatly restated by commentators who highlight the same contrast by pointing out that the Pacific Union is neither a world state nor a single peace treaty because a world state would jeopardize civic freedom (Doyle, 2006, p. 206). He restricts cosmopolitan rights to universal hospitality, which stipulates that a stranger must not be greeted with animosity upon arrival (Kant, 1795/2013, p. 82). These three layers of right, when combined, limit what is acceptable and stabilize expectations among states by steering them away from a state of war and toward lawful and peaceful relations (Kant, 1795/2013, p. 81). According to Kant, the publicity principle maintains that a policy is only legitimate if its guiding

principle can be openly avowed without defeating its own purpose; any maxim that operates only under secrecy fails this test and reasonably invites opposition. Tactical information may be temporarily kept secret, but the rule that supports the policy must be publicly defendable. This criterion focuses on the fundamental policy principle rather than operational specifics. Accordingly, principles that are openly declared promote collaboration and trust, while those that rely on confidentiality convey dishonesty and breed mistrust (Kant, 2006, p. 104–105).

As liberalism is an economic philosophy that believes that people can learn and grow, it anticipates that freedom will benefit both society and individuals when laws safeguard contracts and property (Smith, 1998, p. 459). In short, Smith's argument is that since people can grow and learn, market freedom tends to benefit society as a whole by increasing productivity and distributing wealth when contracts and property are protected by the law. To put it briefly, liberty functions best when it is enshrined in explicit laws and safeguards. Because decentralized coordination can direct resources through what later authors refer to as the invisible hand when fundamental rules are stable and obvious, the traditional argument in this field is that many decisions should be left to voluntary exchange (Smith, 1998, p.593). When these elements are combined, four interconnected processes become apparent in global politics, starting with representation, as citizens who pay taxes, trade internationally, and possess rights can voice risks and costs, which in turn pushes leaders to avoid needless force and to value credible promises (Locke, 1988, p.111). This is not a rejection of all regulation, but rather an expectation that predictable law and secure rights typically produce higher welfare and fewer temptations to coerce others under rules (Smith, 1998, p. 25). When these components are combined, a series of mechanisms manifest in global politics. The first step is representation; traders, taxpayers, and rights holders can voice concerns about costs and hazards. Their voice puts pressure on leaders to refrain from using needless force, to choose negotiated, rule-guided solutions, and to honor commitments made to others.

Following constitutional restraint, adventurism becomes more expensive and compliance is more likely when agreements are signed because divided powers and independent courts impose obstacles before decisions and accountability after them (Montesquieu, 1989, p.156-157). Open discussion adds another discipline by exposing manipulation and improving information, which makes signals sent by states more clear and less likely to be misinterpreted or caught off guard in times of crisis (Mill, 1879, p.17-18).

Last but not least, when property rights and adjudication are

trustworthy, interdependence under the law increases because trade and investment grow, making coercion more costly than negotiation while generating groups that directly profit from stability (Montesquieu, 1989, p. 338-339). Because states can concentrate on absolute gains when rules, monitoring, and reciprocity reduce uncertainty and lengthen the time horizon, liberal writers respond to the darker predictions of realism by arguing that anarchy does not always prevent cooperation (Keohane, 1984, p.12–13).

Liberal theory therefore treats states as varied rather than uniform, because domestic structures, regime type, and organized interests shape preferences and choices in ways that matter for external behavior (Locke, 1988, p. 354). One prominent example of this logic is the democratic peace expectation, which maintains that liberal democracies are very unlikely to fight one another because public oversight, transparency, and legal constraints restrict the path to war and encourage lawful dispute settlement between similar regimes (Doyle, 1997, p. 285-286). In order to reduce transaction costs and make cooperative outcomes easier to maintain without a central enforcer, international organizations reinforce these patterns by disseminating information, outlining obligations, and providing venues for settlement (Keohane, 1984, p. 90). The broader context of complex interdependence then demonstrates that numerous avenues of communication and a wide range of topics on the agenda lessen the central position of power among some partners and enhance the usefulness of institutional management (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p.21-23).

The liberal picture is more plural and dynamic than rigid state-centered accounts permit because non-state actors, like multinational corporations and civil society organizations, create connections that transcend national boundaries and influence agendas (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p. 28). Economic interdependence is particularly important because dense trade and finance increase the costs of conflict while enhancing the benefits of peace, which encourages reasonable leaders to reach a negotiated compromise when the rules are known (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p.9,15). Since these mechanisms do not automatically create harmony, liberal theory outlines its own boundaries and conditions by citing the institutional characteristics that underpin its expectations, such as reciprocal rights and true representation within states (Locke, 1988, p.271). The relationship between society and foreign policy is weakened and promises become less credible even when formal documents are in place, if checks and balances are ineffective in practice or if free discussion is stifled (Mill, 1879, p. 35).

Because it can be highly asymmetric, interdependence is not always calming. When there are few alternatives or poor adjudication,

actors in central network positions can use economic ties as tools of pressure (Montesquieu, 1989, p. 337-338). When public laws govern relations, even distant peoples can build peaceful relationships, bringing the world closer to a cosmopolitan constitution (Kant, 2006, p. 106).

While acknowledging the ongoing threat of conflict reoccurring, Kant rejects the idea of a world state and instead proposes an ever-expanding, permanent federation of free states that prevents war (Kant, 2006, p. 105). Any legal claim must be able to be made public according to the publicity principle (Kant, 2006, p. 128). A maxim that demands secrecy is illegitimate; Kant presents this as a negative juridical criterion for identifying what is wrong regarding others. If one cannot avow a maxim without thereby thwarting one's own aim, the universal opposition it provokes reveals its injustice (Kant, 2006, p. 129).

The economic strand of liberalism offers a parallel explanation for why restraint is frequently rational by arguing that secure property and clear rules support growth through voluntary exchange, making coercion a costly and short-lived strategy compared with investment and trade (Smith, 1998, p.459,590). This suggests that liberalism is not a doctrine that expects peace without conditions, but rather a mechanism-based theory that predicts cooperation where rights, checks, law, and openness are present and durable (Kant, 2006, p.74–75).

Governments face domestic pressure to uphold regulations and resolve conflicts with the least amount of disruption because businesses and households that plan under predictable law create intricate supply and payment chains that are easily disrupted by war (Smith, 1998, p.458,488). The social groups that gain from exchange make the case for prudence in times of crisis and for believable pledges that safeguard contracts and market access because these pressures coincide with the political processes of representation and debate (Locke, 1988, p. 350–351). Although this arrangement does not eliminate power politics, it does help to explain why many states prefer negotiated solutions that uphold the law over one-time benefits that encourage reprisals, particularly in situations where interactions are repeated and reputation is important (Keohane, 1984, p.94). Neoliberal institutionalism, which asks how cooperation can be maintained among self-interested states that interact repeatedly under anarchy, more precisely restated liberal arguments in the late 20th century (Keohane, 1984, Ch. 4).

In order to make cheating expensive and compliance appealing to actors who value the future, even in the absence of centralized enforcement, institutions monitor behavior, provide information, and encourage reciprocity (Keohane, 1984, Chs. 5–6). When actors care about their reputation and anticipate future encounters, research on repeated games

provides the micro-foundation by demonstrating that basic conditional strategies can stabilize cooperation (Axelrod, 1984, Chs. 1-2). Because economic, social, and legal ties create other channels that institutions are designed to manage, military force is not always the most effective tool among certain partners, as explained by the concept of complex interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p.20-29).

Liberal ideas have faced two main lines of criticism and have responded in theoretical terms rather than with policy slogans, beginning with the realist claim that international organizations reflect the interests of powerful states and matter little in hard security crises (Keohane, 1984, Ch. 1). Although liberal authors acknowledge the importance of power, they also demonstrate how regulations and oversight have altered behavior in numerous fields where enforcement was lax and reputations and frequent contact handled the burden of upholding agreements (Keohane, 1984, Ch. 6).

According to a second line of criticism from constructivist authors, liberal models undervalue the ways in which identities and norms shape interests. The liberal response is that institutions and publicity function in part through the formation of norms because open justification and rules teach actors what other people can reasonably expect (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p.46-47). Because it links outcomes to observable arrangements of rights, institutions, information, and repeated interaction, liberalism remains an analytical approach that tracks when cooperation is feasible and why it lasts rather than a moral sermon that assumes harmony by nature (Kant, 2006, p.108). When these strands are brought together, it becomes evident what the theory predicts and under what circumstances it functions best. Legal review and institutional checks make promises credible when treaties are signed and raise the cost of reckless ventures. In these situations, where individuals have effective rights and government is based on consent, leaders must consider the opinions of groups that bear the costs of external action, making caution more sensible than bravado (Locke, 1988, p. 363, 366).

Information is better and manipulation is riskier when there is open debate and a free press that can question official claims. This lowers misperception and fortifies accountability systems (Mill, 1879, p.17–20).

To put it briefly, liberalism offers a useful and verifiable approach to thinking about international relations by demonstrating how domestic institutions and concepts spread to shape state behavior in the absence of a global authority (Kant, 2006, p.74-75,82).

Foreign Policy Analysis of Liberalism

To fully grasp liberalism's perspective on foreign policy, it is necessary to examine its historical roots. Liberal thought is fundamentally grounded in Immanuel Kant's idea of "Perpetual Peace," which suggests that the spread of constitutional governance, the expansion of free trade, and the establishment of international organizations would pave the way for lasting peace. This notion provides the philosophical foundation for liberalism's belief in the possibility of both peace and cooperation. (Kant, 2013, p. 67–71).

Additionally, Adam Smith's advocacy of free trade emphasized that economic relations foster interdependence among states, thereby encouraging cooperation instead of conflict (Smith, 1776/1994, p. 418–420). The idea that economic integration could soften security policies became a significant aspect of liberal approaches to foreign affairs (Russett & Oneal, 2001, p. 25–27). In the early twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson's vision of liberal internationalism highlighted democracy and the strengthening of international legal institutions as the basis of peace (Wilson, 1918, Points I–XIV; Knock, 1992, p. 121–125). His "League of Nations" project after World War I represented one of the first attempts to institutionalize liberal foreign policy (Knock, 1992, p. 121–125). Thus, liberal foreign policy perspectives have historically evolved through Kant's philosophy of peace (Kant, 1795/2013, p. 67–73), Smith's free trade principles (Smith, 1776/1994, p. 418–420), and Wilsonian efforts toward institutionalization (National WWI Museum and Memorial, n.d.). Today, they continue to develop around the themes of economic interdependence, international institutions, and the democratic peace theory (Doyle, 1983, p. 213–214; Russett & Oneal, 2001, p. 271–274). In the discipline of international relations, liberalism is an approach grounded in the assumption that states and societies are inclined toward cooperation based on rational interests. Liberalism in international relations argues that human nature is inclined toward cooperation and that conflicts between states do not necessarily have to escalate into war. While states remain sovereign actors with potentially conflicting interests, international law, norms, and institutions provide mechanisms to manage these disputes peacefully. From this perspective, the international system is not seen merely as a struggle for power but as an order shaped by cooperation, norm-building, and the rule of law.

Liberalism provides not only a framework for domestic politics but also a significant theoretical perspective in international relations. Although the international system is considered anarchic, liberal thought argues that cooperation among states is possible and that lasting peace can be achieved. Immanuel Kant's idea of "Perpetual Peace" forms one of the

central pillars of this approach. From a liberal standpoint, international institutions, legal frameworks, and interdependence make relations between states more predictable and stable. As trade and economic interaction expand, the cost of war increases, making cooperation a more rational choice. Thus, liberalism explains international order not solely through the balance of power, but also through norms, institutions, and mutual interests.

Liberal theory highlights the importance of international organizations in sustaining cooperation. Institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the League of Nations have played critical roles in creating a more regulated and predictable international environment. By setting common rules and providing a legal framework, these organizations reduce the likelihood of conflict and contribute to peace and stability. According to liberal thought, modern states are increasingly connected through economic, technological, and communicational interdependence. The expansion of global trade, capital mobility, international investment, and advances in communication technologies bind states together, raising the costs of conflict and encouraging peaceful cooperation. Another key proposition of liberalism in international relations is the "democratic peace" thesis. This perspective suggests that democratic states are less likely to go to war with each other, as they share similar values and political structures. Transparency, the rule of law, and public accountability make conflict among democracies less probable. Hence, liberalism regards democratization as a crucial instrument for achieving and maintaining international peace.

Overall, liberalism explains not only the relationship between individuals and the state but also the functioning of the international system through cooperation, institutions, and interdependence. In this sense, it provides an alternative paradigm to realism. While liberalism emphasizes the prospects of cooperation and institutions, realism criticizes this view as overly optimistic, maintaining that in an anarchic system, conflict of interests among states is inevitable. Consequently, liberalism stands as a contrasting paradigm to realism in the field of international relations. From this perspective, human nature is essentially peaceful and predisposed to collaboration; just as individuals can cooperate, so too can states, especially when their interests align. While states are regarded as sovereign actors, liberalism posits that national and international organizations can make a more cooperative and bounded understanding of sovereignty. The international system is not merely an arena of power struggles, but also a shape shaped by cooperation, norms, and legal frameworks.

Liberal theory believes that lasting peace between states is feasible,

particularly through world trade, economic interdependence, and institutionalization. According to liberal thought, economic interdependence is one of the most significant foundations of peace. Free trade and globalization intertwine the interests of states, thereby increasing the costs of war and encouraging cooperation. The greater the growth of international trade, the more the economies of states become interdependent, so war becomes improbable and cooperative relations become fostered. Such economic exchanges involve not only commodity exchange but also the flow of capital, information, technology, and labor. For this reason, issues such as migration, public health, environment, education, and monetary policies become central to foreign policy management.

In the liberal approach to foreign policy, economic interdependence emerges as a significant dimension. The expansion of trade among states, the integration of international financial systems, and the deepening of global supply chains increase the costs of war and promote cooperation. This process encompasses not only the exchange of goods but also the flows of capital, knowledge, technology, and labor. Consequently, foreign policy decisions are shaped not only by security concerns but also by the aim of preserving and enhancing economic prosperity. Within this framework, the concept of complex interdependence developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye is particularly noteworthy. According to this perspective, states are interconnected not only in the military and security domains but also in multidimensional fields such as economy, environment, health, technology, and communication. In such a system, military instruments cease to be the sole determinants of foreign policy; diplomacy, international law, and economic mechanisms increasingly come to the forefront. This perspective constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of liberal foreign policy in today's globalized international relations.

Even though the institutions have no importance in both the domestic and international arena with realism, it has with a liberal perspective. From the liberal framework, international organizations play a role in transparency. Institutions help states trust each other by making things clear, checking actions, and using trust-building steps. Organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Health Organization function as norm-setting entities in international relations. These institutions enable not only states but also civil society, individuals, and corporations to participate actively in global affairs. We may understand that the foreign policy is also shaped by human rights, global equity, and sustainable development. Not only the security issues or interests form the international arena.

Another prominent element in the liberal understanding of foreign policy is the Democratic Peace Thesis. Rooted in Immanuel Kant's idea of Perpetual Peace, this thesis argues that in a world where constitutional governments and representative democracies become widespread, wars between states will decline. Within the liberal framework, it is assumed that democracies are less likely to wage war against each other and, conversely, more likely to engage in cooperation. After the Cold War, this perspective became particularly evident in the United States' policies of "democracy promotion" and in the European Union's enlargement strategies. Democracy has been framed not only as a domestic system of governance but also as a foreign policy instrument aimed at fostering international peace and cooperation.

Nevertheless, the democratic peace thesis has been subject to criticism. Although democratic states have rarely fought wars against each other, they have frequently clashed with authoritarian regimes. For instance, the U.S. intervention in Iraq demonstrated that the foreign policies of democratic states do not always prioritize peace. Thus, while the democratic peace thesis reflects the idealistic dimension of liberalism, in practice it remains a contested and challenged domain. Even so, this approach continues to serve as a significant theoretical foundation supporting liberalism's core claim that lasting peace in the international system is indeed possible. In liberal thought, war among states is not inevitable. Rather, it is hoped that through shared experience and institutional settings, trust is developed, and conflicts are resolved peacefully. Interest conflicts are normal, but their translation into violent conflicts can be avoided by shaping international law and imposing international norms. The belief that certain rights are universal, inalienable, and non-negotiable for both individuals and states is a pillar of liberalism.

In this respect, human rights are not just an internal matter but also a legitimate basis for foreign intervention. Liberalism recognizes state sovereignty but also that in extreme human rights abuses, the international community can intervene under certain circumstances. Such intervention does not have to come in the form of military force; it can be diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, or humanitarian aid. Uncertainty and insecurity are not dismissed by liberal theory but are viewed as issues that can be reduced through transparency, mutual monitoring, and institutional accountability. Under liberalism's auspices, ideas of individual welfare, freedom, and security principles become paramount in accordance with the character of society. Such a framework emerges based on democratic representation, civilian participation, and the rule of law. States, in turn, shape foreign policy strategies that embody and disseminate such principles on the global stage. The assumption that democracies will not be

in conflict with one another and will most likely cooperate is the basis for the "democratic peace theory.".

In summary, liberalism views global foreign policy as a realm where interests clash and uncertainty does not automatically produce conflict. Instead, an enduring peace becomes possible under institutions, norms, and shared interests. Not only is security sought after by states, but goals such as economic growth, human rights protection, environmental quality, and global welfare are also sought. The achievement of a more peaceful, secure, and stable world order depends on the general adoption and enforcement of these values by all members.

Liberalism argues that in the realm of foreign policy, states act not only through power struggles but also by fostering cooperation based on economic interdependence, international institutions, and democratic values (Kant, 1795; Smith, 1776). In this framework, foreign policy is shaped not only by security concerns but also by goals of protecting economic welfare, human rights, and global norms. Kant's idea of Perpetual Peace (1795) and Smith's notion of free trade (1776) laid the foundations for the belief that international cooperation is both possible and sustainable. Keohane and Nye's concept of complex interdependence further demonstrates that in modern foreign policy, economic, environmental, and technological interactions have become increasingly decisive (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Moreover, the democratic peace thesis posits that the likelihood of war between democracies is low, making the promotion of democracy a strategic tool in foreign policy (Doyle, 1983).

However, the liberal approach to foreign policy has faced several criticisms. Realist theory contends that international relations are essentially shaped by power distribution and security concerns, viewing liberalism's emphasis on cooperation as overly optimistic (Waltz, 1979). Economic interdependence has not always produced peace; rather, it has sometimes generated dependency crises and power asymmetries among states (Gilpin, 1987). The democratic peace thesis is also contested in practice: while democracies rarely fight each other, they have frequently engaged in military interventions against authoritarian regimes (e.g., the U.S. intervention in Iraq) (Owen, 1994). Furthermore, liberalism's interventionist claims grounded in human rights have often been criticized as serving not as "legitimate foreign policy" but as a means to justify the interests of great powers (Chomsky, 1999). Therefore, while the liberal perspective on foreign policy offers a strong theoretical framework that highlights peace and cooperation in the international order, its application brings inherent limitations and contradictions. Liberalism's foreign policy dimension should thus be evaluated with a balanced approach between its idealistic vision and realist warnings.

CHAPTER TWO: SECOND WORLD WAR AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Second World War, which took six years from 1939 to 1945, was the most devastating and extensive war in human history. Involving nations from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, the war involved military and civilian populations on a scale hitherto unprecedented. The war killed tens of millions of people, created extensive devastation, and instituted profound changes in the international political structure. (History.com Editors, 2018) It was not just war on the traditional battlefield but extended into economic, ideological, and technological areas that dominated the 20th century.

The war was truly a fight between two great coalitions: the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) and the Allied Powers (Britain, France, the Soviet Union, China, and eventually the United States) (McLean, 2022). These two were not only military alliances but also drastically differing world visions and political orders. The Axis powers pursued territorial enlargement policies on the path to territorial conquest and ideological domination, while the Allies sought to counter their aims and restore international balance. The origins of World War II can be traced back to the unsettled legacy of the First World War. "The gains were confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, at the end of the First World War—thus leaving Japan the predominant power on the west side of the Pacific. Despite this, her people were dissatisfied with her war gains and left with the feeling that she was a 'have-not' power, like Italy. So, the Japanese came to feel that they had something in common with Italy and with Germany." (Liddell Hart, 1970, p. 204). Similarly, the Western powers' conciliatory approach created a fragile environment in which radical ideologies could flourish. As Liddell Hart observes, "Ever since Hitler's entry into power, in 1933, the British and French Governments had conceded to this dangerous autocrat immeasurably more than they had been willing to concede to Germany's previous democratic Governments. At every turn they showed a disposition to avoid trouble and shelve awkward problems—to preserve their present comfort at the expense of the future." (Liddell Hart, 1970, p. 15). The erosion of international peace in the 1930s was marked by the failure of collective security mechanisms. "In September 1931 the 'Mukden incident' gave the local Japanese Army leaders a pretext, and opportunity, to expand into Manchuria, and turn it into their puppet state of Manchukuo... Although the occupation was not

recognised by the League of Nations, or the United States, protests and widespread criticism gave the Japanese an incentive to withdraw from the League in 1933." (Liddell Hart, 1970, p. 205). On March 15, 1939, Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia, which had remained outside the scope of the Munich Agreement signed on September 29, 1938. This occupation marked a turning point in German foreign policy, which had been evolving since 1933. In the earlier period, Germany had freed itself from the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles and, with the slogan "ein Volk, ein Reich," sought to unite all Germans under one state. The takeover of Czechoslovakia, however, represented the first clear step of the imperialist policy of "Lebensraum." This development caused Britain and France to reconsider their stance, abandoning the appeasement strategy they had followed until then. (Armaoğlu, 1958, p. 142). The conflict soon expanded into a truly global war, drawing in dozens of nations and transforming civilian life through occupation, aerial bombardment, and total economic mobilization.

World War II not only reshaped borders and governments. According to Kennedy, "After the defeat of Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union will be the only military powers of the first magnitude. This is due in each case to a combination of geographical position and extent, and vast munitioning potential" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 357). Its consequences continue to shape international politics, law, and memory to this day.

Causes of the Second World War

Although World War II seems to have started specifically because Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the situation cannot be explained by a single reason. The roots of this global conflict largely lie in the fragile peace established after World War I and the international developments of the 1920s and 1930s. When we look at the reasons of the war's main actors one by one; the Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919, declared Germany as the sole responsible party for the war, forced it to pay heavy reparations, caused it to lose some industrial areas, and limited its military power. The social anger and economic collapse caused by this treaty laid the foundation for the rise of radical ideologies in Germany, especially Nazism. On the other hand, Italy, which would later emerge as Germany's most significant ally during the Second World War, had been among the victors of the First World War; nevertheless, it was marginalized by its allies at the end of the conflict and was unable to secure the gains it had sought. (Metintaş, 2020,55) Simultaneously, the Treaty of Sèvres forced on the Ottoman Empire resulted in foreign powers drawing boundaries in the Middle East, laying the ground for regional instability. Also, the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), negotiated during the war, was a British and French

scheme to partition the Middle East into spheres of influence, which produced widespread resentment and further distrust of the West among Arab nations (Selvi, 2023; Keyman, 2023). Italy failed to secure the expected territorial gains from the post-war treaties, and the disappointments it encountered from the outset of the Paris Peace Conference were later exploited as a key propaganda instrument by Mussolini's fascist regime (Çelikçi & Kakışım, 2013, p. 86) France, even though it emerged triumphant from the war, had vital security concerns, especially along the German border, and tried to protect itself by building defense facilities like the Maginot Line. The construction of this line was a declaration that, in the event of a second major war with Germany, France would remain on the defensive (Acet, 2023, s. 42). Rearmament by Germany contributed to such apprehensions even more.

The Great Depression was one of the major causal elements for the rise of radical ideologies and destabilization of the democracies in the 1930s. The worldwide economic crisis, which began with the Wall Street Crash of 1929, resulted in extensive unemployment, poverty, and social agitation in Europe and America (Pelz, 2017, para. 59–60). In Germany, the post-war crisis aggravated the already feeble economy and further discredited Philipp Scheidemann's Weimar Republic, thereby paving the way for extremist parties like the Nazis to gain popular support (Mutlu, 2023, p. 22–23). Similarly, in countries like Japan and Italy, economic hardships spawned expansionist policy to gain resources and markets abroad. In this uncertain European climate, the Soviet Union sought to recover territories lost during and after the First World War, while also aiming, after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, to spread communist ideology globally—a development regarded as a major threat by capitalist powers. The specter of communism became a central element in the propaganda of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, whereas Western capitalist states were simultaneously unsettled both by Soviet expansionism and by German aggression (Erdoğan, 2023, p. 55–60; Çomu, 2023, p. 15–18; Mutlu, 2023, p. 27–29). Just before the outbreak of war, a surprising development took place: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939, a non-aggression treaty which also contained a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence, including provisions on Poland and the Baltic States (The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939, Secret Protocol, p. 1–2). This agreement shocked the world, as the two ideologically opposed regimes agreed to cooperate temporarily. It allowed Germany to invade Poland without fearing a Soviet intervention, while the USSR was able to annex parts of Eastern Europe, such as eastern Poland, the Baltic states, and parts of Finland. This pact directly enabled the start of the war by removing the immediate threat of a two-front conflict for Germany (United States

Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022). Under Emperor Hirohito's leadership, Japan sought to expand its empire in Asia by securing vital resources such as oil, rubber, and iron, while targeting China and the Korean Peninsula as strategic territories (Najmuldeen, 2020, s. 195). The occupation of Manchuria in 1931 marked the beginning of this imperial vision (Najmuldeen, 2020, s. 196). Japan propagated the slogan 'Asia for Asians,' presenting itself as a liberator from Western colonialism (Najmuldeen, 2020, s. 194). However, this rhetoric largely concealed its imperial ambitions, which were embodied in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, aiming to place Asian nations under Japanese control and exploit their resources and labor. Japan's aggression in China, particularly the full-scale invasion of 1937 (Najmuldeen, 2020, s. 197-201), and atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, demonstrated the expansionist and militaristic nature of its regime (Chang, 1997). These actions led to increased tensions with Western powers, especially the United States, which viewed Japan's expansion as a direct challenge to its interests in the Pacific. Although the United States did not immediately enter the war—reflecting strong isolationist sentiment and economic priorities—it sought to contain Japan through sanctions.

In 1939 and 1940, restrictions were placed on exports of aircraft parts, steel, and scrap iron. After Japan's occupation of southern Indochina in July 1941, Roosevelt froze Japanese assets and, with Britain and the Netherlands, imposed an oil embargo that deprived Japan of nearly 80 percent of its supply, creating a severe energy crisis (Kennedy, 1999, Chapter 15). Confronted with the possibility of collapse, Japanese leaders debated whether to withdraw from China, but the army remained adamant and continued preparing for war, even though leaders like Konoe recognized that Japan had no chance of winning against the United States and that no power, not even Germany, would aid Japan against the ABCD powers (Iriye, 1987, p.165–166). Ultimately, the sanctions and the failure of diplomacy accelerated Tokyo's decision to launch the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941—an outcome that American leaders had anticipated in general but not in its specific form (Kennedy, 1999, Chapter 16)."

Meanwhile, Britain was focused on maintaining the international balance and securing its colonial empire. It tried to play a balancing role against Germany's rise in Europe and Japan's expansion in Asia. However, the 'appeasement' policy followed by Britain and France, especially during Germany's annexation of Austria (Anschluss, 1938) and the occupation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, failed to stop Germany and encouraged further aggression (Erdoğan, 2020, p.61). Believing that the Soviet Union would benefit the most from a possible war in Central

Europe, Western leaders preferred to preserve peace rather than weaken themselves against communism, and for this purpose they chose to make concessions to Hitler if necessary (Erdoğan, 2020, p.73).

The interwar period also saw the collapse of several fragile democracies and the rise of authoritarian regimes. Militarism and nationalist ideologies increasingly replaced democratic norms, especially in countries like Germany, Italy, Japan, and even in some parts of Eastern Europe. This trend was facilitated by weak political institutions, fear of communism, and dissatisfaction with the status quo. After the First World War, many newly established democracies in Europe lacked stable constitutional traditions and strong political foundations. For example, the Weimar Republic in Germany was continuously confronted with government crises, while fragmented parliaments weakened decision-making processes and eroded public confidence in the state (Ekinci, 2021, 125). Similarly, in Italy, the parliamentary system proved ineffective in addressing mass unemployment and social unrest, which paved the way for Mussolini's authoritarian rule (Çelikçi & Kakışım, 2013, 86–87).

The term fear of communism reflects the widespread anxiety in Europe following the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union. As Weyland notes, "a fundamental shared problem that lay at the root of the authoritarian and fascist reverse wave was the specter of communism, which the Bolshevist Revolution of 1917 had given enormous salience" (Weyland, 2021, p. 5). The Bolshevik seizure of power was perceived by bourgeois classes, landowners, and traditional elites as a fundamental threat, since it suggested "enormous losses, including catastrophic economic destruction … and serious setbacks to the liberal and democratic progress that many nations had already achieved" (Weyland, 2021, p. 6). These fears became a powerful tool of propaganda, particularly in countries such as Germany and Italy, where economic depression and social unrest were already acute. Leaders like Mussolini and Hitler exploited anti-communist rhetoric, presenting themselves as defenders of security and order. As Weyland emphasizes, "these profound fears of left-wing extremism provided the most fundamental impetus for the imposition of authoritarianism and fascism in so many countries during the interwar years" (Weyland, 2021, p. 7). Consequently, fear of communism was not only an ideological concern but also an accelerant of democratic decline and a catalyst for mass support of radical ideologies. Meanwhile, dissatisfaction with the status quo denotes popular discontent with prevailing political, economic, and social conditions.

Across postwar Europe, economic crises, hyperinflation, unemployment, and social unrest were widespread. In Germany, the Versailles Treaty was widely regarded as punitive, creating humiliation and

resentment, while the political and economic instability of the Weimar Republic further deepened public frustration (Özel Özcan & Tutuş, 2022,283). In Italy, the failure to secure the territorial gains promised after World War I gave rise to the narrative of a 'mutilated victory,' which undermined confidence in liberal institutions and helped fuel nationalist sentiment (Çelikçi & Kakışım, 2013, 86). These circumstances fostered the perception that the existing order had failed, encouraging many to turn toward radical, nationalist, or authoritarian alternatives. During this period, the world was divided into two major ideological and political groups: the fascist-militarist bloc (Germany, Italy, Japan) and the liberal-capitalist and socialist bloc (Britain, France, the U.S., and the Soviet Union). This division deepened global polarization.

As Mazower (1998, p. 22) observes, 'anti-liberal and anti-democratic creeds had been gaining ground since the last quarter of the nineteenth century,' spreading rapidly in the wake of the Great War and finding their most visible expression in the fascist movements of Italy and Germany. Meanwhile, Britain and France were 'concerned more about communism than dictatorship; so long as the new states of central-eastern Europe held communism at bay, they cared little about their domestic political arrangements' (Mazower, 1998, p. 23). The Russian Revolution and the 'spectre of communist subversion cast their shadows westwards across the continent' (Mazower, 1998, p. 4), further fueling this polarization. Additionally, the rapid arms race among countries strengthened the inevitability of war, while Germany and Japan rebuilt their heavy industries and armies and began aggressive foreign policies.

The League of Nations, established to maintain peace after World War I, proved ineffective in the face of growing international tensions. It failed to prevent acts of aggression by Italy in Ethiopia (1935), Japan in Manchuria (1931), and Germany's successive violations of the Treaty of Versailles. As Polat (2020, 1965) notes, the League suffered from serious structural weaknesses, such as inadequate decision-making mechanisms and the absence of its own military force, which rendered its resolutions non-binding and its sanctions ineffective. Consequently, the League was unable to stop armed conflicts and invasions, ultimately failing to avert the outbreak of the Second World War. Moreover, Karabulut (2017, 61,75-76) emphasizes that the League emerged as a failed international organization, incapable of serving as a reliable mechanism for international security. Its passivity in the face of Italy's aggression in Ethiopia, Japan's invasion of Manchuria, and Germany's violations of Versailles demonstrated its impotence. The absence of the United States, along with the prioritization of national interests by major powers, further undermined the principle of collective security, eroding confidence in the organization and encouraging

unilateral and militaristic policies.

World War II was not the result of a single military action. It was a combination of the flaws in the post-World War I peace settlement, conflicts of interest among great powers, ideological divisions, economic crises, regional insecurities, and the arms race. These multiple causes turned into a real war when Germany attacked Poland in 1939, starting a new era that deeply changed world history.

Commencement of the Second World War

World War II is generally accepted to have begun on September 1, 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland. On this day, the German armies invaded Poland. On Sunday, the 3rd, the British Government declared war on Germany, in fulfilment of the guarantee it had earlier given to Poland. Six hours later the French Government, more hesitantly, followed the British lead., turning a regional conflict into a global war. (Liddell Hart, 1970, p. 16)

In the early stages, Germany rapidly occupied countries such as Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France, clearly demonstrating the military power of Nazi Germany. During this period, the German army achieved significant victories using the Blitzkrieg tactic—swift and devastating offensives aimed at overwhelming the enemy. As the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (n.d.) explains, 'Blitzkrieg tactics required the concentration of offensive weapons (such as tanks, planes, and artillery) along a narrow front… permitting armored tank divisions to penetrate rapidly… causing shock and disorganization among the enemy defenses.' This 'Lightning War' strategy represented a dramatic departure from conventional warfare of the time, combining rapid air raids, swift armored advances, and coordinated communication technologies to highlight the decisive role of speed and coordination in modern warfare. The Allied powers, however, failed to mount an effective response to this new tactic. One of the main reasons was their reliance on static, World War I-style defensive doctrines. France placed great faith in the Maginot Line, a heavily fortified defensive barrier, which proved useless against the fluid and mobile tactics of modern combat. Instead of directly breaching the line, Germany bypassed it by invading through Belgium, quickly undermining French defenses. As Shirer (1960, 646-647) emphasizes, the Germans outflanked the Maginot Line by breaking through Belgium and Luxembourg, while the French lacked preparation and resolve despite their fortifications. Similarly, as noted in a Turkish study, Germany's decision to bypass the Maginot Line and advance through Belgium exposed the inadequacy of static, World War I-style doctrines and forced France into collapse within weeks (Çınar, 2020, 165). The Allies' poor coordination thus enabled Germany to occupy several

countries in a remarkably short time. The most striking example of this strategy's success was the fall of France in 1940. Within only a few weeks, Germany gained control of most of the country, culminating in France's surrender in June 1940. Northern and western regions were placed under direct German occupation, while the south came under the Vichy regime, a collaborationist administration led by Marshal Pétain. This regime provided political and economic support to Germany, thereby weakening internal resistance. As Çakı and Gülada (2018, p. 56) emphasize, this collaborationist government functioned as a key mechanism of German control in occupied France and was allowed limited autonomy only insofar as it fulfilled Nazi demands. At the same time, the Free France Movement, led by Charles de Gaulle from London, became the symbol of continued struggle against occupation, as discussed by Özen and Akdevelioğlu (2016, 161–162), who highlight the leadership struggle between Vichy authorities and de Gaulle's resistance movement. In conclusion, the effectiveness of Blitzkrieg, combined with the Allies' slow and uncoordinated reactions, consolidated Nazi Germany's dominance in Europe during the early years of the war. The rapid collapse of France not only reshaped the balance of power across the continent but also secured for Germany a strategic advantage that would influence the future course of the conflict.

When analyzing the war in two distinct periods by countries, we see that in the early years of the war, the Soviet Union expanded its influence in the east through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed with Germany, which assigned the Baltic states and Finland to its sphere of interest. As Weinberg (2011, p. 98) notes, 'the Soviet Union was moving forward to secure the loot it had been promised in its secret bargain with Germany. As soon as she attacked Poland, she began insisting that Estonia and Latvia—both assigned to her sphere of interest by the Nazi-Soviet secret protocol of August 23—sign pacts of mutual assistance allowing the stationing of Soviet troops at designated points in the country.' Under pressure, Estonia signed on September 29 and Latvia on October 5. Similarly, the Soviet Union pressed Finland for territorial concessions, including a border shift on the Karelian Isthmus and the lease of Hanko as a naval base. When negotiations failed, Soviet troops attacked on November 30, 1939, starting what became known as the Winter War (Weinberg, 2011, p.100–101). However, on June 22, 1941, Germany launched Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, opening up the Eastern Front, which became one of the deadliest and longest military campaigns in history (Eraslan & Vuralgil, 2024, p. 621). The Battle of Stalingrad played a critical role in halting the German advance and marked a turning point in the war (World History Encyclopedia, 2025). In addition to developments in Western Europe, one of the major theaters of the Second World War was the Mediterranean and North Africa. Germany,

together with Italy, fought against British forces in this region (Weinberg, 2011, p. 352–353). The German Afrika Korps, composed of units from both the Heer and the Luftwaffe, played a particularly significant role. Under the command of General Erwin Rommel, these forces became renowned for their tactical mobility and rapid offensives, earning a formidable reputation in the North African campaign (Weinberg, 2011, p. 362). Between 1941 and 1942, control over key strategic areas such as Libya, Egypt, and Sudan shifted hands multiple times (Weinberg, 2011, p. 352–353). However, by late 1942, the decisive British victory at the Battle of El Alamein halted the Axis advance and marked a turning point in the campaign (Weinberg, 2011, p. 362). Around the same period, Ethiopia—previously occupied by Italy—was liberated with Allied support. In the Far East, Japan's expansionist policies and growing aggression in China and Southeast Asia heightened tensions with the United States. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, led the U.S. to formally enter the war. This development significantly reinforced the global dimension of the conflict (Weinberg, 2005, p. 320–328). The U.S. entry into the war brought great hope to occupied nations and dramatically increased the Allies' military strength and morale (Weinberg, 2011, p. 144). Before its formal entry into the war, the U.S. had already enacted the Lend-Lease Act, which provided extensive military and logistical aid to countries like Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and France (Weinberg, 2011, p. 142–143). This assistance played a key role in strengthening Allied resistance (Weinberg, 2011, p. 332–333).

Course of the Second World War

The course of the Second World War between 1941 and 1945 was marked by decisive developments that gradually shifted the balance in favor of the Allies (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 375). In 1941, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill issued the Atlantic Charter, which laid the foundations for the postwar international order and articulated principles such as the right of nations to self-determination, collective security against aggression, and economic cooperation (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 382; Mazower, 2012, p. 179). Although the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 was not a legally binding treaty, it held significance for several reasons. First, it openly reaffirmed the solidarity between the United States and Great Britain against Axis aggression. Second, it presented President Roosevelt's Wilsonian vision for the postwar world—defined by freer trade, self-determination, disarmament, and collective security. Finally, the Charter inspired independence movements across the Third World, serving as an influential model for colonial subjects fighting for liberation—from Algeria to Vietnam (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, n.d.). This document also marked the first time the concept of the "United Nations" was articulated

in the international arena (Popowycz, 2022). In December of the same year, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States formally into the war, thereby globalizing the conflict. In the Pacific Theater, Japan's rapid expansion was checked in 1942 at the Battle of the Coral Sea, which halted its advance toward Australia, while the Battle of Midway became the turning point that inflicted irreparable losses on the Japanese navy and shifted the balance of power in favor of the United States. (Harris, 1981,35,59) Subsequently, the Guadalcanal Campaign (1942–1943) symbolized the beginning of Japan's retreat in the Pacific. Along with the naval Battle of Midway (June 3–6, 1942), the fighting on Guadalcanal marked a turning point in favour of the Allies in the Pacific War. (Encyclopaedia Britannica Editors, 2025).

One of the most critical turning points of the war in Europe was the Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943). The German forces experienced devastating losses and were compelled to retreat, which not only ended their dominance on the Eastern Front but also signaled a wider strategic shift toward the Allies (Armaoğlu, 2010, 383–385). A comparable development unfolded in North Africa, where Rommel's Afrika Korps suffered a decisive defeat at El Alamein in 1942; the Axis was gradually forced back and eventually capitulated in Tunisia in 1943 (Armaoğlu, 2010, 386-387). In the same year, the Allied landing in Sicily precipitated the collapse of Mussolini's regime and led Italy to defect to the Allied side. (Armaoğlu, 2010, 387-388). Also in 1943, the Tehran Conference marked the first time Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met together in person (Armaoğlu, 2010,393). At this summit, the Allied leaders confirmed the decision—initially planned at the Quebec Conference—to open a second front in Western Europe, which was later realized through the Normandy invasion (Armaoğlu, 2010, 391,396). Throughout this period, a series of major conferences—including Casablanca (1943), Quebec (1943), Tehran (1943), and Yalta (1945)—played a critical role not only in coordinating military strategy but also in shaping the postwar order (Armaoğlu, 2010, 389-402). In particular, the Yalta Conference determined the division of Germany into occupation zones, the redrawing of Poland's borders, and the founding framework of the United Nations, thereby laying the foundations of the postwar international system. Yalta also finalized the decision to establish the United Nations, paving the way for the San Francisco Conference in April 1945, where the organization's foundations were laid. The structure of the Security Council and the principle of permanent membership were determined, with the U.S., USSR, U.K., China, and France designated as founding members (Armaoğlu, 2010, 399-402). The following year proved decisive the Normandy landing of June 6, 1944, allowed the Allies to gain a firm foothold in Western Europe and, by August, liberate Paris (Armaoğlu,

2010, 39). At the same time, the Soviet Union launched a major summer offensive that destroyed Germany's Army Group Centre and enabled deep advances into Eastern Europe (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 397). Germany's final counteroffensive in the West brought only temporary gains before being repelled, hastening the collapse of the German army (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 402).

In the Pacific, the United States advanced toward Japan by seizing the islands one by one (Armaoğlu, 2010, 384). The Battle of Leyte Gulf (1944) not only secured the liberation of the Philippines but also crippled Japan's naval power. This was followed by the brutal battles of Iwo Jima (1945) and Okinawa (1945), which opened the way to the Japanese home islands, though at enormous cost in casualties (Armaoğlu, 2010, 403). By 1945 in Europe, Mussolini had been captured and executed, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in Berlin, and Germany surrendered unconditionally in May (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 402). In the Pacific, the war concluded with the U.S. dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, alongside the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Japan, forcing its surrender (Armaoğlu, 2010, 406).

The End of the Second World War

When the Second World War began, no one, including the countries involved, could have predicted that it would cause such massive destruction. The war was experienced not only on the battlefields of the fighting states but also in the economic life of both the participants and non-participants, and national economies suffered great damage (Aydemir,2021, p.98). The end of the Second World War did not only stop the fighting; it also changed how the world worked. The war caused massive destruction and a shocking loss of life. Many historians say this was a new kind of killing on an industrial scale, which pushed countries to think differently about rules, rights, and peace (Kershaw, 2015, p. 39).

Britain and France were counted among the winners, but both were very tired and much poorer after the war. They struggled to rebuild at home and could not control their empires like before. European empires were too strained to rule as before. In this climate, independence movements across Asia and Africa began to voice demands for self-rule more openly (Birinci, 2017, 65). A parallel postwar debate that tied atrocities, accountability, and the language of human rights gave additional normative support to anti-colonial claims (Altınbaş, 2018,36). By the late 1940s, keeping the pre-war status quo no longer seemed realistic. In short, even the victors had to accept that the old imperial system was weakening. The defeated Axis powers changed the most. In Germany and Italy, fascist systems were removed, and new political structures were set up under Allied supervision. An important step here was the Nuremberg Trials,

where leading Nazi officials were charged with crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. For the first time, international law clearly held individuals responsible for these crimes, not only states (Parlak, 2015, 51). After Japan's surrender, the country came under U.S. occupation commanded by General Douglas MacArthur. From the outset, the occupation authorities steered Japan toward democracy and worked to build up representative institutions (Armaoğlu, 1995, 456–457). T Two countries now stood out as the main powers: the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States assumed leadership of the "free world" against the Soviet threat (Değirmencioğlu, 2007, p. 71). Institutionally, the postwar order centered on the United Nations: the UN Charter was signed in San Francisco in 1945, and the Security Council was structured with five permanent members—the U.S., USSR, U.K., France, and China—tasked with primary responsibility for international peace and security (Çalık, 2015, p. 1093, 1100). The U.S. also played a leading role in creating the United Nations, and, until 1949, it alone had nuclear weapons, which gave it serious strategic weight (Çalık, 2015, p. 70–72). The Soviet Union also came out of the war as a superpower, even though it suffered huge losses. It earned great prestige by defeating Nazi Germany in major battles like Stalingrad and Kursk, and by taking Berlin in 1945 (Armaoğlu, 2010, p. 383–385). After the war, the USSR established or backed communist governments in Eastern Europe, building a wide sphere of influence (Westad, 2005, p. 74). The Soviet economy focused on heavy industry and defense, which helped a relatively fast—though uneven—recovery (Davies, 1997, p. 112). Other actors were also reshaped. China, although badly damaged by long years of war, was recognized as a great power and received a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. This showed that China would be important in the new system, even if it still faced internal conflicts after 1945 (Edwards, 2018, p. 36). In Europe, many smaller countries had to rebuild their economies and decide which side to align with. Eastern Europe moved under Soviet influence, while Western Europe drew closer to the United States for economic help and security (OECD, 2008, p. 16). The institutional side of the postwar order was just as important as the power balance. In 1945, countries founded the United Nations to prevent another world war and to promote cooperation (Çalık, 2015, p. 1093). Soon after, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were set up to stabilize economies and support reconstruction (Library of Congress, n.d.). At the same time, the legal and moral lessons of the war became clearer. The charges and ideas tested at Nuremberg supported a growing global human-rights language. This trend connected with anti-colonial claims and with efforts to write universal rules for rights and dignity (Çalık, 2015, p. 1096-1127). By 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, and it helped shape many later

agreements and the wider legal framework of international society (Sambells & Randall, 2021, p. 22–24).

Putting all of this together, the world after 1945 became both bipolar and more organized. On one side stood the U.S. with liberal democracy and market economics; on the other stood the USSR with one-party rule and a state-directed economy (Westad, 2005, p. 74; Kılıç, 2016, p. 9–11). This rivalry set the stage for the Cold War. Yet, at the same time, more and more countries joined the international system as independent states, and new organizations helped create shared rules. Nuclear weapons also changed strategy by making leaders more cautious, because another great-power war could be catastrophic (Kershaw, 2015, p. 39). In short, the end of the Second World War removed fascist regimes, sped up decolonization, and built a new set of institutions. Power concentrated in the United States and the Soviet Union, but space also opened for former colonies to become independent and for human-rights norms to grow stronger in world politics (Sambells & Randall, 2021)

PRE-WAR TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

Following the end of World War, I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, leading to a significant transformation of the Middle East's geopolitical landscape. The defeat of the Ottomans and the signing of the Armistice of Mudros in 1918 left the empire at the mercy of the Allied Powers, resulting in foreign occupations and ultimately the imposition of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. This treaty aimed to partition Ottoman territories among the victorious powers, posing a grave threat to Turkish sovereignty. In response, a national resistance movement emerged in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Özal, 2018, p. 412–413, 420).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk initiated the national struggle by arriving in Samsun in 1919 and united the public around national objectives through the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses. With the opening of the Grand National Assembly (GNA) in Ankara in 1920, a new political authority was established, and Atatürk emerged as both the military and political leader of this movement. Following the victory of the War of Independence, the Republic of Türkiye was proclaimed on 29 October 1923, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was unanimously elected as the first president. His leadership not only shaped domestic reforms but also charted the course of Turkish foreign policy (T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], n.d.).

The newly founded Republic of Türkiye adopted a comprehensive foreign policy to solidify its legitimacy on the international stage and to secure its borders in line with the objectives of the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli). The Treaty of Lausanne (1923) marked international recognition of Türkiye's borders, nullified the Treaty of Sèvres, and established Türkiye

as a sovereign actor within the global system. Özal, 2018, p. 421–422,). Atatürk's foreign policy was guided by the principle of "Peace at home, peace in the world," embracing a non-interventionist, peaceful, and diplomacy-oriented approach. Given the economic and military devastation left by World War I and the War of Independence, Türkiye pursued a cautious foreign policy and avoided military confrontations (Akgönenç Mughisuddin, 1993, p. 259). In line with this vision, Türkiye redefined its relations with international organizations and joined the League of Nations in 1932. This membership signaled Türkiye's commitment to peace and enabled it to act as an effective player through diplomacy. In response to revisionist threats in Europe, Türkiye signed the Balkan Pact in 1934 with Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia, fostering regional security cooperation. This alliance served as a deterrent against expansionist states like Italy and Bulgaria (İnan, 1968). In the Middle East, Türkiye signed the Saadabad Pact in 1937 with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan to ensure stability along its eastern borders. Through these partnerships, Türkiye fostered friendly relations not only in the West but also with its eastern neighbors (Palabıyık, 2010, p. 155–160). Türkiye's diplomatic approach to the Hatay issue also demonstrated its commitment to peaceful resolution and adherence to international law. After prolonged negotiations with France, Hatay was declared an autonomous republic in 1938 and joined Türkiye in 1939. This development underscored the importance Atatürk placed on diplomacy. (Soysal, 1985)

The issue of the Straits was another matter of national security. The Bosporus and Dardanelles, initially under the control of an international commission per the Treaty of Lausanne, were returned to Turkish sovereignty through the Montreux Convention of 1936. This convention granted Türkiye the right to control military passage through the Straits while maintaining international freedom of navigation, exemplifying Türkiye's balanced foreign policy and marking a diplomatic victory. The Montreux Conference marked a turning point in both Turkish–British and Turkish–Soviet relations. During this meeting, the most significant progress was achieved in the rapprochement between Türkiye and Britain. It is clear that without Britain's approval and understanding, Türkiye would not have been able to alter the regime of the Straits so favorably. Britain's supportive attitude toward Türkiye stemmed largely from the threat posed by Italy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Facing this challenge, Britain considered Türkiye a reliable ally and sought to bring it closer to its side. For Türkiye as well, in the face of the same threat, it was natural to lean toward Britain, which had strong naval power, rather than the militarily weaker Soviet Union. As a result, conditions after Montreux further strengthened Turkish British relations (Armaoğlu, 1992, p. 178). Türkiye also addressed Ottoman-era debts through agreements with

European powers and managed minority issues in line with the Lausanne framework. The population exchange with Greece was a significant step in reducing ethnic tensions and building a more homogeneous nation-state (Arı, 2020, p.23). The Mosul issue, despite being part of the National Pact, was contested due to British control of the region under the Iraq Mandate. Türkiye asserted its claims, but the League of Nations ruled in favor of Iraq. Türkiye accepted the decision in favor of international stability, demonstrating its commitment to peaceful solutions and international law (Kılıç, 2008).

In terms of international relations, Türkiye developed constructive and cordial ties with the Soviet Union. According to Yetim, in the conduct of foreign policy, ideological sensitivity was also considered important in achieving strategic objectives. This sensitivity can roughly be summarized as: cooperation with the Soviets, yes; communism, no; dialogue with the Western world, yes; imperialism, no. (Yetim, 2011, p.93) The support received during the War of Independence laid the foundation for this relationship, which continued with mutual respect despite ideological differences. Relations with Italy remained cautious due to Mussolini's expansionist ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean, though Türkiye avoided confrontation. Türkiye's orientation toward the West was reinforced through agreements like the Balkan Entente, and diplomatic achievements such as the Montreux Convention increased Türkiye's international influence. As the threat of war loomed in late 1930s Europe, Türkiye pursued a balance-of-power strategy, strengthening ties with Britain and France while maintaining economic relations with Germany and preserving its neutrality.

In conclusion, Atatürk's foreign policy was grounded in peaceful, law-based, and multilateral diplomacy. Türkiye aimed to protect national sovereignty, fulfill the goals of the National Pact, and assert itself as an independent actor on the global stage. Replacing the dependent relationships of the Ottoman era with a foreign policy based on equality and mutual respect, Türkiye managed to avoid entanglement in major conflicts before World War II, reinforced regional peace, and laid the groundwork for long-term stability. 'The principle "peace at home, peace abroad" enunciated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was more than mere wishful thinking. It was a cautious and realistic assessment of the nation's economic and political conditions that guided Atatürk in the formulation of a non-involvement policy abroad and a policy of rapid development at home. This is why Türkiye concentrated its efforts on building up its security and on establishing peaceful coexistence with all its neighbors' (Akgönenç Mughisuddin, 1993, p. 259).

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

İsmet İnönü, the second president of the Republic of Türkiye, was an important leader who governed the country during the difficult period just before, during, and after World War II. The presidential period of İsmet İnönü took place in the Republic of Türkiye from November 10, 1938, when Atatürk passed away, until 1950, when the Democratic Party came to power. İsmet İnönü was the first prime minister of the Republic of Türkiye and the second president after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Lüleci, 2023, 178). He is known for his efforts to maintain balance in both domestic and foreign policies. Under his leadership, Türkiye managed to stay out of the global conflicts and crises by following a principle of neutrality, while also developing policies to preserve peace inside the country and continue development (İlyas, Turan, 2016, 320).

Important Events of The Era

İsmet İnönü's presidency was a critical period for the Republic of Türkiye politically, economically, and socially. Taking office right after Atatürk died in 1938, İnönü had to protect the country from both internal and external threats. The most defining feature of this period was the approaching Second World War and the great efforts to keep Türkiye out of this war.

Following the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on November 10, 1938, İsmet İnönü was elected as the second President of the Republic of Türkiye. As a respected military commander during the War of Independence and a trusted political figure of the early republic, İnönü brought a sense of continuity and stability to the country. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal chose İsmet Pasha for several main reasons. First, there was no personal rivalry between them, and İsmet Pasha was seen as someone who respected and supported Mustafa Kemal's authority, which was greatly needed at the time. He was also known as a hardworking and serious statesman. Moreover, he strongly believed in the revolutionary cause—both in its material and moral aspects—just as much as Mustafa Kemal himself, and he was deeply committed to the reforms that aimed to rebuild the country (Aydemir, 2001, p.488). During the war years, the key figure in Turkish foreign policy was undoubtedly İsmet İnönü. The most distinctive feature of his approach was caution. Although both the Allies and the Axis powers wished to see Türkiye on their side depending on the course of the war, Türkiye's position remained consistently stable from beginning to end. Building on Atatürk's legacy, İnönü and his team effectively employed a realist and dialogue-oriented strategy against revisionist states. This approach kept Türkiye away from a potential disaster and allowed the country to secure an honorable place in the new world order that emerged

after the war (Keçetep,2019, p. 103). Under his leadership, Türkiye pursued a policy of "active neutrality" throughout World War II and succeeded in staying out of the conflict. Leaders such as President İnönü, his Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu5 and Numan Menemencioğlu, Secretary General at the Foreign Ministry, employed a distinctly pragmatic, to some extent opportunistic, approach in their decision-making. Turkish neutrality, as guided by İnönü, was essentially a policy of waiting (Gökay,2021, p.2).

When the war began on September 1, 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland, Türkiye had already signed mutual assistance agreements with Britain and France. While these alliances placed Türkiye alongside the Allies on paper, the rapidly shifting balance of power in Europe pushed Turkish leaders to act with caution. Concerned about both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Türkiye signed a friendship and non-aggression pact with Germany on June 18, 1941. This dual approach aimed to maintain national security by balancing relations with both sides. Throughout the war, President İnönü held several diplomatic meetings with Allied leaders, including British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In high-level conferences held in Adana and Cairo in 1943, Türkiye was encouraged to join the war on the Allied side. Churchill even offered military aid, including tanks and fuel. However, İnönü made it clear that Türkiye lacked the military and economic capacity to enter the war and that public support for such a move was also absent. His cautious stance demonstrated Türkiye's determination to protect its independence and avoid unnecessary risks. Türkiye's neutral policy was not only shaped by present realities but also by past experiences. The catastrophic consequences of the Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I were still vivid in the minds of Turkish leaders. İnönü believed that war would bring similar devastation and delay the country's development. Therefore, he resisted both Allied and Axis pressures while seeking to avoid being drawn into the conflict

Domestically, the war years were marked by economic hardship and emergency policies. The National Protection Law, enacted in 1940, granted the government broad powers. In 1942, the Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) was introduced, disproportionately affecting non-Muslim citizens and sparking domestic and international criticism (Altınörs,2017:2). Bread rationing, city-wide blackouts, and civil defense measures became part of daily life. Although these policies made life more difficult, staying out of the war helped Türkiye avoid far greater destruction. As the war neared its end, Türkiye declared war on Germany and Japan on February 23, 1945. Though symbolic, this moves allowed Türkiye to qualify as a founding member of the United Nations. It was a strategic decision to ensure a place

in the emerging postwar order. Economically, Türkiye carefully protected its limited foreign currency reserves during the war years. This was done by restricting imports, supporting local production, and controlling foreign borrowing. Despite the difficulties caused by the war, significant investments were made in education. The Village Institutes, established in the 1940s, represented an important social reform aimed at improving education and development in rural areas. Through these institutes, village teachers were trained and agricultural development was supported. İsmet İnönü's foreign policy during World War II is often described as a policy of balance. He maintained diplomatic ties with both Allied and Axis powers while prioritizing national security. This careful navigation not only kept Türkiye safe during the war but also prepared the ground for postwar transitions. In the following years, Türkiye moved toward a multi-party-political system, joined Western alliances such as; NATO, and embraced new reforms.

International developments during İnönü's period also affected Türkiye's domestic politics. After the war ended, world balances shifted, and Türkiye's regional importance increased. For this reason, preparations were made to maintain internal stability and to present a strong stance on the international stage.

Foreign Policy Steps and Decisions of The Era

İsmet İnönü's foreign policy was cautious and balance-maximizing, given the realities of the world then. During the Second World War, which began in 1939, Türkiye made great diplomatic efforts not to enter the war. İnönü's main objective was to maintain Türkiye's security by avoiding this global war and protecting the security and economy of the nation. Fırat (n.d.) discusses how Türkiye's foreign policy during World War II, under President İsmet İnönü, is considered one of the most criticized and/or defended periods in Turkish foreign policy. Some argue that İnönü missed a significant opportunity by not entering the war and, with his cautious and timid attitude, hindered Türkiye's post-war gains, particularly regarding the Dodecanese Islands; others believe he saved the country from destruction. (Fırat, n.d.)

Following Atatürk's death in 1938, İsmet İnönü became the President of the Republic of Türkiye. During this time, the world was beginning to feel the early signs of expansionist policies resurfacing after the First World War. In contrast, the Republic of Türkiye was still dealing with the consequences of the First World War and had no intention of becoming involved in another global conflict. Public opinion in Türkiye also played a role in shaping foreign policy. The trauma and heavy toll of the previous war made the public cautious, and most people supported the government's neutral stance. The İnönü administration consciously guided

public opinion, maintained morale through propaganda, and warned of the dangers of war. A key reason behind Türkiye's neutrality was its lack of sufficient military strength. During İnönü's presidency, efforts were made to modernize the army and secure weapons and ammunition, with support from the United Kingdom and the United States. Although Türkiye took steps to strengthen its military infrastructure, it was still not ready to fully participate in a large-scale war.

Italy, despite being on the winning side of the First World War, was dissatisfied with the post-war outcomes, which caused unrest in the country. This unrest brought Benito Mussolini to power with his fascist regime. Italy pursued aggressive policies by occupying Fiume (Yugoslavia), Corfu (Greece), and Albania, and in 1936, it invaded Ethiopia.

Germany suffered the heaviest losses in the First World War. It signed the harshest terms and lost the most territory. These conditions led to the rise of the National Socialist Workers' Party, with Hitler aiming to escape the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles and expand German living space. Both Germany and Italy used the post-war environment to justify their expansionist ambitions. Türkiye, still recovering from the devastation of the First World War, approached these developments cautiously. Before the war began, Germany had annexed Austria (Anschluss), occupied Czechoslovakia, and was preparing to invade Poland. Aware of the potential spread of German influence into the Middle East and the Balkans, Türkiye signed a Mutual Assistance Agreement with Britain on 12 May 1939. The goal was to break political isolation and establish stronger ties with Western powers. This later evolved into a Tripartite Alliance with Britain and France. At the same time, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939 alarmed Türkiye, triggering what came to be known as the "Poland Syndrome." The fear was that Türkiye could be surrounded by both powers. When Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, the Second World War officially began. On 4 September 1939, the Turkish Grand National Assembly declared that Türkiye would stay neutral and not take sides in the war. This position was conveyed not only to the public but also to major world powers, including Britain, France, Germany, and the Soviet Union, through official diplomatic notes. Between 1939 and 1941, Germany achieved rapid and significant military victories in Europe. This created a period of great uncertainty for neutral states like Türkiye. Despite the fast pace of the war, Türkiye remained committed to neutrality and kept diplomatic channels open with both sides. In the same period, Italy attacked Greece through Albania. After the invasion of Greece in October 1940, Türkiye followed developments in the Aegean region with great concern. Although still neutral, it reinforced its western defenses, enhanced

coastal security, and engaged in active diplomacy to evaluate the potential consequences. These actions reflected Türkiye's strategic awareness of the risks in its neighborhood.

As Germany advanced toward Soviet borders, it signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Türkiye on 18 June 1941 to secure its southern front before launching "Operation Barbarossa" against the Soviet Union. Türkiye sought to avoid direct involvement in the war by maintaining a diplomatic balance between the Allies and Germany. The 1941 agreement with Germany helped Türkiye reduce its fears and establish a buffer zone against both the German and Soviet threats. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the USSR began to doubt Türkiye's intentions, suspecting a secret deal with Germany. As German-Turkish relations warmed, the Soviet Union used the opportunity to renew its demands for joint control over the Turkish Straits. Despite both neighboring powers being at war, Türkiye remained officially neutral. It neither supported Germany militarily nor entered the war on the side of the Soviets. This strategy prevented direct conflict with either side. During this period, Türkiye sold chromium to Germany, which was critical to the German war effort. However, it also maintained trade and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. From 1942 onwards, pressure from both sides to join the war increased.

The Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943) marked a turning point. Germany suffered its first major defeat, losing its 6th Army. This boosted Soviet morale and gave the Allies hope. These developments encouraged Türkiye to gradually shift toward the Allied side.

In 1943, the Casablanca Conference was held by Britain and the United States to review the war's progress and reduce pressure on the Soviet Union. One major decision was to open a second front in the Balkans and push for Türkiye's entry into the war. If Türkiye joined, Germany would have to open another front, weakening its military strength. Concerned about Türkiye's growing ties with the Soviets, the Allies intensified their diplomatic efforts. After Casablanca, Churchill visited İnönü in Adana on 30 January 1943. However, Türkiye declined to enter the war. Its army lacked the equipment, infrastructure, and resources needed for such a conflict. Meanwhile, Italy was suffering defeats on multiple fronts. This led to Mussolini's fall and Italy's exit from the Axis. In August 1943, the Quebec Conference was held without Stalin. Once again, Türkiye's participation in the war was discussed. However, Britain and the United States concluded that Türkiye's military was still insufficient. İnönü chose to maintain neutrality and pursue a balanced policy. Staying out of the war but aligned with the winning side seemed wiser. Türkiye increased contact with the Allies and received military and technical support. Still, the

Allies continued to push for Türkiye's participation. At the Moscow Conference, the USSR, the US, and Britain again raised the issue of Türkiye joining the war. The Soviet Union openly expressed its frustration over Türkiye's neutral stance. Strategic concerns over the Straits and the Black Sea were used to justify this pressure.

One of the most critical issues for Türkiye during the war was the Straits. The Soviet Union demanded joint control over them during and after the war, but Türkiye firmly rejected this and fought diplomatically to preserve its sovereignty. This created tension not only with the Soviets but also with other Allies. To revisit the matter, the First and Second Cairo Conferences and the Tehran Conference were held. İnönü attended some of these meetings. Nevertheless, he responded to all demands with the argument that "Türkiye is not militarily ready. Our air force is nearly non-existent. Weapons and ammunition are insufficient." Türkiye maintained its neutral stance throughout the war. Rather than saying "no" directly, İnönü explained Türkiye's unreadiness. He emphasized the potential human and economic costs and conveyed that Türkiye was not willing to risk its people. İnönü managed the situation carefully, using phrases like "We are ready to contribute when the time comes," "We need help to increase our military capacity," and "We may revise our position depending on how the war develops." Watching the war unfold, İnönü decided to declare war on Germany and Japan on 23 February 1945, when he was certain of the Axis defeat. This was a symbolic move rather than a military one, intended to allow Türkiye to join the post-war international system. This declaration fulfilled the requirement to become a founding member of the United Nations. The decision was influenced by the Yalta Conference held in February 1945, which addressed Türkiye's post-war status, Soviet demands regarding the Straits, and Türkiye's membership in the UN.

In summary, because of its important geographical location, Türkiye attracted the attention of great powers during the war. İnönü applied a policy of balancing powers to manage this tension, carefully ensuring that the war's balance was not disturbed and that Türkiye would not be harmed. İsmet İnönü's foreign policy sought to keep Türkiye neutral during a time when the whole world was under threat from war, to protect international balances, to favor peaceful means, and to improve the security of the nation with close links to the West. This cautious and balancing approach was one of the foundations of modern Turkish foreign policy. The Ottoman Empire's alignment with Germany and its role as a passive actor in that alliance had led to severe consequences for the country. That memory strongly influenced their cautious approach during the Second World War. (Zürcher, 2020, p. 298)

CHAPTER THREE: AN ANALYSIS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN TERMS OF REALISM AND LIBERALISM

International Relations is often explained through two dominant theoretical approaches: realism and liberalism. These theories provide different perspectives on how states behave, how leaders make choices, and how global order is shaped. (Ateş, 2009, p.12) Realism focuses on power struggles, national security, and survival in an anarchic international system, while liberalism emphasizes cooperation, institutions, and shared values as tools for reducing conflict. The coexistence of these perspectives offers useful ground for examining state behavior in times of crisis.

In this regard, Türkiye's foreign policy during the leadership of İsmet İnönü presents an important case study. Following the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938, İnönü assumed the presidency and soon faced the challenges of the Second World War. This period forced Türkiye to navigate both internal adjustments and external pressures, balancing its national interests with the demands of the shifting international environment (İlyas & Turan, 2016, p.319). The country's strategy during the war years reveals a combination of realist calculations and liberal instruments, making it a rich subject for theoretical evaluation.

EVALUATION FROM A REALIST PERSPECTIVE

A limited number of difficult questions guide realism's approach to international politics: who controls power, how is it allocated, what are the primary dangers, and which decisions best safeguard the interests and security of the state in anarchy? (Page 258 of Düzgün, 2020). From this angle, Türkiye's foreign policy from the late Atatürk era until World War II can be seen as a set of pragmatic measures taken to survive and lower risks, rather than as an idealistic strategy. The primary reasoning was realist, despite the use of neutrality and cooperation rhetoric: the government closely monitored the balance of power, estimated potential costs, and adjusted its stance whenever global circumstances changed.

Because Türkiye did not take a warlike stance, its "active neutrality" could initially be interpreted as a liberal policy. A more thorough examination reveals that neutrality was not a moral goal. Through this policy, Türkiye was able to maintain open lines of communication with all of the major powers, avoid making commitments too soon, and reduce the likelihood of entering a war under trying circumstances. The purpose of

keeping diplomatic ties with both the Axis and Allied powers was the same. Ankara was able to gather intelligence, indicate moderation when appropriate, and protect itself from abrupt changes on both fronts. To put it briefly, the state attempted to protect freedom of action while reducing the likelihood of becoming entangled in another person's conflict (İnal, 2015, s. 211-212). The chronology supports this realist reading. Even before the war, Ankara laid a defensive baseline around its frontiers: the Balkan Pact of 9 February 1934 with Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia pooled political weight to discourage unilateral border changes and created a consultative ring that reduced the chance of surprise in the northwest (Oran, 2001, p.254); in 1936 the Montreux Convention restored effective Turkish control over the Straits and turned a narrow waterway into a strategic lever, strengthening sovereignty and raising the costs for any navy that might challenge the regional status quo (Oran, 2001, p.321) ; a year later, the Sadabad Pact of 8 July 1937 with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan quieted the eastern and southeastern flanks by pledging non-aggression and non-interference, which freed attention and resources for the real pressure points (Oran, 2001, p.365-367).

Ankara sought external balance following the death of Atatürk in 1938 and the integration of Hatay in 1939, a modest, low-cost revision that improved border defensibility. Britain and France signed a Mutual Assistance Agreement with Türkiye in October 1939. Türkiye was shielded from an automatic entry into war by the agreement's flexible provisions regarding the type and timing of assistance, even though it sent a deterrent message. When France collapsed in 1940, these safeguards proved essential because the credibility of the guarantee declined (Armaoğlu, 1958, p. 407). Due to the imminent threat posed by Germany's position in the Balkans, Türkiye and Germany signed a Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression on June 18, 1941. Chrome exports evolved into a tool of "resource statecraft" between 1941 and 1943, oscillating between Allied pressure and German demand as Ankara reduced invasion risks and traded time (İnal, 2015, s. 191-192). Although the Adana and Cairo conferences in 1943 strengthened Türkiye's ties with the Allies, they also demonstrated that the nation was not prepared for war. Without enough equipment, training, and supplies, opening a front would not have been realistic (Canbirdi, 2025, p.205-208). Following a decisive shift in the balance, Türkiye severed diplomatic ties with Germany in the summer of 1944 and declared war on Japan and Germany in February 1945. Entry into the new UN order was made possible by this late, limited step, which avoided the physical devastation of full belligerence (Gilbert, 2014, p.517). This timeline is used in the sections that follow to explain Türkiye's primary foreign policy choices.

While the 1939 agreement demonstrates how deterrence was combined with flexible promises to avoid being forced into war, the Montreux Convention demonstrates how Türkiye used the Straits to control and limit access (Soysal, 2000, p. 508). The 1941 non-aggression pact with Germany is a delaying strategy under conditions of proximity and threat. The chrome diplomacy reveals how strategic commodities can be used as bargaining chips when military options are costly (Soysal, 2000, p. 645-646). Adana and Cairo display cost-benefit reasoning and capacity-based restraint. Finally, the 1944–45 pivot demonstrates alignment with the winning coalition at minimal cost (Canbirdi, 2025, p.205-208). Taken together, these choices are consistent with a realist strategy that prioritizes survival, manages danger through balance and hedging, and converts geography and resources into leverage rather than ideology into policy. The same logic shaped the Sadabad Pact of 8 July 1937 with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This was a non-aggression and non-interference understanding rather than a war alliance, but that is exactly why it mattered for security (Oran, 2001, p.252). The pact decreased the likelihood of proxy agitation along long land frontiers, decreased routine guarding costs, and decreased rear-area uncertainty and the security dilemma with immediate neighbors by calming the eastern and southeastern flanks. Because of those consequences, Ankara was able to shift forces and attention away from the threat of a sudden second front and toward the real pressure points, the Straits and the Balkans. A calmer back allowed the state to handle the Hatay (1938–1939) question from a firmer base, enter the crisis diplomacy of 1939–1945 with more leeway, and enforce Montreux (1936) with greater confidence. In realist terms, the arrangement redistributed risk in favor of Türkiye and improved its bargaining position elsewhere.

The 1936 Montreux Convention gave Türkiye back full control over the Straits and allowed it to place military forces there. This turned the narrow waterway into a gate that Türkiye could protect and use according to its own security needs (Armaoğlu, 1958, p.345). From a realist perspective, the main issue was not just legal details but sovereignty and protection. Türkiye decreased the likelihood of pressure or threats close to its shores and made it more difficult and expensive for any navy to alter the balance of power in the area by having the authority to restrict or regulate the passage of warships, particularly during times of conflict. Because Türkiye was able to protect its own survival while hedging against more powerful players thanks to its chokepoint, the arrangement also gave it long-lasting bargaining power in future crises. This is the kind of behavior that realism expects, driven more by geography, threat, and power than by ideals. Realistically speaking, legal tidiness is only important as a tool. Law helps when it fixes rights that a state can enforce, so rules become leverage

rather than a moral end. Sovereignty sits at the center of realism because the primary goal is survival and independent choice under anarchy. Montreux increased Türkiye's freedom to act without an external veto at a place where force could decide outcomes (Armaoğlu, 1958, p.345).

Regional balance refers to the distribution of military capabilities in each theater. Controlling access to the Straits directly shapes that balance by limiting how and when fleets can move between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Raising the expected cost of aggression for an adversary is how deterrence works. Any challenger must account for the possibility of delays, losses, and escalation when Türkiye has the legal and physical authority to close the gate. Geography becomes power through chokepoint control. One actor can slow supply, refuse reinforcement, and demand concessions if they can block or meter a narrow passage. Hedging is a common small- and middle-power response to uncertainty. It entails avoiding firm commitments until the balance of power is more clear and maintaining options with rival blocs. The significance of Montreux for realism can be explained by its anarchy and enforcement capabilities. Rules only have an impact on behavior in a world without a global government when a state can support them with legitimacy; the convention provided Türkiye with the material resources and legal protection it needed to do so right at its doorstep.

The Hatay question in 1938–1939 was handled as a limited and carefully managed step at a time when a major war was approaching. The main goal was to make Türkiye's southern border safer and easier to control. In 1938 a separate administration was formed, and in 1939 the elected assembly voted for union with Türkiye. This solved the issue without a military clash and through a two-stage process that kept tensions low but still produced a clear outcome (Soysal, 1985). From a realist point of view, this choice was not about ideals but about reducing a long and fragile frontier, improving practical control, and lowering risks in future crises. The external situation also helped, since France was preoccupied with the European crisis and wanted Türkiye's support.

Türkiye took advantage of this moment without escalating the conflict. It kept its demands limited, used careful language, avoided unnecessary confrontation, and kept diplomatic channels open. As a result, security gains were achieved at a low cost. After the union, the positive effects became visible in daily management. Ports, roads, and administration came under a single authority, which made control more effective. Movement of troops, supply lines, and communication were better organized. The border became shorter and straighter, which made patrols, fortifications, and early warning systems easier to manage. Since crossings were closely watched, supply routes were tracked, and sudden

advances would result in delays and losses, the opposing side would now have to contend with increased expenses and more challenges in any potential conflict. Because words carried more weight when supported by order and readiness, this decreased the likelihood of an attack and gave Türkiye a stronger negotiating position. Following legal procedures also helped secure the result. Elections, a parliamentary decision, and diplomatic notes weakened outside objections and showed that the change was based on a transparent and legitimate process rather than arbitrary action.

However, since rules are only important when they can be enforced, a law on paper alone was insufficient. Türkiye possessed the administrative and institutional ability to implement this control in real life. When combined, the Hatay ruling offered a more robust border, improved day-to-day supervision, and a more stable stance during emergencies. This result is consistent with a realist interpretation, which prioritizes survival, gradually manages risk, and looks for gains at the lowest feasible cost. Türkiye attempted to maintain caution in the months leading up to the war by first issuing the Anglo-Turkish declaration on May 12, 1939, and then signing the Tripartite Treaty of Mutual Assistance in Ankara with Britain and France on October 19, 1939. The basic idea was straightforward: the parties agreed to provide assistance in the event of aggression, but the text carefully chose to leave the form and timing of that assistance up to mutual decision. This allowed for support to be political, financial, or military, depending on the situation, and ensured that no one clause would force Türkiye into war if the strategic picture changed unexpectedly. The treaty came out of a long summer of negotiations in which Ankara asked for protection without surrendering the right to weigh costs, and London and Paris wanted a signal of solidarity in the eastern Mediterranean without writing a blank check, and the final wording reflected that compromise by combining deterrent language with flexible execution, which suited a country that faced more than one potential pressure point at the same time (Armaoğlu, 1958, p. 407).

While reading all this information from the realist way, the treaty was not a moral statement about friendship but a tool to raise the expected cost of any move against Türkiye while still keeping room for maneuver, because a potential attacker now had to think about the chance that Britain and France might be drawn in, yet the government in Ankara could still decide how and when to respond according to its own capacity and to the balance of power in that week or that month. This flexibility was crucial because the risks were tangible—a land threat from the Balkans, a naval issue across the Straits, and the ongoing need to prevent a two-front crisis—and because Türkiye's mobilization and rearmament efforts were

still in progress. By promising "help" in theory but holding back on how to provide it, leaders were able to buy time, avoid getting sucked into someone else's conflict, and match their promises with their actual capabilities. In other words, the treaty managed the traditional issue of small and middle powers by reducing the likelihood of entrapment and allowing Ankara to modify its responses as the situation changed day by day, while simultaneously signaling solidarity to deter aggression. At the end of the day when France fell and accepted an armistice in June 1940, the practical value of the guarantee obviously dropped, yet the arrangement still did two things Türkiye needed most in a dangerous neighborhood: it reduced isolation by keeping formal consultations alive with London, and it bought time to steer a careful course while the great-power fight moved through Europe, which is exactly what happened as Ankara maintained contact with the Allies and, facing a very near threat in the Balkans, later signed a non-aggression pact with Germany on 18 June 1941; in that sense the 19 October 1939 treaty looks realist not because it was perfect or permanent, but because it used a formal pact as a security instrument—to warn rivals, to keep options open, and to adjust to power shifts—rather than as a rigid promise that could force Türkiye into war on bad terms. In the changing map of Europe after the fall of France in June 1940, pressure around Türkiye grew as German forces moved into the Balkans in the spring of 1941 and the risk of a land threat close to Thrace increased; in this setting the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between Türkiye and Germany was signed in Ankara on 18 June 1941 (İnal, 2015, s. 191-192), and only four days later, on 22 June 1941, Germany opened a new front against the Soviet Union (Gilbert, 2014, p.205), which made it even more important for Türkiye to avoid a sudden clash on its own borders. The treaty was a limited agreement that frozen the bilateral military risk at that time, maintained open lines of communication, and permitted Ankara to move through a risky period without accepting fixed combat duties that it could not support. It did not make Türkiye a partner in German plans or alter the legal foundation of Turkish neutrality.

To put it another way, the government watched the larger war and kept other options alive while attempting to prevent the immediate danger from turning into a crisis. According to realism, the decision made on June 18, 1941, was about survival in anarchy rather than friendship or approval. By establishing a non-aggression line with the most dangerous neighbor at the time, Türkiye bought time, decreased the likelihood of a two-front conflict, and safeguarded freedom of action so that any subsequent response could be in line with actual capacity and the actual balance of power. Because rules are only relevant for realism when a state can implement them at its own gate, and gatekeeping power serves to deter pressure and reduce the risk of miscalculation, this reasoning also explains

why the treaty was written narrowly and why Türkiye persisted in applying the Montreux rules in the Straits in the same stringent way for all sides.

Even though the step used diplomatic language and legal forms, it can be considered realist because the goal was not to choose a permanent side in June 1941, but rather to reduce the immediate risk while maintaining ties with the Allies and avoiding being drawn into someone else's war on bad terms. When the military tide turned and the Allies demanded more at Adana in January 1943 and Cairo in December 1943, Türkiye reiterated that entry into war required a real level of equipment, training, and logistics that was not yet in place. This was a simple cost-benefit line rather than a moral claim. What followed demonstrates the same pattern in practice: between 1941 and 1943, chrome exports became a way to manage danger and to earn money while the government kept in touch with London and later Washington because trade contracts, delivery calendars, and inspections could be used to slow pressure and signal limits without opening a front. The dates and the decisions taken together fit a realist interpretation that prioritizes security, uses time and geography to manage risk, and changes course when the external balance makes a different course safer. As the balance continued to shift, Ankara severed relations with Germany in August 1944 and ultimately declared war on February 23, 1945, confirming that the non-aggression pact had been a temporary shield to pass a narrow strait of danger rather than a promise of alignment.

Because it sat close to multiple active fronts and controlled the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, Türkiye's geopolitical location made it a focal point of wartime diplomacy. The Turkish government maintained its primary objectives despite attempts by the Axis and Allied powers to entice Ankara closer: preventing a war on bad terms, maintaining national independence, and avoiding conflict between more powerful adversaries until the balance of power was established. Realists interpret this as prioritizing survival, exercising cost-consciousness, and making thoughtful use of time and space. Türkiye's actions—what it requested, what it granted, and what it rejected—indicate that decisions were made based on actual risk, capacity, and anticipated benefits rather than on a desire to appease one side or the other, even when it used the language of neutrality. The direction of the war was still unclear at the time of the Adana meeting in late January 1943.

Later that year, Prime Minister Churchill personally visited Türkiye to make the case for Britain's desire for Türkiye to take the next step toward active participation. The Turkish side paid attention, but their response had a definite "readiness threshold." They clarified that entering a war required certain equipment that was not yet available, such as enough

contemporary aircraft and skilled pilots to defend important cities and bases, anti-air defenses and radar to lessen the chance of unexpected attacks, improved logistics to transport and supply troops, and time to train units that had been mobilized for a long period of time. Saying "no" in this manner was not courteous. It was a practical method of ensuring that Türkiye would not fight in a vulnerable position if it ever had to. The British left Adana with promises to help, and Türkiye left with more time and with public confirmation that its caution was grounded in practical needs rather than in indecision. The issue most emphasized during the meeting was strengthening Türkiye's defense. Official statements and press reports generally focused on this point (Yalçın, 2011, p.719). The months following Adana demonstrated the importance of this prudence. German forces had entered the Balkans in 1941, and the Luftwaffe and German ground forces continued to be a threat to Thrace and the Aegean islands even after Soviet fortunes started to turn around. If Türkiye had opened a front without air cover and logistics, the costs could have been very high, and a two-front crisis was a real danger because relations with the Soviet Union were never simple. Under these conditions, the Turkish government kept reinforcing the Montreux rules of 1936 in the Straits, because the ability to enforce passage limits and to apply them evenly reduced misunderstandings and discouraged naval adventures near its coasts. This is a classic realist move: gatekeeping lowers the likelihood that others will test you, and rules are helpful when a state can implement them at its own gate. The Allied powers discussed ways to get Türkiye more involved in the war effort by the end of 1943 at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in October.

In addition to increasing pressure, this provided Ankara with additional details about the plans and expectations of the Allies. The Turkish answer stayed consistent: they were ready to coordinate, to host talks, to share information, and to prepare, but they would not accept firm combat duties without the tools to meet them. This is due to the fact that realism views promises as meaningful only when they align with actual capabilities. The promise turns into a trap if the gap is too great. Türkiye ensured that any subsequent action would be linked to what could be supplied and maintained on Turkish soil by maintaining a steady line after Moscow. The same debate was intensified during the Cairo meetings in early December 1943. Türkiye reiterated the readiness threshold after Allied leaders urged Ankara to join the war quickly. This time, however, they were more specific, discussing airfields that required maintenance, fuel storage and spare parts that were scarce, training schedules that couldn't be hurried, and coastal defenses that still required equipment. These are fundamental facts of war, not fancy points. Without them, a state takes on a lot of risk with little chance of success. The outcome in Cairo was a sort

of "coordinate without combat" formula: Türkiye would continue to cooperate with the Allies and take actions that were within its capabilities, but it would refrain from going to war until the supply and power dynamics made sense. Read in a realist way, this was a bargain that traded information-sharing and access for time and safety, and it shows how small and middle powers try to avoid entrapment while staying connected to stronger coalitions.

These meetings took place against a backdrop of economic pressure and the unique Chrome case. Chrome exports fluctuated between 1941 and 1943 in response to Allied pressure and German demand. Ankara maintained diplomatic channels in London and later Washington, using contracts, delivery schedules, and inspections as risk management tools. The direction of trade also shifted when the military tide turned. This is a practical story, not a moral one. In order to reduce the likelihood of coercion and purchase maneuver space without resorting to a shooting war, strategic goods were viewed as bargaining chips. If we align the dates, the pattern becomes even more obvious. Türkiye had insisted from the beginning that the "form and timing" of any assistance would be decided jointly because the Tripartite Mutual Assistance Treaty of October 19, 1939, lost its practical force after France fell in June 1940. After Germany and Türkiye signed a Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression on 18 June 1941, the near risk was reduced for a time, and that breathing space was used to talk seriously with the Allies at Adana (January 1943) and Cairo (December 1943).

Later, as the balance shifted more clearly, Ankara cut relations with Germany in August 1944 and, when it became both safe and useful, declared war on 23 February 1945, which opened the way into the United Nations without the massive losses of full belligerency. Every step follows the same realist methodology: buy time when the threat is near, obtain information through conversations, inquire about what is required before making a commitment, and alter course only when the external balance makes a different course safer. The meetings also help us see the domestic side of these decisions. The economic costs of Türkiye's protracted mobilization, such as rationing, investment restrictions, and scarcity, naturally limited the amount of risk the nation could take on outside its borders. Leaders were aware that opening a front before they were prepared would expose them to domestic social pressure in addition to military risk. In terms of realism, state capability is just as important as intentions. In order to maintain allies' support while maintaining the "not yet" stance, the meetings provided Ankara with a platform to clarify these boundaries and make them acknowledged facts. Although neutrality is typically seen as passivity, Türkiye's record during the war indicates that its neutrality was

active. Adana and Cairo were not social calls; they were instruments of policy. Ankara compelled the conversation to concentrate on actual risks and assets by restating the readiness threshold. It demonstrated the consistency and firmness of its gatekeeping by applying Montreux equally. Relationships were maintained while boundaries were communicated by carefully handling chrome and other trade. One of the biggest risks in a crowded theater like the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans is miscalculation, which was less likely as a result of all these actions. A different kind of pressure was applied in the immediate postwar years, as Moscow pushed for special arrangements that would have limited Turkish control and for changes to the Straits regime (1945–1946). Ankara answered in the same realist language used during the war. By strengthening its political ties with Washington and London, it sought external balancing, strengthened coastal defenses, and maintained Montreux as the legal anchor. The reasoning was simple: refrain from making unilateral concessions under duress, indicate great-power support to increase the expected cost of coercion, and maintain freedom of action until the regional balance of power was established. This stance paved the way for the security decisions of the early Cold War era and naturally led to closer ties with the Western camp.

What Ankara could promise overseas was shaped by domestic decisions that also pulled in the same direction. Large portions of the workforce and budget were devoted to security as a result of general mobilization and a steady increase in defense expenditures after 1939; strict import licensing, price controls, and rationing kept basic supplies flowing but left little room for adventurous pursuits. Home defense and logistics were enhanced by fortification projects like the Çakmak Line, new airfields, and rail links, but they also demonstrated why any commitment needed to be matched with actual capacity. After 1941, British and later American aid came in handy, but it took time to build up training cycles, spare parts, and fuel supplies. For this reason, Turkish delegations in Adana (January 1943) and Cairo (December 1943) reiterated the same readiness threshold in straightforward terms.

These scenes are connected by a brief neorealist note. Results followed changes in the allocation of capabilities: hedging and buck-passing were rewarded in the early, fluid multipolar environment, whereas late alignment was safer and less expensive due to the 1944–1945 tilt toward Allied preponderance. To survive in anarchy, where institutions could assist but structure set the boundaries, Türkiye combined internal balancing (mobilization, fortification) with external balancing (pacts, consultations). In this way, continuity between 1934 and 1945 resulted from the ongoing necessity to keep options open, costs manageable, and

threats divided rather than from ideology.

To put it briefly, the best way to interpret the wartime meetings and Türkiye's responses to them is as phases in a realist plan. The government employed diplomacy to learn, to deter, to hedge, and to postpone until circumstances improved, not to convey a moral narrative. When considered collectively, the 1934–late 1940s record demonstrates a steady realist trend. In order to prevent any neighbor from gaining a dominant position in Türkiye's immediate neighborhood, policymakers assumed a competitive environment and expected others to protect their own advantage. They avoided making strict promises that might lead to entrapment, but they did cooperate when interests coincided or when regulations stabilized expectations. These decisions—capacity-based conditions, calibrated pacts, postwar balancing, Montreux enforcement, and cautious neutrality—made survival the top priority, controlled danger by hedging and balance, and turned resources and geography into leverage rather than ideology into policy. Türkiye's location and control over a narrow sea passage made it desirable to both the Allies and the Axis.

However, Türkiye's primary priorities were safety and independence, which it shaped its actions to meet. Because of this, Türkiye was able to join the UN from a position that maintained its fundamental security while minimizing the costs of the conflict itself when the war came to an end and the new order started to take shape. By transforming geography, timing, and stringent conditions into instruments of state survival, the protracted negotiations between 1939 and 1945 helped keep the nation out of a bad fight, even though they did not make headlines every day.

EVALUATION FROM A LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE

When we examine Türkiye's foreign policy from the late Atatürk period through the İnönü years in liberal theoretical terms, that is, against the view that security can only be produced by power and conflict in an anarchic international system, and in favor of the Enlightenment-rooted optimism that has treated human beings as capable of learning, reasoning, and cooperating. An international order where institutions, established procedures, and transparency have taken root has made war much less likely, even relegated to idealistic or utopian strands. Liberal thought has assumed that rational agents, such as people, can solve common problems and that, given the correct incentives and regulations, nation-states composed of these individuals can act rationally. In this sense, the liberal lens has examined how the international system has developed over time by combining more transparent regulations, monitoring-supported reciprocity, timely information sharing and public transparency, economic interdependence, and a focus on absolute gains rather than zero-sum spoils.

Within this frame, a set of Turkish choices has illustrated liberal mechanisms in practice: the opening of multilateral consultation channels by joining the League of Nations in 1932; the standardization of non-intervention and consultation procedures through the Balkan Pact of 1934 and the Sadabad Pact of 1937; the establishment of equal and predictable passage rules in the Straits under the 1936 Montreux regime; the Hatay dossier being tied to procedures under League supervision; the 1939 Anglo-Turkish Declaration and the Tripartite Mutual Assistance arrangement, which have bound "form and timing" of aid to joint decision; the open and verifiable announcement of a "readiness threshold" at Adana and Cairo in 1943; issue linkage and oversight in the 1941–1943 chrome trade through contracts, delivery calendars, and inspection; and, after 1945, accession as a founding participant to the United Nations, engagement with the Bretton Woods institutions from 1947, and entry into the Council of Europe in 1949, all of which have tied policy to a rule-governed order. The persistent emphasis on conference procedure during the 1945–1946 Straits crisis also reflected a liberal preference for rule-based, forum-anchored bargaining. When combined, these actions have decreased uncertainty, decreased the possibility of making a mistaken calculation, established credibility through repeated contacts, and created opportunities for absolute gains that could simultaneously benefit various parties.

Liberalism has offered an appropriate and complementary framework for explaining why Türkiye has consistently selected processes and institutions that make cooperation feasible, without discounting realist concerns. On the liberal side, a number of themes that are present in realist interpretations have also surfaced, and their varying assessments under each perspective have become apparent. According to a liberal viewpoint, international cooperation has been facilitated by institutions and regulations that have produced predictability, reciprocity with monitoring, information sharing with transparency, and sensible restraint habits rather than relying exclusively on the balance of power. Given this, Türkiye's 1932 decision to join the League of Nations has served as more than just a symbolic gesture; it has been a clear commitment to multilateral processes that lessen uncertainty and to a long-standing preference for resolving conflicts through discussion and common procedure before resorting to force. By joining the League, Türkiye has also backed the liberal argument that entities other than individual states, particularly international organizations, have been instrumental in promoting state cooperation and achieving more peaceful results than would have been possible through ad hoc great-power negotiations alone. Regular reporting, agenda-setting, and committee work are benefits of league membership that have standardized expectations, made behavior visible, and raised the reputational cost of

non-compliance. Turkish participation in the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods architecture, and the Council of Europe has not been a sudden turn; rather, it has been an extension of a path that has already been marked by procedure, transparency, and verifiable commitments. At the same time, the consultative habits learned there have prepared the ground for later forums.

Overall, the liberal reading has demonstrated how Türkiye has consistently tied significant decisions to reciprocal obligations, public regulations, monitoring systems, and economic ties throughout the pre-war Atatürk era and the wartime İnönü period. By doing this, it has enhanced cooperation that has benefited many parties simultaneously. By bringing its intentions into a framework that is publicly announceable and subject to review, Türkiye's accession has sent a clear message to its neighbors and major powers alike. As a result, avenues for establishing credibility and reputation through frequent engagement have been opened and are now operating with greater predictability. According to liberal theory, miscommunication and information gaps have frequently led to mistrust and misunderstandings between states; joining the League in 1932 was seen as a decision to close those gaps through public forums, rules, and procedure. In addition to reducing the likelihood of future crises, this decision has regularized tools like early warning, consultation, and mediation, ensuring that they are no longer dependent on sporadic goodwill but rather are rooted in standard procedure. Monitoring in conjunction with reciprocity, another mechanism that liberalism emphasized, has also been reinforced: the League's investigative, reporting, and observational activities have increased the political and reputational costs of violations and made state behavior more transparent. A standing set of procedures involving investigation, written reports, and reasoned recommendations has been available, so once a dispute has arisen, the path of response has not been limited to a display of force. For Türkiye specifically, membership has meant giving prior consent to procedures and criteria that have clarified "how to act under which conditions," and this consent has served to make future undertakings verifiable. These processes have strengthened what the liberal literature has referred to as credible commitment by incentivizing decision makers to take actions that are observable both domestically and internationally. Additionally, the League framework served as an early collective security laboratory. The idea that "an attack concerns not only the victim but the membership as a whole" has put unilateral revisionist actions under an international cost structure, despite imperfect implementation. As tensions have increased, issues have been brought to multilateral agendas rather than being caught in asymmetric bilateral pressure games, and the playing field has been bound by established rules, which has served as a buffer against diplomatic

isolation for a middle-sized state like Türkiye. From a liberal perspective, the benefits that have been generated here have not had to come at the expense of others; the predictability brought about by common rules has produced absolute gains, allowing multiple parties to simultaneously benefit from a more secure and safe environment. The liberal explanation has also been expanded by an economic and technical dimension. Trade and payments issues have been discussed on multilateral platforms during a time when the effects of the Great Depression are still being felt, and they have been backed by measurable commitments and predictable regulations. Liberal norms like consultation, non-intervention, and notification have been disseminated through regional arrangements using the procedural language acquired in the League.

As demonstrated by Manchuria and Abyssinia, it has also been true that the League has had a limited ability to exert pressure and has not been able to avert every crisis. However, the liberal approach has taken seriously the partial but significant gains that institutional ordering has provided, rather than relying on the demand for flawless execution. Although membership hasn't by itself provided Türkiye with a security guarantee, it has provided international oversight mechanisms that have partially balanced the asymmetries that can occur in bilateral bargaining, increased communication channels, institutionalized pathways back to the table, and decreased the risk of miscalculation. Thus, decisions about foreign policy have been made in a more open and quantifiable framework. All things considered, Türkiye's voluntary alignment with a more rule-governed and multilateral order in external affairs can be interpreted as the League's 1932 decision. According to liberal theory, this step has decreased uncertainty, promoted compliance through reciprocity and monitoring, and established a framework that makes cooperation possible through institutions and procedure. A liberal interpretation has interpreted this continuity as a procedural decision that has improved security while reducing costs, rather than as "law replacing power." Forums and regulations have given Türkiye's relations with its neighbors and the major powers the necessary framework for predictability and cooperation. From a liberal perspective, the Sadabad Pact of 1937 and the Balkan Pact of 1934 stand out as two specific examples of achieving security through repeated collaboration and codified processes in addition to unrefined power dynamics. Each text has written non-intervention (non-interference in domestic matters) and consultation into standard procedure, going beyond the traditional notion of a "all fight together against aggression" alliance. According to liberal theory, these written procedures have three reinforcing effects. They have decreased uncertainty, to start. Notification, a meeting, and a joint assessment are the first steps that the parties know should be taken when a crisis arises, and this order has reduced the possibility of miscommunication and overreaction.

Secondly, they have made monitoring and reciprocity possible. A long-standing pledge to refrain from interfering and to avoid changing borders through coercion has built reputation over time, while any infractions have resulted in increased expenses due to the fact that they have been documented. Thirdly, they have reduced the cost of transactions. Negotiations have proceeded more quickly and amicably as a result of the pacts' provision of pre-made channels for communication and meetings, which officials have not had to create from scratch in an emergency. In short, as liberalism had predicted, the arrangements in the Balkans and Sadabad have worked like real-world laboratories where regulations, openness, and consultation have increased security, decreased expenses, and made collaboration feasible; they have not ruled out the use of force, but they have confined it to a predictable and regulated framework.

The Hatay dossier has functioned as a rule-based model of change under third-party supervision, according to the same liberal interpretation. Instead of using bare power bargaining, status and safeguard devices were shaped under the League's watch between 1937 and 1939 through an announceable and reviewable procedure. This process was made more transparent by the channels for observation, reporting, and consultation provided by an external forum. The reputational cost of violations has increased as a result of monitoring making behavior visible; every action has been taken knowing that a counter-action will be taken because reciprocity has been expected. At every step, the Hatay method has advanced and remained subject to verification. In order to create issue linkage and spread costs and benefits in a way that the parties could accept, components like an autonomy formula, administrative arrangements, and security guarantees have been handled as a single package; the social and military costs that the use of force would have created have been purposefully avoided. The process has reinforced consent-based legitimacy by prioritizing legal and administrative actions over any final act of representation and vote. In summary, the Hatay file has demonstrated—as liberalism had anticipated—that third-party institutional oversight, standardized processes, and open information flows have reduced the scope for power politics and made conflict easier to handle while simultaneously providing the parties with absolute benefits (lower costs, calmer borders, and enhanced reputation).

The liberal thesis—"rules and institutions reduce uncertainty and make cooperation possible"—has been made tangible and applicable by Türkiye's trade protocols and payments-clearing arrangements from the late 1930s to 1943. These agreements have written delivery schedules into official calendars, documented the value of the goods in reciprocal accounts, and predetermined the inspection procedures to be followed

when necessary. Because of this, there have been fewer surprises and negotiations have progressed along a known path rather than hopping from one file to another. Both parties have also known what would arrive, when, at what cost, and by what route. Open information sharing has led to quantifiable commitments replacing conjecture, increased compliance due to the ability to monitor one another, and a higher reputational cost associated with breaking promises. During this time, two liberal mechanisms have been particularly apparent. The first has been transparency and monitoring: it is now possible to see who has and has not fulfilled their commitments thanks to shipment lists, port manifests, delivery-acceptance receipts, and, when required, third-party verification. The second has been reciprocity, whereby repeat interactions have created a positive cycle whereby one party has moved on access, price bands, or additional quotas when the other party has complied with the contract. When combined, these mechanisms have facilitated the tracking of obligations, accelerated the implementation of new agreements, and created a common understanding that violations are not free. Transaction costs have been reduced by standard forms, common measurements, and frequent reporting; in the event of disagreements, a return path to the table has been left open by procedure rather than closing through blame. Additionally, these protocols have created issue linkage, which means that behavior in other areas has been taken into consideration along with a single commercial topic. For instance, when it comes to a strategic material like chrome, the quantity and delivery schedule are combined with the price, as well as the expedited customs clearance, insurance, and shipping arrangements, as well as the schedule for technical missions. The parties have found it easier to make minor adjustments without cornering one another once issues have been packaged in this manner; these adjustments have reduced tensions and maintained cooperation. Economic interdependence has gradually increased as a result of clearing mechanisms that have maintained trade in the face of limited foreign exchange. Actors have found quieter, less disruptive paths more appealing than confrontational ones as the cost of breaching an agreement has increased along with interdependence. Rather than promoting short-term gains, these devices have created predictability in an uncertain wartime environment. Debates have been held in the language of documents rather than in the language of personal trust because the texts have already specified which corrective actions would be taken in the event of a delayed delivery, how reserved quantities would be updated, and how inspections would be carried out. Intentions have become clearer, the "next step" has become easier to predict, and trust has gradually been rooted in institutional foundations as the language of the texts has converged across agreements.

The liberal literature's emphasis on repeated-game dynamics and credible commitment has been reinforced by the fact that when an agreement has faltered, it has continued through amendments and additional protocols rather than breaking down. Together, these developments have demonstrated that a peaceful, yet functional framework has been established, demonstrating that cooperation has not been left to goodwill alone. Even difficult security issues have been brought into a more manageable environment as the parties have conducted their relations through written timetables, auditable deliveries, and rules that can be updated as needed. To put it briefly, trade protocols and payments-clearing arrangements have maintained trade during times of scarcity while also fostering a set of behaviors—transparency, monitoring, reciprocity, and issue linkage—that have lessened the allure of conflict and made ongoing cooperation the more sensible and affordable option. Because of these factors, the mechanisms in question have, as liberal theory would predict, decreased transaction costs, decreased uncertainty, expanded the avenues for establishing compliance and reputation, and created areas of absolute gain that have benefited both parties. In actuality, this has meant that protocols have been made clear beforehand, information has been disseminated in verifiable formats, and repeated interactions have been grounded in rules rather than shifting attitudes. The potential for costly miscalculation has decreased as a result of each of these steps, which have also increased the cost of breaking a promise by making behavior more visible to observers and establishing clearer expectations about what will be done, when it will be done, and how it will be verified. In summary, a network of straightforward but long-lasting practices has emerged, which has encouraged collaboration by making it more reasonable and cost-effective for all parties involved rather than by presuming goodwill.

In precisely this liberal sense, the implementation of the Montreux regime during the war years has resulted in an order where regulations have reduced uncertainty and made collaboration feasible. The flow through the Straits has been controlled within a predictable framework because Türkiye has implemented clauses like notice periods, tonnage ceilings, and restrictions on the passage of warships without favor and with careful attention to the written procedure throughout the conflict. The impartial and equitable implementation of the regulations has enabled naval powers to anticipate the treatment they will receive under specific circumstances, thereby lowering the likelihood of miscalculation. Since all requests have been handled through the same process, decisions about passage have been based on recorded texts rather than individual preferences, and arbitrariness has been replaced by standardized steps. As a result, the cost of conducting business has decreased and disputes have been resolved through notes, notices, and minutes rather than physical force. This

practice has simultaneously fueled two fundamental mechanisms from a liberal standpoint. Transparency and monitoring have been the first: notifications, port records, and diplomatic correspondence have made behavior readable and raised the cost of infractions to one's reputation. The second has been reciprocity: naval powers have prepared their passage requests in accordance with the process, and compliant behavior in repeated interactions has been rewarded, provided that Türkiye has complied with the rules. By operating in this manner, Montreux has created a type of stability that has produced absolute gains, kept routes back to the table open during crises, and made risks at a narrow chokepoint easier to manage. Ultimately, Türkiye has solidified its position as a "reliable enforcer of rules" despite the harsh conditions of war; while the use of force has not been ruled out, it has been confined to a predictable and regulated framework. By doing this, the regime has reduced overall costs while simultaneously enhancing regional sea lanes' security and Türkiye's security.

The liberal emphasis on standardization, transparency, and reciprocity has been made tangible through participation in Lend-Lease and standardized supply lines between 1942 and 1945. Regular reports on inventory lists, training schedules, and spare part flow have decreased information asymmetry and allowed both parties to anticipate what will be supplied, when it will arrive, and how it will be maintained. As a result, collaboration has been based on documented processes rather than on personal trust, and the ability to generate verifiable commitments has grown. Interoperability has been improved, misunderstandings have decreased, and transaction costs have decreased thanks to common technical measures and shared standards. Because a party that has complied has been able to access better terms in the next tranche, reciprocity has been encouraged, and monitoring has been made easier by regular supervision of the delivery-training-maintenance cycle. All things considered, this supply regime has created trust through consistency and frequent communication, even in the face of wartime restrictions; it has elevated collaboration to an institutional level and, as liberal theory would predict, has created opportunities for participants to gain absolute advantage.

Foreign policy has been linked to multilateral procedure since Türkiye's 1945 admission to the UN, which openly indicated that it has preferred to handle issues through open meetings and common rules rather than one-by-one force displays. According to the liberal perspective, institutions lessen uncertainty by outlining exactly what will be done, when, and how. Türkiye's UN membership has also reduced the possibility of misunderstandings by enabling disputes to be brought to open forums like

the General Assembly, Security Council, and committees. Written procedures have been used to track promises within this time frame, and an order has been established whereby "those who keep their word" gain reputation while "those who do not" incur costs. In addition to the UN, collaboration with specialized organizations like FAO, WHO, and UNESCO has standardized information flows in food, health, and education projects through shared calendars, tables, and frequent reporting. Additionally, a culture of collaboration founded on verifiable records rather than personal trust has been established. These standards have improved reciprocal behavior and facilitated monitoring in a variety of domains, including performance indicators and inventories. In this way, the costs of resolving issues have decreased, Turkish commitments have become quantifiable and return paths to the table have been kept open by procedure when a file has stalled. Rule-governed behavior has reduced the unexpected events that intensify crises and established areas of unrestricted profit that are advantageous to all parties. As a result, Türkiye has established a more consistent image as a partner that "conforms to rules and proceeds by procedure" within the UN framework, and a foundation of credibility has been built up in international relations through openness and consistency. This order has, as liberal theory would predict, made it easier to cooperate, limited the use of unilateral pressure, and given postwar policy a more solid base.

The liberal assertion that "institutions, rules, and transparent information flows make cooperation possible" has been given tangible form by Türkiye's participation in the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF. As a result of IMF membership, reserve data, balance-of-payments statistics, and information on the exchange regime have been shared in standard reporting formats and are regularly reviewed through consultations. Because of this process, economic developments are no longer surprising, behavior is now observable, and promises can now be verified. Access to IMF resources has lowered the social cost of sudden adjustments, allowed for the management of short-term crises within a framework governed by rules, and provided temporary finance and policy advice against payments shocks. The World Bank has combined technical specifications, procurement guidelines, and audit procedures with long-term and reasonably priced financing for infrastructure and development projects. These agreements have strengthened the pursuit of effectiveness, removed resource allocation from arbitrary decisions, and created quantifiable goals and a culture of minute-taking and monitoring in project selection and execution. Regular field reports, open tender procedures, and standard contracts have boosted public authority accountability and bolstered external partners' trust. Through reputation and transparency, access to external financing has improved, and private capital flows have

found a clearer course over the medium term. Through par value disciplines and a stable exchange-rate framework, the Bretton Woods architecture has helped to clarify pricing and contract horizons while lowering trade and payment uncertainty. Transaction costs have decreased, reciprocal behavior has improved, and a party that has kept its word has been able to negotiate better terms in the subsequent round because the rules have been known beforehand. In addition to increasing the cost of violation and making the reward for compliance evident, this repeated-interaction structure has sped up the reputation-building process that is essential to liberal literature. This institutional framework has given Türkiye a common language and tools for managing macroeconomic vulnerabilities, and it has cooperated with the clearing and supply arrangements that have sustained trade during the postwar years of scarcity. All things considered, Türkiye's external economic relations are now based on the principles of rule-observance, transparency, and monitoring thanks to its involvement in the Bretton Woods institutions, which has also expanded the avenues for collaboration that yield tangible benefits. By doing this, there is less uncertainty, trade and financing decisions have an organized schedule, and relationships with outside partners have moved forward based on data and documented processes rather than on personal trust. From a liberal standpoint, this institutional binding has strengthened Türkiye's rule-based integration into the global system and brought about long-term trust and stability in addition to one-time gains. Türkiye's foreign policy is now more closely aligned with the rule-based and multilateral framework that liberal theory has anticipated since its 1949 admission to the Council of Europe and its early shift toward the European human rights architecture in 1950. Common standards have been established through written conventions, decision-making procedures have been made open to frequent discussion and evaluation, and external commitments have been scheduled according to a predictable and verifiable timeline. By allowing disputes to be resolved in institutional forums instead of closed bargaining, the Council's treaty system, the Committee of Ministers, and the parliamentary channels have reduced the possibility of misunderstandings. By increasing the "reversal cost" of sudden policy changes, the European human rights conventions and their oversight procedures have established standardized standards in the area of rights and liberties and produced a credible-commitment effect. From a liberal perspective, these actions have produced long-term advantages in three ways. First, monitoring and transparency have been improved, who has done what and when has been made clear through independent review, reporting, and decision follow-up. Second, a reputational loop has emerged whereby rule-abiding actors have found easier support in political and economic cooperation, thereby institutionalizing reciprocal behavior.

Third, transaction costs have decreased; negotiation, compliance, and dispute resolution have accelerated due to shared protocols and a common working language. The Council of Europe and the human-rights architecture have not eradicated power politics, but they have positioned it within a framework that is rule-bound and reviewable; rules that reduce uncertainty have created trust through repeated interaction and have expanded areas of absolute gain that different parties can enjoy simultaneously. This institutional anchor has provided a coherent regional layer to complement Türkiye's multilateral turn under the United Nations and Bretton Woods, and it has helped to consolidate an external profile of a partner that "follows rules and proceeds by procedure." This has strengthened the connection between internal reform and external cooperation, increased the credibility of Türkiye's external commitments, and created long-term stability and predictability.

Türkiye's preference for conference procedure and multilateral consultation over unilateral imposition is in line with liberal expectations, as demonstrated by the Straits crisis of 1945–1946. The issue has been linked to forum-based negotiation because, in response to Soviet demands, Ankara has stressed that any change in the Straits regime can only be considered within the conference procedure provided by the Montreux Convention and with the participation of the parties. Türkiye has reduced the chance of miscalculation and created equal treatment and predictability by enforcing notification regulations, tonnage ceilings, and restrictions on warship passage without distinction. The reputational cost of any breach has been increased, transparency and monitoring have been maintained, and information sharing has been kept active through notes and frequent communications with London and Washington. Insistence on an open process has reduced the appeal of force by shifting pressure away from a two-handed bargaining game and onto a ground that has resulted in multilateral costs for coercive moves. In repeated interactions, Türkiye's "rules first, decisions second" strategy has reinforced reciprocity expectations and conveyed a message of dependable commitment. As a result, the Straits have been managed by a passage regime based on treaty texts and subject to oversight rather than by individual judgment, and the avenues for the crisis to worsen have been limited. As expected by liberal theory, Ankara has maintained Montreux as the legal anchor, guided the conversation back to the conference table, and maintained an avenue for resolution through institutions and regulations.

By bringing what has been promised overseas into line with practical timetables and domestic resources, wartime mobilization, scarcity management, price and import controls, and the extraordinary fiscal measures of 1942–1943 have reinforced the liberal logic of credible

commitment on the bridge between domestic capacity and external commitments. Decision-makers have been able to demonstrate in advance "who will do what, when, and with which means" thanks to tools like budget ceilings, import licenses, ration and procurement plans, and the regular flow of statistics. As a result, an institutional foundation for verifiable promises has been established. Prioritizing defense and essential consumption have been made possible by administrative measures to preserve price stability combined with revenue-broadening fiscal actions. This has also made it evident to external partners that the financing of commitments has been planned in a sustainable way. This framework has made decisions based on documented processes rather than subjective statements, decreased uncertainty, and curbed arbitrariness. These internal arrangements have also functioned as liberal theory would predict when reflected externally. Allies and trading partners can now clearly see Türkiye's readiness threshold and delivery capacity thanks to standard reporting, auditing, and scheduling, which also reduces the possibility of errors in judgment. Reciprocal behavior has improved, monitoring has gotten easier, and a party that has complied with its responsibilities has been able to negotiate better terms in the subsequent tranche. Transaction costs have decreased, return routes to the table during crises have remained open, and the areas of absolute gain that benefit multiple parties simultaneously have grown as a result of repeated interactions conducted in a common language and according to a common protocol. The channels of cooperation that Türkiye had during the war years have been stabilized on a procedural basis of trust, and external pledges are now transparent, traceable, and executable thanks to the fiscal and administrative framework that is supported by mobilization, scarcity policies, and price-import controls.

The Second World War offers a useful framework for assessing Türkiye's foreign policy decisions. Due to the conflict's quick changes, the constant pressure from the major powers, Türkiye's limited military and economic capabilities, and the social cost of full mobilization, it became impossible to avoid making cautious and practical decisions. It is evident from analyzing these years' policies that no one theoretical framework can adequately account for them. Rather, the choices made show a complex and adaptable pattern were preserving national survival, ensuring security, and preserving sovereignty were given top priority. These priorities align well with realism's presumptions. However, the use of institutional frameworks, legal processes, and multilateral consultations shows that liberal tools were not disregarded but rather used selectively when they aided these realist objectives. There was no central authority in the international system at the time. States were forced to ensure their survival in anarchy, where most interactions were characterized by rivalry

and mistrust. The ultimate goal was to preserve sovereignty and advance national interests, despite the fact that leaders frequently spoke in a cooperative and moderate manner. In line with realist theory, this led to frequent conflicts of interest and a persistent sense of unease. A significant change in the balance of power was also brought about by the war's conclusion, which was characterized by the weariness of European powers. While the Soviet Union solidified its position as the other superpower, the United States, which was economically powerful but geographically removed from the major battlegrounds, became the new world leader. Although this bipolar structure provided a new framework for collaboration after the war, national interest calculations continued to play a crucial role. In addition to their normative belief in peace, states joined new organizations like the UN because it benefited their material interests, security, or legitimacy.

Therefore, Türkiye's "active neutrality" cannot be seen as a straightforward liberal decision for peace. Instead, it was a planned survival tactic. The same logic can be seen in the 1936 Montreux Convention and the insistence on controlling the Straits, the agreements in the Balkans and Sadabad that encouraged consultation procedures, the 1943 Adana and Cairo meetings that insisted on a "readiness threshold," the 1941 Non-Aggression Pact with Germany, the careful use of chrome exports as a bargaining tool, the 1944 break with Berlin, and the symbolic declaration of war in 1945. Until the balance of power was clearer, Türkiye aimed to avoid making hasty decisions, lessen the chance of an attack, and preserve its flexibility. Although these actions were fundamentally realist, the fact that they were carried out through written regulations, multilateral talks, and diplomatic channels demonstrates that liberal approaches were employed as tools to lower uncertainty and justify cautious policies. Institutions during this time did not provide complete security, but they also had purpose. Türkiye gained recognition, visibility, and a position on diplomatic platforms as a result of its membership in the League of Nations and then the United Nations. Procedures like official notes, committee deliberations, and reporting requirements increased the reputational cost of infractions, decreased misunderstandings, and made behavior more transparent. However, national interest always determined the level of dedication to these institutions. States only participated in institutional processes if those processes matched their priorities, making participation selective and conditional. This explains why, rather than acting as legally binding regulations that limited state behavior, liberal mechanisms served more as tools for lowering costs and fostering confidence.

The war's overall dynamics show how power politics won out. Germany's rapid military campaigns, expansionist goals, and contempt for

moral and ethical boundaries were all manifestations of the harshest kind of realism. Hitler's example of charismatic leadership further demonstrates how individual leaders can disregard international institutions and norms. It was unrealistic to expect international organizations to avert conflict in such a setting. It should be mentioned, though, that even small institutions had advantages. They gave states channels of negotiation, symbolic status, and diplomatic visibility. This visibility was strategically significant for middle powers such as Türkiye. This is made abundantly evident by Türkiye's decision to join the UN in 1945. By avoiding destruction during the war and assimilating into the new order, Türkiye demonstrated that it was a state prepared to work within institutional frameworks—but only when those frameworks aligned with its interests as a nation. Türkiye's decisions were heavily influenced by both domestic and foreign factors. The nation's capacity to take chances overseas was constrained by widespread mobilization, rationing regulations, stringent economic controls, and high defense expenditures. For this reason, in response to Allied pressure, Ankara accepted the war on the condition that certain conditions were met, including having aircraft, radar systems, logistics infrastructure, and adequate training. One instance of how Türkiye turned its internal constraints into a diplomatic stance is the explicit expression of these conditions at Adana and Cairo. From a liberal standpoint, the dependence on open communication and conditional agreements demonstrates how institutions could be used to justify and explain delay, while from a realist standpoint, this was a survival tactic.

Another compelling example is the Straits question. Any plan to weaken Türkiye's sovereignty over the Straits was always met with resistance. The fair and unbiased implementation of the Montreux provisions strengthened Türkiye's negotiating position while lowering the likelihood of a mistaken estimate and assuring naval powers of predictability. Türkiye was able to turn geography into leverage by controlling a chokepoint. Realistically, the convention was significant because Türkiye had the will and ability to implement it, not because it was a neat legal document. Only when backed by legitimate force did rules gain strength. The Hatay case illustrates the same combination of methods as well. On the one hand, the process was carried out with administrative arrangements and elections under League of Nations supervision, which aligns with liberal theory's focus on openness and procedures. However, the fundamental goal was to reduce future risks, fortify defense, and shorten borders. Thus, even though it was accomplished with liberal tools, the result was a low-cost security gain that makes sense from a realist standpoint. Attention should also be paid to the war's economic aspect. Diplomatic instruments included strategic commodities, chief among them chrome. Contracts, delivery plans, and inspection protocols reduced the

likelihood of conflict by fostering reciprocity and transparency. Standardized reporting and cooperative procedures were used in supply agreements and aid programs, showing that collaboration could go on even in times of scarcity—not out of goodwill, but because schedules and regulations eliminated uncertainty. Liberalism explains this as the advantage of institutions, but in the end, realists used them to buy time and lower the costs of survival. These dynamics were further strengthened with the advent of the bipolar order after 1945. The two superpowers shaped the boundaries of the increasingly active institutions and forums. "How free are these institutions really?" is the query. remained true. Only when doing so strengthened their own strategic positions did great powers typically lend support to weaker states. Seldom did they want to see rivals develop into equal rivals. As a result, the alignment of interests and the backing of powerful states continued to be necessary for institutions to function effectively. Neutrality was always a tool, not an end, for Türkiye. It is not enough to attribute the common claim that "if Türkiye had entered the war, the consequences would have been catastrophic" to a liberal wish to maintain peace. Survival was the deeper motivation. A swift defeat might have resulted from using Blitzkrieg tactics to counter a German attack. As a result, Türkiye avoided situations where the threats were manageable and sought collaboration when they were imminent. Crucially, diplomatic negotiations rather than coercion led to the assistance from more powerful states. Ankara was able to secure time, economic support, and weapons without sacrificing its neutrality because the great powers needed Türkiye.

This realist-liberal blend is also evident in Türkiye's domestic wartime policies. Instead of taking a laissez-faire stance, the government took significant action, imposing new taxes, rationing, mandatory procurement, and limitations on imports and consumption to influence day-to-day activities. The parliamentary system, the constitutional order, and fundamental values like equality and suffrage were all maintained at the same time. This combination demonstrates how realist necessities constrained liberal ideals of freedom in practice, despite their formal upholding. When combined, these findings result in a cautious but reliable assessment. The need for survival and sovereignty overshadowed all other considerations in Türkiye's foreign policy during World War II. Risks, costs, and benefits were calculated for almost all significant decisions. Liberal institutions and practices were not disregarded; rather, they were frequently employed to boost bargaining power, legitimize caution, and lessen uncertainty. However, the fundamental goals remained realistic. Accordingly, Türkiye's policy can be characterized as "realist goals pursued through liberal methods." Türkiye avoided direct destruction at the end of the war, but it still gained a position

in the new international order. A strategic and symbolic move, admission to the UN showed a desire to engage in the new rule-based order while maintaining security and sovereignty. Later years saw a continuation of this dual strategy, with rules and procedures valued only to the extent that they did not compromise national sovereignty.

To sum up, Türkiye's policies from 1939 to 1945 are a special combination. To ensure survival, a combination of geography (the Straits), resources (chrome), protocols (notes, pacts, multilateral platforms), and institutions (the UN and the League) were employed. Institutions served as helpful instruments within power politics rather than taking its place. Although the strategy's core was realist, liberal mechanisms were frequently used in its execution. Türkiye was able to integrate into the postwar order at a relatively low cost and avoid the catastrophic battles of World War II thanks to this practical synthesis. This balanced approach left a lasting impression on the course of Turkish foreign policy, influencing not only the war years but also the security decisions made in the early stages of the Cold War.

CONCLUSION

The Second World War created a unique and challenging environment for the Republic of Türkiye, where foreign policy had to be shaped under the pressure of constantly shifting balances, limited national resources, and an international order marked by uncertainty. In this context, the policies adopted by Ankara cannot be explained by a single theoretical framework. Instead, they represent a combination in which realist priorities—such as the protection of sovereignty, survival of the state, and national security—were pursued through liberal instruments, including rules, institutional procedures, and diplomatic negotiations. Neutrality, therefore, was not a moral principle but rather a carefully designed tool to avoid premature commitments, reduce risks, and keep strategic flexibility intact. When analyzed from a realist perspective, Türkiye's behavior fits well with the logic of an anarchic international system where no superior authority exists above states. In such an environment, mistrust, rivalry, and competition define the relations among actors. Even though the rhetoric of moderation and cooperation was often used, the underlying priority of almost every state was to protect sovereignty and maximize its own interests. Türkiye, too, adopted this logic by adjusting its position according to threats and opportunities. The conclusion of the Montreux Convention in 1936, the settlement of the Hatay question without military escalation, the Balkan and Sadabad Pacts, the Anglo–French Mutual Assistance Treaty of 1939 with flexible conditions, the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression signed with Germany in 1941, and finally the declaration of war against Germany and Japan in 1945 all show that the state carefully balanced threats while buying time and minimizing costs. These steps, though presented in diplomatic language, were essentially realist moves designed to guarantee survival and independence.

At the same time, liberal elements were not absent. The careful enforcement of Montreux rules, the use of official diplomatic notes, the reliance on procedural arrangements, and later Türkiye's accession to the United Nations indicate that institutions and legal frameworks also played an important role. Liberal theory highlights that rules, reciprocity, transparency, and monitoring mechanisms can reduce uncertainty and increase predictability, even in times of war. Indeed, Türkiye's even-handed application of Montreux provisions reassured other powers that the Straits would be governed according to known standards, reducing the chance of miscalculation. Similarly, in the field of trade, contracts, delivery timetables, and monitoring arrangements provided transparency and reciprocity, making cooperation more rational than confrontation. These examples demonstrate that liberal methods were used, but they served realist

purposes—such as minimizing risks, strengthening bargaining positions, and legitimizing cautious policies. The overall dynamic of the war also reinforces the realist picture. Germany's rapid military expansion, disregard for moral or ethical norms, and charismatic leadership under Hitler reflected the harshest features of power politics. France's inability to manage the crisis effectively shows how even if a state were willing to adopt peaceful methods, such approaches could easily be rendered ineffective when faced with aggressive expansion. This indicates that the core logic of survival and power remained dominant, regardless of the institutional frameworks that existed.

However, institutions like the League of Nations or later the United Nations were not completely irrelevant. They provided visibility, legitimacy, and platforms for middle powers such as Türkiye to express their positions. Joining these institutions did not mean sacrificing sovereignty but rather using them strategically to reduce isolation and increase international recognition. Türkiye's policy of "active neutrality" is particularly striking in this respect. By insisting on a "readiness threshold" during the Adana and Cairo meetings in 1943, Turkish leaders made clear that participation in the war could only be considered under certain practical conditions—such as adequate air defense, sufficient training, and logistical preparedness. This conditional approach was not only a realist survival strategy but also a liberal signal of transparency. By making its limitations explicit, Türkiye reduced external pressure and created a verifiable diplomatic position that others could understand. Neutrality thus became both a shield against external threats and a means to preserve independence until the global balance shifted decisively. The post-war order further highlights this duality. On the one hand, the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers deepened the logic of power balancing. On the other hand, the creation of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the Council of Europe demonstrated how rules and organizations could reduce uncertainty and transaction costs. Yet, even within these institutions, national interest remained the ultimate determining factor. States joined, complied, or withdrew depending on how their sovereignty and security were affected. For Türkiye, participation in these frameworks served more as a means to strengthen legitimacy and reduce risks rather than as unconditional commitments. Domestic policies also reveal this balance between realist needs and liberal appearances. Long-term mobilization, rationing, extraordinary taxation, and strict import controls imposed heavy burdens on society. Citizens faced economic and social constraints, demonstrating that the government did not adopt a laissez-faire attitude but intervened heavily to sustain the war effort. At the same time, parliamentary institutions, constitutional principles, and rights such as suffrage remained

in place, preserving the formal image of liberal values. This shows that liberal ideals were not abandoned but were subordinated to realist necessities when survival required it. Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that Türkiye's foreign policy between 1939 and 1945 can best be described as realist in its objectives but pragmatic in its methods. Almost every major choice was based on calculations of costs, risks, and benefits. Liberal procedures were used to legitimize decisions, reduce uncertainty, and increase credibility, but the underlying aim remained the survival of the state and the protection of sovereignty. Türkiye thus managed to avoid the devastation of war while still integrating into the post-war international order. The ability to use liberal tools for realist purposes created a pragmatic synthesis that allowed Türkiye to achieve security at relatively low cost.

In conclusion, Türkiye's wartime foreign policy demonstrates that realism and liberalism are not mutually exclusive but can complement one another depending on context. Realism explains the main goals—survival, sovereignty, and security—while liberalism sheds light on the instruments—rules, institutions, and diplomatic procedures—that made those goals achievable. By combining these approaches, Türkiye not only preserved its independence during one of the most destructive conflicts in history but also secured a place in the post-war order. This pragmatic balance between realist aims and liberal practices left a lasting imprint on Turkish foreign policy and shaped the choices of the early Cold War years.

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