



**Parahyangan Catholic University**  
**Faculty of Social and Political Sciences**  
**International Relations Undergraduate Study Program**

*Accredited College*

*SK BAN-PT No. 2579/SK/BAN-PT/AK-ISK/S/IV/2022*

**The Change of United States Foreign Policy Toward  
Turkey's Military Invasions in Syria (2016-2019)**

Undergraduate Thesis  
International Relations Undergraduate Study Program

By  
Anastasia Cattleya Limantara  
6091901017

Bandung  
**2023**



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Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik  
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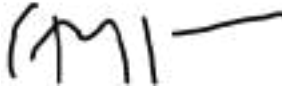
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## ABSTRACT

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This research aims to prove that the contestation between domestic and international variables in foreign policies is the reason behind the change of US foreign policy toward Turkish military intervention in Syria. On the early days of the Syrian Crisis, the US gave their support toward two initial Turkey military incursions in Syria, the Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch. However, the US foreign policy changed when they are faced with the third Turkish military incursions to Syria, the Operation Peace Spring. Though it was conducted with the same objective of two previous incursions, the US condemned this operation and sanctioned Turkey for it. Whilst condemning it, the US also gave their indirect support to Operation Peace Spring and contribute to the success of the operation by withdrawing their troops, leaving the Kurds militant vulnerable to this invasion. Reflecting from the aforementioned change, this research aims to understand factors that lead up to the change of US foreign policy toward Turkish military intervention in Syria. By utilising the framework of neoclassical realism, this research argues that the change of US foreign policy toward Turkish military invasions in Syria was prompted by the contestation between international factors, which is the systemic stimuli, and domestic factors, including leader images, state-society relations, as well as strategic culture.

**Keywords:** United States, Turkey, foreign policy, US-Turkish cooperation, Syrian Crisis, neoclassical realism, and military intervention

## ABSTRAK

Nama : Anastasia Cattleya Limantara  
NPM : 6091901017  
Judul : Perubahan Kebijakan Luar Negeri Amerika Serikat terhadap  
Invasi Militer Turki ke Suriah (2016-2019)

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membuktikan bahwa perubahan kebijakan Amerika Serikat terhadap invasi Turki di Suriah tahun 2016-2019 dilatarbelakangi oleh adanya kontestasi antara faktor domestik dan internasional dalam kebijakan luar negeri. Pada permulaan Krisis Suriah, Amerika sendiri memberikan dukungan kepada dua operasi militer Turki, Operation Euphrates Shield dan Operation Olive Branch yang bertujuan untuk menghentikan tindakan terorisme di Suriah. Akan tetapi, kebijakan luar negeri Amerika mengalami perubahan ketika dihadapkan kepada operasi militer Turki ketiga, Operation Peace Spring. Terlepas dari fakta bahwa operasi militer ketiga tersebut dilaksanakan dengan tujuan yang sama seperti dua operasi sebelumnya, Amerika mengancam Operation Peace Spring dan memberikan Turki sanksi ekonomi atas operasi tersebut. Walau mengancam, pada waktu yang bersamaan Amerika juga memberikan dukungan tidak langsung kepada Operation Peace Spring dan berkontribusi terhadap keberhasilan operasi tersebut. Berangkat dari perubahan kebijakan tersebut, riset ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari faktor-faktor yang mengakibatkan perubahan kebijakan Amerika Serikat terhadap intervensi militer Turki di Suriah. Dengan teori neoclassical realism, riset ini berargumen bahwa perubahan kebijakan Amerika tersebut dikarenakan adanya kontestasi antara faktor internasional, yaitu stimulus sistemik dan faktor domestik, yaitu imaji dan persepsi dari pemimpin, hubungan negara dan masyarakat, serta budaya strategis Amerika Serikat.

**Kata Kunci:** Amerika Serikat, Turki, kebijakan luar negeri, kerjasama Amerika-Turki, Krisis Suriah, neoclassical realism, dan intervensi militer

## **PREFACE**

Glory to God that thanks to His grace, the author is able to finish this undergraduate thesis. This undergraduate thesis itself is written to analyse the change of United States foreign policy toward Turkey's military invasions in Syria during 2016-2019. The analysis will utilise the framework of neoclassical realism which argue that foreign policy is a result of contestation between independent (international) and intervening (domestic) variables. The author hopes that this thesis will academically contribute to the growth of the analysis related to the US foreign policy toward Turkish military interventions in Syria. Despite all the efforts, the author realises that this thesis is far from perfect. Hence, the author would like to apologise for any shortcoming found in this thesis and is always open for any constructive critiques and suggestions given to make this undergraduate thesis better.

Bandung, 20 May 2023

Anastasia Cattleya Limantara

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my not so tolerable personality. Thank you for willing to be patient and have a bigger heart whenever I am not in a good mood. College will not be as easy as this if we did not stick together. Thank you for always having my back since the first day and thank you for always taking my side against everyone else. We always go around as Tasia and Annas, and I hope that stays for a long-long time. I also hope that you have enough patience to deal with me until the end of your life, or mine. Last, thank you for willingly use your very limited paid leave days for my thesis defense. No words could explain how much that means to me and honestly, thank you is an understatement. Moving ahead, I hope you are able to see and appreciate your own worth, like I always do. As you know, this world is cruel. But rest assured because you have a very dependable, loyal, kind, soft-hearted, caring, and amazing best friend ☺.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BoI	: Balance of Interest
CENTCOM	: United States Central Command
CJSOTF-S	: Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Syria
EO	: Executive Order
FPE	: Foreign Policy Executive
FSA	: Free Syrian Army
GWOT	: Global War on Terror
HPD	: People's Democratic Party
ISIS	: Islamic State
MGK	: Turkey's National Security Council
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCR	: Neo-classical Realism
OES	: Operation Euphrates Shield
OIR	: Operation Inherent Resolve
OOB	: Operation Olive Branch
OPS	: Operation Peace Spring
PKK	: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PYD	: Democratic Union Party
SAC	: Syrian Arab Coalition
SDF	: Syrian Democratic Force
SNA	: Syrian National Army
SOF	: Special Operation Forces
TAF	: Turkish Armed Forces
T&E	: Train and Equip
UN	: United Nations
UNSC	: United Nations Security Council
US	: United States
VNSA	: Violent Non-State Actor
YPG	: Kurdish People's Protection Unit

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Limited mainly by the principle of non-intervention that President Obama adopted, in the early days of the Syrian Crisis, the US was left with no choice but to be highly dependent on their allies who already set foot on the battle ground.<sup>1</sup> One of them is Turkey. As a bordering country, the spill over of the Syrian Crisis to Turkey was inevitable. Mainly concerned about the penetration of Islamic State (ISIS) and Kurdish-based insurgency to their territory, starting from August 2016 until October 2019, Turkey decided to conduct military operations in Syria.<sup>2</sup> These operations include Operation Euphrates Shield (OES), Operation Olive Branch (OOB), and Operation Peace Spring (OPS).<sup>3</sup>

Throughout their operations, especially the two initial ones, Turkey has gained support from great powers, including their hot-and-cold ally, the United States (details in table 1.1).<sup>4</sup> The US support to Turkish military operations was then based on the fact that these interventions were conducted on the same objective with their Global War on Terror (GWOT) campaign, which is to eliminate the Islamic State. Hence, to achieve this common objective, the US decided to directly deploy

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<sup>1</sup> Kilic Kanat and Kadir Ustun, "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (2015): 92.

<sup>2</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and the Changing Dynamics of the Kurdish Issue," *Survival*, Vol. 58, no. 2 (2016): 68; Michael J. Totten, "The Trouble with Turkey: Edrogan, ISIS, and The Kurds," *World Affairs*, Vol. 178, no. 3 (2015): 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Seçkin Köstem, "Russian-Turkish cooperation in Syria: geopolitical alignment with limits," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2020): 8-9; Lacin Idil Oztig, "Syria and Turkey: Border-Security Priorities," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXVI, no.1 (2019): 122

<sup>4</sup> Khayrallah al-Hilu, "The Turkish Intervention in Northern Syria: One Strategy, Discrepant Policies," *Middle East Directions Wartime and Post-Conflict in Syria (WPCS) Research Project Report* (2021): 6.

their special forces to fight alongside the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and give continuous aerial surveillance throughout two Turkish military interventions.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1.1: European Countries' Stances toward Turkey's Military Operations in Syria (2016-2019)**

Operations/Countries	Russia	Germany	France	United States
OES	For	For	For	For
OOB	For	Against	Against	For
OPS	For	Against	Against	Against

Source: al-Hilu (2021)

Additionally, the US-Turkish cooperation in the Syrian Crisis is also reflected in armaments Washington delivers to Ankara to be distributed to anti-Assad groups.<sup>6</sup> To further enhance the effectiveness of their attack against ISIS, the US also took advantage of their alliances with Turkey by using several Turkish military facilities including the Incirlik Air Base, ground early warning missile radar in eastern Turkey, and forces command sites in Izmir.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the intimate relations between US and Turkey can also be seen in the conduct of joint patrols to prevent the penetration of terrorists in the Turkish-Syrian border.<sup>8</sup> Alongside Turkey, the US has also engaged in multiple talks to create a safe-zone to protect civilians and refugees from attacks initiated by militant groups in Syria.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Stein, "Reconciling U.S.-Turkish Interests in Northern Syria," *Council on Foreign Relations Discussion Paper* (2017): 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey: Background, U.S. Relations, and Sanctions In Brief," *Congressional Research Service* (2019): 2.

<sup>8</sup> Tessa Fox, "Turkey, US agree to set up operation centre for Syria safe zone," *Al Jazeera*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/7/turkey-us-agree-to-set-up-operation-centre-for-syria-safe-zone> (accessed on March 8, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

The Syrian Crisis, also known as the Syrian Civil War, began in March 2011 when a high influx of citizens protested against the unlawful regime of Bashar al-Assad. Being responded with violence and even labelled as terrorist, most of the demonstrators then transformed into rebel or militant groups with their own interest and vision of the future Syria. On the government side, al-Assad received support from Iran forces and Shia militant groups, including Hezbollah. On the other side, the opposition forces are dominated by the Sunni through the existence of Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Kurdish-based insurgents such as Democratic Union Party (PYD), its military branch, Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YPG), and later the United States-sponsored Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).<sup>10</sup>

While the Civil War left Syria in a vacuum of power, the opportunity was exploited by one of the strongest violent non-state actors (VNSAs), the Islamic State, to expand their sphere of influence. First advanced to North-eastern Syria by 2014, ISIS has the objective to bring together all Sunni Muslims into one Caliphate rooted in an extreme interpretation of Sharia law. With the additional existence of ISIS, the crisis gained more concern from the international communities, including Turkey who responded with military interventions and the United States (US) who, originally, stood alongside their NATO-ally, Turkey.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Geraint Hughes, "Syria and the perils of proxy warfare," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 25, no. 3 (2014): 523-527.

<sup>11</sup> Ufuk Ulutas, *The State of Savagery: ISIS in Syria* (Istanbul, Turkey: SETA, 2016), 138-140.

## 1.2 Problem Identification

### 1.2.1 Description of the Problem

Despite the aforementioned US-Turkish cooperation in the Syrian Crisis, in October 2019 Washington decided to turn their back against Ankara. This is reflected through the US decision to condemn the third Turkish military operation in Syria, known as the Operation Peace Spring. In his statement, Trump declared that the Turkish operation in Syria is threatening all efforts that have been mustered to defeat ISIS. Simultaneously, he also claimed that the OPS is threatening the US national security and foreign policy in the Syrian Crisis, innocent civilians, regional stability as well as security, and international peace.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, in his statement, the US Secretary of Defence at that time, Mark T. Esper also claimed that the conduct OPS had damaged the US-Turkish relations.<sup>13</sup> He further stated that Turkey has indiscriminately taken innocent civilians' lives, destroyed public facilities, and conducted targeted killing against ethnic minorities, Kurds.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting from Turkish action in Syria, the US imposed sanctions on Turkey. Released on October 14, 2019, the sanction is included in the Executive Order (EO) number 13984. In the EO, Trump stated that the punishment

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<sup>12</sup> "Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to the Situation in and in Relation to Syria," *The White House*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/10/12/notice-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-the-situation-in-and-in-relation-to-syria-2/> (accessed on March 7, 2023).

<sup>13</sup> "Statement by Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper Regarding Turkey, Syria Border Actions," *US Department of Defense*, October 14, 2019, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/1988372/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-dr-mark-t-esper-regarding-turkey-syria-border/> (accessed on March 7, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

is targeted against Turkish government officials who will receive financial punishment, block of entry to Washington, and freeze of assets and properties.<sup>15</sup>

The US position toward Turkish military interventions in Syria then becomes more complex as the superpower cannot seem to establish their stance. While Washington decided to turn their back on Ankara, the US also indirectly gave support for Turkey to carry out their OPS. This is shown through Trump's policy to withdraw US special forces from Syria after a phone call with Erdoğan where he announced the plan of conducting OPS.<sup>16</sup> In his statement, Trump further stated that the US troops will neither get involved nor take any side in the OPS.<sup>17</sup> By extracting all their forces from Syria, the United States then left their ally, Kurdish militants, in a much weaker position against the Turkish troops. Moreover, scholars also argued that this policy was a way to clear paths for Turkey to successfully carry out their missions in eliminating Kurdish insurgencies.<sup>18</sup>

Other than through indirect "assistance" in the conduct of OPS, Washington also indicates a willingness to protect Ankara from Kurdish insurgency through joint cooperation to build the Safe Zone in North-eastern Syria. With this agreement, the US promised to prevent Kurdish insurgencies from crossing the

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<sup>15</sup> "Treasury Developing New Authorities to Target Turkey for Any Potential Human Rights Abuses or Destabilising Actions in Syria," *US Department of the Treasury*, October 11, 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm791> (accessed on March 7, 2023); Wojciech Michnik and Spyridon Plakoudas, "The US Withdrawal and The Scramble of Syria," *European, Middle East, and African Affairs* (2020): 34; Zanutti and Thomas, Op. Cit., 3; 6.

<sup>16</sup> "Statement from the Press Secretary," *The White House*, October 6, 2019, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-85/> (accessed on March 7, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Dania Koleilat Khatib and Ayman Saleh Al-Barasneh, "US–Turkish Relations in the Light of the Syrian Crisis (2011–2019)," in *The Syrian Crisis: Effects on the Regional and International Relations*, ed. Dania Koleilat Khatib (Singapore: Springer, 2021), 23.

Euphrates Shield and marching toward Turkish territory.<sup>19</sup> Reflecting from all their actions, the US foreign policy stances toward Turkish military interventions in Syria can be best described as a coin with two sides. On one hand, Washington announced that they do condemn the third Turkish military operation, OPS. However, on the other hand, they also allow OPS to have a greater chance of victory through troops withdrawal and protection from their own-backed Kurdish militants.

### **1.2.2 Problem Limitation**

Noting the enormous number of actors involved in the Syrian Civil War, this work focuses on the United States and Turkey. Additionally, this paper only discusses events from 2016 until 2019. The chosen years became the most appropriate time to be analysed because it was when Ankara conducted their military operations in Syria. Within the same time, US also adopted foreign policies to support two Turkish military operations while condemning the third one. In this timeframe, the US can also be seen to still give indirect support for OPS.

### **1.2.3 Research Question**

Taking in note that the United States only supported two initial Turkish military operations in Syria while condemning the third one, yet indirectly contributing to the success of OPS, the analysis of this paper talks about the change of US's foreign policies to Turkish military operations. In doing so, this paper provides an answer of **“Why did the United States change their foreign policy approach toward Turkish military interventions in Syria?”**

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<sup>19</sup> Galip Dalay and E. Fuat Keyman, “Turkish-U.S. Strategic Decoupling Through the Prism of Syria,” *The German Marshall Fund of The United States*, no. 4 (2019): 2.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

#### **1.3.1 Research Objectives**

The objective of this research is to explain how domestic and international elements can influence the change of the United States foreign policy toward Turkish military operations in Syria. In order to do so, this thesis utilises the framework of neo-classical realism which focuses on the systemic stimuli as the international factor and images of the leader, strategic culture, as well as state-society relations as the domestic factors.

#### **1.3.2 Function of the Research**

Through this paper, the writer wishes to provide a new perspective in understanding the change of the US foreign policy toward Turkish military interventions in Syria (2016-2019). By utilising the theory of neoclassical realism, this paper seeks to explain how domestic and international elements can influence the change of the US foreign policy toward Turkish military operations. Nonetheless, this academic paper is written with the hope that it can give reference on studies exploring similar topics. Lastly, this work is made to fulfil the requirements for the writer's undergraduate degree in International Relations.

### **1.4 Literature Review**

Various perspectives have been proposed to explain the change of US foreign policy toward Turkish operations in Syria. While several scholars argue that Turkey's alliance with Russia has been the determinant factor in such change, others argue that the US's growing dependency with YPG and SDF became the main reason for their policy change. Additionally, there are also assumptions upon the



fact that the main reason for the US's opposition to OPS was due to the stained history of Turkish-US relations. Another point of view that is also worthwhile to be considered then stated that the change in US foreign policy was due to different perceptions the United States and Turkey hold over the status of YPG and SDF as terrorist organisations and affiliation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The arguments of the first group of scholars are well presented by Şener Aktürk and Seçkin Köstem who argue that Turkey-Russia relations are polluting the cooperation between Erdoğan and the US. They also believe that Erdoğan's decision to stay closer to Russia, compared to the US, has become the reason behind the US decision to stop supporting Turkish operations in Syria. Moreover, taking into note the confrontational ties between the US and Russia, it is not unpredictable that Turkey's tight dependence on Putin eventually cost them to lose the trust of one of their biggest allies, the hegemony state, the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Different from the previous group, Kilic Kanat, Kadir Ustun, Ahmet K. Han, and Behlül Özkan argued that the US's alignment with Kurdish militants is hurting the cooperation between US and Turkey in Syria. On one hand, the US themselves are well aware of the volatile relations their ally, Turkey, had with the Kurdish. However, as the US desperately needed Kurdish militants to become their right hand in fighting ISIS, the hegemony decided to rely on them and gave them

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<sup>20</sup> Şener Aktürk, "Relations between Russia and Turkey Before, During, and After the Failed Coup of 2016," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 21, no. 4 (2019): 97-98; Köstem, "Russian-Turkish cooperation in Syria," 796-797.

weaponry support. Hence, intimate ties that US had with YPG and SDF then argued as one of the main reasons behind US foreign policy change to condemn the OPS.<sup>21</sup>

The third group of scholars which include Ayşe Ömür Atmaca and Didem Buhari Gulmez argue that the US foreign policy change happened due to the volatile relationship between the US and Turkey. They stated that relations between the two countries had too many stumbling blocks which resulted in mistrust. Tracing back to their historical relations, such as the conflict of Iraq, these two countries were found to stand on different sides. Though normalisation efforts were initiated, it cannot be denied that the cynical tone accumulated throughout the past time has impacted the foreign policies of Turkey and the US, including the one that Washington adopted in regards to Turkish interventions in Syria.<sup>22</sup>

Lastly, Mustafa Kibaroglu and Feryal Cubukcu Can claim that the change of US foreign policy toward Turkey's operations in Syria was due to the contradicting view both countries have toward the status of YPG. For Ankara, the YPG was indistinct from the PKK, in which both of them are terrorist organisations. Meanwhile, the US did not recognize YPG as an affiliation of PKK. The US also assured the public that YPG were different from PKK, which led them to recognize the Kurdish militant group as an entity with political rights. Hence, noting that the

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmet K. Han and Behlül Özkan, "Turkey and United States in Syria: Allies, Frenemies, or Worse?" *The German Marshall Fund of The United States* (2017): 1; Kanat and Ustun, "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," 92.

<sup>22</sup> Ayşe Ömür Atmaca, "Turkey-US Relations (2009–2016): A troubled partnership in a troubled world?" in *Turkish Foreign Policy: International Relations, Legality and Global Reach*, ed. Pınar Gözen Ercan (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 64;72; Didem Buhari Gulmez, "The resilience of the US–Turkey alliance: divergent threat perceptions and worldviews," *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 26, Issue 4 (2020): 477-478; 480.

main target of OPS was Kurdish militants in Syria, the US's decision to officially oppose the operation then based on the fact that they did not see YPG as terrorists.<sup>23</sup>

Different from all the aforementioned works, this paper provides a new perspective in viewing the issue. While all the aforementioned scholars argue that the change of United States foreign policy was caused by either domestic or international factors, by utilising the theory of neo-classical realism, this paper demonstrates that the US's foreign policy shifted due to the contestation of both domestic and international factors. In detail, there are several domestic variables that contribute to such change, including leaders' images, strategic culture, and state-society relations. These domestic variables are accompanied with international factors which focus on the systemic stimuli and clarity of threats in the international system. The argument itself is slightly in line with the previously mentioned journals stating that the change of US foreign policy was caused by the existence of Turkish-Russian partnership as well as US-Turkish difference standpoint on the status of YPG as a terrorist organisation.

## **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.5.1 Neo-Classical Realism Theory of Foreign Policy**

Quite different from other schools of realism, neoclassical realism (NCR) proposed a transmission belt model in seeing countries' foreign policy choices. Through this model, foreign policies are seen as results or middle grounds of

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<sup>23</sup> Feryal Cubukcu Can, "Factors That Cause the Divergence of Views Between Turkey and The US Over YPG," in *Terrorism '19 Conference Proceedings*, ed. Özgür Öztürk (Istanbul: Dakam Yayınları, 2019), 41-52; Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey and The United States: Staunch Allies or Rivals?" *The Strategist* (2018): 12.

contestation between international and domestic factors. Emphasising the importance of international stimuli, NCR implemented a “top-down” approach. This implies that states’ foreign policies are made as responses to the change or threat in international realms. Even so, systemic changes did not leave states with a single choice of action. Instead, states are left with several responses which need to be suited to their domestic conditions. In this process, the NCR believes that various domestic factors play a role in leading states to adopt certain foreign policy.<sup>24</sup>

First coined by Gideon Rose, the interpretation of neo-classical realism continued to develop and varied. Specifically, scholars still have an on-going debate on what can be understood as the international and domestic factors in the NCR itself. For instance, a group of scholars including Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman argued that the international factor refers to the condition of the international system and the domestic factors include image leader, states-society relations, states domestic institution, and strategic culture. Quite different from that, several other scholars also firmly believed that the domestic factor should also include the history or past relations between the actors involved in the issue.<sup>25</sup> Last but not least, Nicholas Kitchen also provided his own distinct set of domestic factors which include the state’s domestic coherence, leaders’ intellectual status, and decision-making process in the state’s very own national level.<sup>26</sup>

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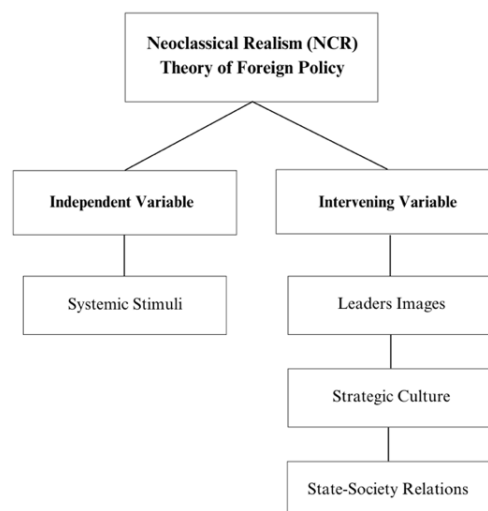
<sup>24</sup> Gideon Rose. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics*, Vol. 51, Issue 1 (1998): 145-146; Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Foulon, “Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 17, no. 4 (2015): 639.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Kitchen, “Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neo-classical realist model of grand strategy formation,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (2010): 130-133.

Without neglecting all other varieties of the NCR, this thesis uses the concept of NCR proposed by Jeffrey Taliaferro, Steven Lobell, and Norrin Ripsman. In their work, these authors argued that there are two factors contributing to countries' foreign policy. These include independent variables and intervening variables. While the first refers to the systemic stimuli, the latter refers to domestic attributes that influence foreign policy making process. Standing independently with their own influence on countries foreign policy, these domestic attributes then include four things such elites' perceptions, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions. While not neglecting the importance of other elements, just like other works that combined several of domestic factors in the NCR, this analysis itself focuses on the first three variables (details in Figure 1.1) due to the fact that they display quite significant roles in influencing the US's foreign policy in condemning Turkish military operations in Syria.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 1.1: Neo-Classical Realism Theory Mapping**



Source: Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell (2016)

<sup>27</sup> Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 31-33.

### **1.5.1.1 International Factors (Independent Variables)**

As aforementioned, one of the international elements that contributes to the states' foreign policy is the systemic stimuli or the condition of the international system. In NCR, systemic stimuli stress the importance of clarity, referring to the clarity of signals or information that states retrieve from the international system, including the clarity of threats. Clear threat then can come from various sources, including from other revisionist states who show desire to harm another state's core interests. For NCR, the systemic stimuli become one of the permissive conditions in shaping states' behaviour because such conditions permit the existence of countries' foreign policy. This implies that without systemic stimuli, states will not be in situations where they need to give responses through foreign policies. Moreover, NCR also believes that states will eventually be compelled to give responses to the systemic stimuli once it poses threats to their interest.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Balance of Interest (BoI)*

Noting that the concept of Balance of Interest (BoI) can explain what are the clear threats for certain states when they are facing pressures from the international system, this thesis uses the BoI concept, specifically their classification of states. First introduced by Randall L. Schweller, this concept argues that states' actions in the international realm are driven by the nature of their interest and profits they want to achieve. In Schweller words, states' policies will depend on the "interests of the units and the structures within which they are embedded". Reflecting from this belief, Schweller recognizes two main categories of state, the status-quo and

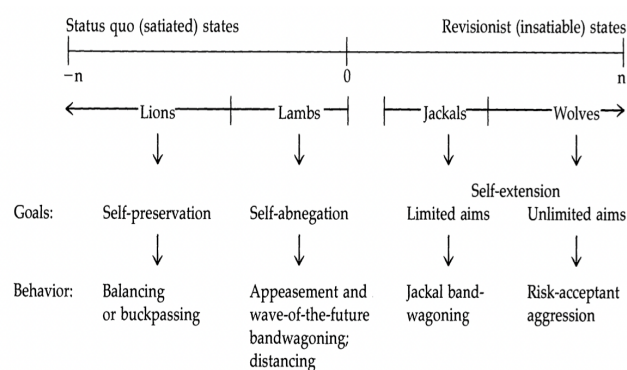
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<sup>28</sup> Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, 13-14; 34; 46-57.

revisionist. Whilst the first refers to states that are satisfied with and wish to maintain both the current distribution of power and their position in the international realm, the latter represents those who believe that the current system is intolerable and therefore, has the ambition to change the status-quo.<sup>29</sup>

Schweller further divides states into four sub-categories (see figure 1.2). The first group is lions, which include those who are willing to pay a heavy price to protect the current international system and want to preserve both themselves as well as the system. Due to their high degree of satisfaction with the current condition, they are categorised as status-quo states and most of the time composed of great powers who first initiated the international realm's system. The second group is lambs, consisting of states who do not want to pay for either maintaining or changing the system, making them also fall in the category of status-quo states. Lamb states then most of the time decided to bandwagon with the lions to guarantee their survivability in the world system.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 1.2: States Categories in Balance of Interest Logic**



Source: Schweller (1994)

<sup>29</sup> Patrick James, "Balance of Interest," in *Realism and International Relations: A Graphic Turn Toward Scientific Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 420; Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (1994): 75; 99.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-103.

In the meantime, Schweller represented the revisionist groups by jackals and wolves. The jackal states, firstly, refers to countries who are willing to take risks to change the international system but also value what they possess. Though jackals often have the ambition to change the status-quo, they are also afraid of losing what they already have. Given their situation, jackals are states who wish to reshape the international distribution of power but are not willing to pay a price for it. Hence, jackal states mostly decided to bandwagon with the wolves and adopt an action that is known as "jackal-style band wagoning". The wolf states then include those who will do anything at their disposal to change the international system, even if failure to do so may result in extinction. With their unlimited aims, wolves tend to adopt the mindset of having nothing to lose, but everything to gain, leading them to pursue large-scale efforts to change the status-quo in the international realm.<sup>31</sup>

#### **1.5.1.2 Domestic Factors (Intervening Variables)**

##### Leaders Images

Whilst the international variables focus solely on systemic stimuli, the domestic factors include four elements in it. The first domestic variable is leader images. As countries foreign policies are decided by the Foreign Policy Executives (FPEs), the beliefs and images that these people hold are important in influencing foreign policy. The beliefs held by the FPEs, accompanied by their images, eventually guide their actions in responding to the "outside world." As images represent leaders' core beliefs, each FPE is believed to have their own values that become their cognitive filter in adopting foreign policy. Among all other cognitive

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-104.



factors, neo-classical realists argue that leader's personality and their Operational Code can be acknowledged as some of the most important ones.<sup>32</sup>

#### Personality Traits and Operational Code

To analyse how leaders' images can influence the US foreign policy toward Turkish incursions in Syria, this paper uses the six personality traits identified by Margaret Hermann. In her work, Hermann argued that there are six traits that influence leaders' actions in the international politics, including the in-group bias and leaders' need of power. On her early works, Hermann refers the in-group bias as nationalism, indicating that leaders with high in in-group bias will perceive their countries' interests as central compared to others. Furthermore, leaders with a strong in-group bias put emphasis on sustaining their countries' superiority in the international realm. In the meantime, leaders need of power refers to their desire to prove the power of their country. The need of power then equals the tendency to engage in strong actions and the tendency to put more concern in preserving their reputation. Alongside personality traits, another important thing to analyse leaders' images are their Operational Codes, referring to a set of "master beliefs" that guide leaders in determining their actions when faced by certain issues.<sup>33</sup>

#### Strategic Culture

Beside leader images, another domestic variable that can determine countries' foreign policy is their strategic culture. The concept itself is defined as a

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<sup>32</sup> Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, 61-64.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret G. Hermann, "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (1980): 9-10;22; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, 64.

set of beliefs, attitudes, and patterns that shape their foreign policies.<sup>34</sup> In a different perspective, strategic culture refers to fundamental beliefs that determine how states are going to carry out their actions to achieve their political goals.<sup>35</sup> In NCR, strategic culture was then believed to shape countries' foreign policy in responding to certain phenomena.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, since each country has its distinct strategic culture, though they are faced with the same threat, countries will most likely have different approaches manifested through their foreign policies.<sup>37</sup>

### State-Society Relations

The last variable is state-society relations that focuses on opinion and support in the national level given to certain foreign policies.<sup>38</sup> The importance of domestic opinions and support is reflected in the belief that it will be nearly impossible, for states to conduct foreign policies when they are showered with opposition from home.<sup>39</sup> This is because resources a country needs to conduct policies are held by citizens. Therefore, when policy options are opposed by the resource-holders, there are heavy costs that FPEs need to suffer if they insist on pursuing such policies.<sup>40</sup> Given these, the domestic support determines an "acceptable" zone of foreign policy where the governments can act upon.<sup>41</sup>

### Pluralist Model of Foreign Policy

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<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 4, no.3 (2002): 93.

<sup>35</sup> Carnes Lord, "American Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, no, 3 (1985): 271.

<sup>36</sup> Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy," 97.

<sup>37</sup> Rashed Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture: A "Cultural" Understanding of War," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (2009): 73.

<sup>38</sup> Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, 70-71.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Kitchen, "Systemic pressures and domestic ideas," 132; 142.

To demonstrate the influence of state-society relations in countries' foreign policy choice, this paper uses a pluralist model of foreign policy. The pluralist model itself stresses the importance of countries' domestic political process in shaping their foreign policy outcome.<sup>42</sup> Within this framework, the pluralists believe that foreign policies are seen as a product shaped through the interest of several parts of societies.<sup>43</sup> The pluralist model then tries to emphasise that countries' foreign policy actions are not merely upon the hand of the executives or the leaders, but also interest groups such as the congressional committees, scholars, and, the citizens.<sup>44</sup> Given the number of people that contribute in foreign policy making process, the pluralists believe that countries' foreign policies should reflect what different groups in societies wish for.<sup>45</sup>

### **1.6 Research Methods & Data Collection Technique**

This paper uses primary source of data collected from government publications, statements, and press briefings. Other than that, this thesis also utilises secondary sources including books, journal articles, reports, existing statistics, and credible news related to the change of US's foreign policy toward Turkish military operations in Syria. The collected data is analysed through analytic induction method, defined as an approach where the researcher seeks explanations for certain

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "Pluralism and Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 52, no. 2 (1974): 263-267.

<sup>43</sup> Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 9; William E. Connolly, "A World of Becoming," in *Democracy and Pluralism The Political Thought of William E. Connolly*, ed. Allan Finlayson (Oxon: Routledge, 2010): 226; Piers Robinson, "The Role of Media and Public Opinion," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 187.

<sup>44</sup> Claude J. Burtenshaw, "The Political Theory of Pluralist Democracy," *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 21, issue 4 (1968): 581.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenfeld, "Pluralism and Policy," 263-267.

issues by collecting data. The data collection then will only cease after no inconsistencies with the hypothesis was found. Analytic induction method then conducted with steps as follow, formulates a research question, creates a hypothesis, collect data, and end the data collection, once the hypothesis is confirmed.<sup>46</sup>

### **1.7 Chapter Organisation**

To provide a comprehensive analysis and answer the research question, this academic paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which includes the problem description, problem identification, problem limitation, research question, function of the research, literature review, theoretical framework, and research methodology. Moving on, the chapter two consists of the general outlook and details of US foreign policy toward Turkish military operations in Syria. The analysis then continued in the third chapter, focusing on how international and domestic factors influence the change of US's foreign policy toward Turkish intervention in Syria. Additionally, this chapter will elaborate the contestation between international and domestic factors and how such contestation impacts the US's policy toward Turkish military interventions in Syria. Lastly, this thesis is closed with the conclusion where the writer summarises findings elaborated in previous chapters and provide an answer to the research question.

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<sup>46</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 566-567; Lisa M. Given, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (California: SAGE, 2008), 191.