NEOCLASSICAL REALISM IN ANALYSING CRISIS MANAGEMENT: THE
CASE OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY CRISIEST

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the pros and cons of neo-classical realism as a theoretical approach to analyze the decision-making and crisis management processes in foreign policy. Neoclassical realism is an emerging school of foreign policy theories, which integrates international system and domestic political environment to explain states' foreign policy behavior. It identifies a state's interest, identity and preference as an intervening variable between the international system and foreign policy behavior. As Schweller (2003) points out, it also brings the statesman back in. Relying on the propositions of neoclassical realism, this paper aims to share its early findings on how leader’s perception or belief affects foreign policy behavior and how we measure this relationship; which impacts the domestic groups or factors have on the decision-making process and how the decision-makers assess the international system and the power of state while managing the crisis.

Introduction

The term neoclassical realism first appeared in Gideon Rose’s 1998 article named “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy” in which he presented a new approach to explain foreign policy behavior. Neoclassical realism aims to update classical and neorealist approach by incorporating domestic and individual level with systemic factors for foreign policy analysis. Neoclassical realists argue that a state’s foreign policies are driven by its relative power capabilities in the international system. The effect of such power

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capabilities, however, is indirect and complex, and how they are translated into foreign policies or security strategies may depend on various intervening factors within the state itself. Therefore foreign policymakers are constrained by the domestic institutional structure, as well as by external threats and opportunities (Rose, 1998, 153). Furthermore neoclassical realism asserts that the basic parameters of a state’s foreign policy are set up by its relative material power and its place in the international system. However, the material capacity of a state does not turn into a specific foreign policy behavior, which is mediated by the political leaders, and elites whose perceptions of power can be more important than the actual power of a state. State power is defined in neoclassical realism as a state’s ability to extract or mobilize resources as determined by its institutions as well as nationalism and ideology (Rose, 149). For this study, neoclassical realism is the most relevant theoretical approach, which could probably bring the most meaningful contribution to Turkish foreign policy behavior model during crises. This is because neoclassical seeks to explain the behavior of individual states’ behavior by adding some immaterial variables. (Rose, 1998, 144) As Zakaria stated, “a good account of a nation’s foreign policy should include systemic, domestic and other influences, specifying what aspects of a policy can be explained by what factors” (Zakaria, 1992, 198) The result of this approach leads a theory which includes three steps: the independent variable (state’s relative power in the international system), the intervening variable (domestic level “transmission belt”, through which systemic pressures are filtered) and the dependent variable or the foreign policy outcome.

All in all, in order to understand the connection between the relative power and the foreign policy of a state an in-dept analysis is needed which individual and domestic factors must take into consideration.

This paper examines state’s foreign policy behavior during crisis within the framework of neoclassical realism that emphasizes the importance of individual and domestic
Neoclassical realism stresses the role played by both independent and intervening variables, which provide a distinct methodology while combining different factors for analysis of foreign policy behavior. Therefore intervening variables presents a useful ground for better understandings and predictions of foreign policy particularly during the crisis.

Neoclassical realism aims to explain a state’s foreign policy behavior with systemic pressures and unit level variables such as domestic political structures and decision makers’ perceptions as intervening variables. This study describes this theory by explaining decision-making process of Turkey foreign policy crisis management for 90 years. In this study, neoclassical realist theory incorporates variables that include leaders and domestic constraints on decision-making process for better understanding and explaining foreign policy behavior during Turkey’s foreign policy crises. Neoclassical realism illustrates foreign policy behavior more than structural theories and unveils behavior patterns by combining domestic and individual level into the analysis. Moreover neoclassical realism draws appropriate foreign policy analysis focusing on micro level by looking at individual political leader behavior and domestic constraints. (Devlen, 2009)

- How the beliefs of leaders affect their behavior? How we can measure them? What can influence the decision-makers opinion on power situation of their states?
- Which domestic factors affect leaders’ assessments of foreign policy challenges?
- How do state’s institutions, elites involve decision-making process during crises?
- What kind of external/internal stimuli does Turkey pursue its policy during crises period?
- How do ideology and national identity affect crises management? How can Turkey’s crises behavior be explained by independent and intervening variables?

These kinds of questions help us to explain short-term foreign policy behavior and to understand, predict state’s behavior particularly during crises.
The analysis of foreign policy behavior during crisis is a matter of short time analysis therefore relative power capabilities explain foreign policy outcomes in the long run rather than foreign policy behavior. (Devlen, 2009) Over the long term, international political outcomes generally reflect the actual distribution of power among states. But the short term policies that states pursue are not predictable based upon a purely systemic theory. (Lobell/Ripsman/Taliaferro, 2009, 18) Moreover, decision makers have limited time and resources for choosing any behavior so that their responsibilities become pivotal during crisis. All in all, neoclassical realism argues that the competitive international system remains as a determining factor of foreign policy it also posits individual and domestic factors for a better policy analysis. In addition, political leaders and elites do not always have the complete freedom to mobilize or manage all resources, which they have. Therefore the analysis must take into consideration the strength and structure of the states relative to their societies because these influence of national resources which can be allocated to foreign policy. (Rose, 147) Different from other realist approach which power and security are in center of state’s behavior, neoclassical realism argues that states react to some uncertainties of the international anarchy by trying to control and shape their external environment. States will want to increase their influence by using all means possible. Therefore the more power they have, the more influence they will seek. (Rose, 1998, 152)

Considering all that was stated before, the analysis of Turkish foreign policy crises behavior and crises management process could be analyzed through the neoclassical realist perspective in a meaningful way. The structures of international system such as bipolarity, unipolarity and Turkey’s relative material capabilities; its position in international system are shaping factors its foreign policy behavior in a general way. In addition to this, developments or changes inside Turkey such as government type, ideological discourse, the features of
political leaders and their perceptions present a meaningful way to explain foreign policy behavior.

**Neoclassical Realist Model and Crisis Behavior**

As stated before neoclassical realism presents a great foreign policy behavior model which includes three steps (independent, intervening and dependent variables). In this study intervening variables are domestic and individual factors utilizing in analyzing foreign policy behavior during crisis. Neoclassical realism gives intervening variables special place to explain short-term foreign policy behavior of a state but particularly crisis period. In this period individual agency and domestic constraints help to understand, explain and predict foreign policy behavior. These intervening variables vary for each foreign policy behavior, some variables as follow; leaders and their perceptions about international system, political survival, domestic structures, ideological perspectives-discourse, financial, political and military capacities, societal structures and its features, culture-identity and ideological elements, government type, administrative and legal structures. With independent variables these intervening variables present a useful methodology for foreign policy behavior. This paper’s crisis behavior model is consistent with neoclassical realism and will be detailed in this section.

One of the main concepts of neoclassical realism is the impact of the international system upon the state’s foreign policy. According to this theory, states’ foreign policies cannot move beyond the limit and the opportunities of the international system. Hence, a good foreign policy theory must examine the effect of the international system upon the national behavior, as “the most powerful generalizable characteristic of a state in international relations is its relative position in the international system” (Rose, 151). Regarding ninety-years Turkish foreign policy crises period, it is important to underlie the both recent changes and long term changes of international system. Independent variables are used in this paper as
follow; the basic characteristic of international system during crisis (Unipolar, bipolar or multipolar international system as long term changes, the US foreign policy, global financial crises, critical situation in the Middle East as recent changes), regional structure, issues in international agenda, leading actors (states, international or regional organizations, nongovernmental organization) in international political system.

Neoclassical realists analyze the systemic pressures and intervening variables such as domestic structures and political leader as determining factors foreign policy (Devlen, 2009). Neoclassical realists such as Randall Schweller (1998, 2004), Fareed Zakaria (1998), Thomas Christensen (1996), and William Wohlforth (1993) all argue, “systemic pressures are filtered through intervening domestic variables to produce foreign policy behavior” (Schweller 2004, 164). Furthermore neoclassical realism particularly theorizes about foreign policy behavior and states’ respond to changes their relative power positions (Rose, 1998). Rose and Schweller claim that neoclassical realism brings the statesman back in which structural realism disregard. Zakaria also posits that statesmen not states are determining factors to shape foreign policy behavior. (Zakaria, 1998)

Neoclassical realism centers political leader and domestic factors into the foreign policy analysis, therefore this kind of micro level analysis gives a useful model for crisis management of states. This paper makes a meaningful contribution of Turkish crisis management model that decision makers whom constrained with domestic and systemic factors while choosing alternative policies during crises period. Therefore all these independent and intervening variables are applied to explain 33 Turkish foreign policy crisis behaviors.
Decision Making - Crisis Behavior Variables in Neoclassical Realist Model

Source: Created by author using diagram in Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy”, World Politics, Vol 51, N. 1, October 1998, p.154
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</th>
<th>INTERVENING VARIABLES</th>
<th>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  The characteristics of international system during crises</td>
<td>Leaders, national structures, regime type, ideological perspectives/discourses, financial, political and military capacities, societal structure and its features, culture-identity elements, government type and its characteristics, administrative-legal features of a state</td>
<td>Determination of foreign policy behavior after threat which violates national values and priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional order/structure,</td>
<td>Any Regional alliances? Leading actor-leader in the region? Regional ideological-cultural structure? Regional agenda differentiated from international agenda?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization of the region, characteristics of the region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Distinctive/important issues in international politics</td>
<td>National agenda, national or international issues, the media’s role to shape agenda? TV, the Internet, social media, sosyal etc</td>
<td>Applying a high strategy which includes war option. Get support from international actors within the framework of international law, refrain from a war option by utilizing a strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading actors in international political system (state, international organization, nongovernmental organization)</td>
<td>Personal/cognitive characteristics of leaders, efficient actors on decision-making process (the president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament, chief of general staff, minister of foreign affairs, minister of defense, minister of justice, intelligence service), opposing parties and their leaders, interest or pressure groups, mass media</td>
<td>Military and diplomatic initiatives can be applied during crisis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turkey’s foreign policy crisis

According to Charles Hermann and Michael Brecher, crises can be classified in two different levels: foreign policy crisis and international crisis. Foreign policy crisis (FPC) occur between states and these are actor level crisis which at least one side is a state however international crisis (IC) are system level crisis and they are more complex in which include many states and organizations for decision making process.

From 1923 the foundation of Turkish Republic to 2014, Turkey has managed 33 foreign policy crises. For each crisis independent and intervening variables have differentiated, in some crises domestic factors or individual agent would become significant while others systemic factors do. Therefore it could be best foreign policy analysis to combine two levels to explain crisis policy behavior. Each crisis is unique and needed to analyzed within its genuine conditions. This paper tests whether neoclassical realism is suitable to analyze both each crisis and crisis management.

Turkey’s foreign policy crisis behavior and management can be explained within neoclassical realism framework while looking at different international system or different government period in the same international system. At the same time even though regional agenda is different from systemic one, neoclassical realism can present a behavior model with intervening variables. Therefore micro level analysis rather than systemic is more suitable analysis for a short time policy behavior particularly during crises.

Regarding Turkish foreign policy crises, it must be underlined the importance of the changes on the global stage such as balance of powers period, World War II, Cold War, post-Cold War era, which have all impacted Turkey’s crisis management behavior and its relation with global or regional actors. Each international system has a different characteristics and their involvement to crisis have different consequences. Table 1 shows four international
systems and 33 crises with opponent countries, which Turkey has faced. As seen from the table most crises have been occurred during the Cold War period the result of ideological impacts.

**Table 1: TFP Crises and International System (1919-2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International System</th>
<th>Number of Crisis</th>
<th>Opponent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multipolarity: 1918-1939</td>
<td><em>Balance of powers</em></td>
<td>Great Britain, France, Iran, Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II: 1939-1945</td>
<td></td>
<td>MV Struma <em>(no directly opponent state)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Polycentrism: 1963-1989</em></td>
<td>Cyprus(GCA), US, Greece, Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unipolarity: 1990-</td>
<td><em>Globalization</em></td>
<td>Armenia, US, Greece, Syria, Israel, Cyprus(GCA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However all crises may not related to systemic factors, there are also some foreign policy crisis, which mostly affected by regional, domestic or individual factors. Victories or traumas in the past can trigger a crisis within the leader or nation’s perception particularly states which share border mostly affected with these factors. Turkey’s foreign policy crisis, the most problem have lived with Greece due to either violation of agreement or no consensus between two states. In our crisis behavior model, neoclassical realism yields a suitable ground
to include regional dynamics as independent variable. Region may be crucial factor to effect foreign policy behavior of a state, which exists in it. Both states and political actors can be constrained and influenced by their regional factors. Regional agenda could be different from international one which states are affected heavily. Therefore, interactivity of both sides shapes foreign policy behavior that decision maker must take into consideration of regional developments for choosing behavior and outcomes of this behavior reshape region effectively. It could be a good contribution to add regional dynamics for foreign policy analysis of Turkey.

It is the best way to examine TFPC management looking at both systemic and domestic even individual factors. With this methodology and testing, neoclassical realism gives an appropriate ground for explaining crisis and crisis management of Turkey.

**Conclusion**

This study aims to show Turkish foreign policy crises management and behavior by using neoclassical realism framework. Systemic factors and regional dynamics are employed as independent variable while individual political actors and domestic factors are utilized to describe Turkish foreign policy crises management model.

Initially 33 foreign policy crises are assigned in this paper (some international crises were not included due to Turkey is not a part of them) since 1923 to 2014. Then a crises model behavior is created to explain crises management process by using neoclassical realism’s main concept such as perception of political leader, ideology as intervening variable and regional dynamics as independent variables. Lastly, we believe that, for a better foreign policy behavior model during crises must include systemic, regional, domestic and individual factors which our theoretical approach provide this in a meaningful way. This study aims to indicate that all variables are interrelated therefore they must take into consideration for analysis of foreign policy behavior.
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