

Preface

This book is, first and foremost derived from of my doctoral dissertation, which I prepared and defended between 2019 and 2025 at Prague University of Economics and Business in Prague, Czechia. At the same time, it is the product of an academic journey whose roots stretch from the streets of Istanbul to those of Prague a journey that was at times deeply enjoyable, and at others, considerably demanding.

When I was awarded the overseas postgraduate scholarship provided by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey under Law No. 1416, I had the opportunity to study and live in Central Europe, and particularly in Czechia. This experience not only allowed me to pursue my academic work in a new geographical and intellectual setting, but also significantly reshaped the way I understood the world and approached academic inquiry. As I built a life in a new country, a new geographical setting, and among new people, the observations I made, my reflections on the region's political developments, and my efforts to follow the pulse of current affairs gradually became the foundation of my curiosity about the subject of this book.

Central Europe is a region of particular importance to the study of international politics, not only because of its geopolitical position but also because of its strong historical memory. Having historically been a crossroads of competing power struggles, the region and its countries have experienced major historical upheavals, including occupations, wars, the ideological divisions created by the Cold War, popular uprisings, and the reconstruction of democratic institutions. This historical experience has inevitably left its mark on the contemporary political attitudes and foreign policy preferences of the countries in the region. Particularly since the 2010s, the relationships between these countries and the European Union, as well as their positions within the Euro-Atlantic order, have attracted increasing academic attention.

Among these developments, Hungary and the position of Viktor Orbán's government within the Euro-Atlantic order became a particular subject of interest for me. At the same time, the parallels reflected in some of the crises experienced between my own country, Turkey,

and the Euro-Atlantic order during the Erdoğan era encouraged me to pursue a more in-depth study, bringing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) into the analysis as well.

During the research process, it was not only the political positions adopted by Turkey and Hungary at different points in time that attracted my attention. How these cases could be explained through the theoretical approaches of the discipline of international relations also became an important dimension of the study. The differences between the explanations offered by various theoretical approaches raised questions about where the framework provided by Neoclassical Realism is sufficient and where it requires further development. Accordingly, this study not only examines the cases of Turkey and Hungary from historical and empirical perspectives, but also discusses the explanatory capacity and limitations of Neoclassical Realism. Addressing certain ambiguities within the theoretical framework in a more systematic manner through these cases became one of the principal aims of the research and, ultimately, one of its main contributions.

At the same time, the emergence of this book cannot, of course, be attributed solely to my own curiosity and academic interest in the subject. From the beginning of this long journey to the completion of the book, the academic insights, criticisms, contributions, and personal support of many people have been of great importance to me. The overseas postgraduate scholarship provided by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey likewise constituted one of the most important forms of financial support that made this work possible.

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This book examines different historical and political periods in Turkey and Hungary through two distinct cases, while also engaging with the broader question of how these cases can be explained within the theoretical framework of international relations. I therefore hope that the book will be of interest not only to scholars working on Turkey, Hungary and NATO, but also to a broader readership interested in international relations theory and contemporary European politics.

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