

# The US-Greece Relations as a Negative Effect on the Systemic Structure of International Politics

## Uluslararası Politikanın Sistemik Yapısında Olumsuz bir Etki Olarak ABD-Yunanistan İlişkileri

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### Abstract

The relations between the US and Greece are of great importance in terms of the international political structure that emerged after the Second World War. The basis of this importance lies in the strategic advantage of Greece in the US' policy of containment the USSR and then the Russian Federation. This advantage of Greece ensured that it was supported militarily and economically by the US during the Cold War period. Greece maintained this advantage in the post-Cold War period as well. However, Greece has taken steps to show that it has different alternatives when its relations with the US were in tension both in the Cold War period and in the post-Cold War period. This political attitude of Greece triggered the US to take steps in line with the reflex of protecting the alliance relationship. Thus, the US initiated a political loop that could shake the balance of the structure in the way of managing the distribution of capabilities in favor of Greece. This policy of the US has the potential to disrupt the alliance structure that emerged after the Second World War. In this study, the negative effects of the US-Greece relations on the structure will be analyzed with the focus on the distribution of capabilities of Structural Realism.

**Keywords:** Structural Realism, the US, Greece, Distribution of Capabilities, Regional Security.

### Öz

ABD Yunanistan ilişkileri İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası ortaya çıkan uluslararası politika yapısı açısından büyük öneme sahiptir. Bu önemin temelinde ABD'nin önce SSCB ardından da Rusya Federasyonu'nu çevreleme politikasında Yunanistan'ın sahip olduğu stratejik avantaj yer almaktadır. Yunanistan'ın bu avantajı Soğuk Savaş döneminde ABD tarafından askeri ve ekonomik açıdan desteklenmesini sağlamıştır. Yunanistan bu avantajını Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde de koruma politikası yürütmüştür. Ancak Yunanistan hem Soğuk Savaş döneminde hem de Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde ABD ile ilişkileri gerginlik seyrindeyken farklı alternatiflere sahip olduğunu gösterecek adımlar atmıştır. Yunanistan'ın bu politik tutumu ABD'nin ittifak ilişkisini koruma refleksi doğrultusunda adımlar atmasını tetiklemiştir. Böylece ABD yeteneklerin dağıtımını Yunanistan lehine yönetme şeklinde yapının dengesini sarsabilecek bir politik döngüyü başlatmıştır. ABD'nin bu politikası İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası ortaya çıkan ittifak yapısını bozma potansiyeline sahiptir. Bu çalışmada Yapısal Realizmin yeteneklerin dağıtımını odağında ABD-Yunanistan ilişkilerinin yapıya dönük olumsuz etkileri analiz edilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yapısal Realizm, ABD, Yunanistan, Yeteneklerin Dağıtımı, Bölgesel Güvenlik.

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## Introduction

Does the policy of the high-influence power at the systemic level, which will shake the regional balance of power, negatively affect the structure? This question constitutes the main research question of the study. In studies based on International Political Theory, the question of what the systemic structure is rarely asked. In addition, examining the political practices of high-influence power that affect the regional balance of power is much less addressed. The US-Greece political relations constitute a very productive sample area to investigate this question. Because the US disproportionately supported Greece in the context of distribution of capabilities in order to containment of USSR and then Russian Federation, and this approach negatively affected the policies of states such as Türkiye within the alliance structure. In addition, the low self-help capacity of Greece and the conflict-friendly nature of its social forces have led to the conduct of political activities by Greece that are contrary to the political principles established by the US within the framework of NATO's Southern Flank. Thus, in the political alliance structure implemented by the USSR and then the Russian Federation for the containment of the US, Greece became a frenemy that could adopt a position against the US even though it was an ally of the US.

In the context of balance of power structure that emerged after the Second World War, the US-Greece relations gained a competitive cooperation feature within the framework of the term frenemy. The most distinctive characteristic of this situation is that in the context of distribution of capabilities, the power capacity of the US has turned towards Greece, and as a result of each crisis experienced, the US has been able to keep Greece in its sphere of influence in the balance of power. These negative effects can be seen in many examples such as the coups in Greece, the limited decision to withdraw from NATO's military wing, the effort to establish alliance relations with the Balkan States under the influence of the USSR/Russian Federation, and the brink of war with NATO member Türkiye. The study, in which these examples are discussed in detail, deals with the above-mentioned research question in two main parts on the scale of the US-Greece relations. The study differs in that analyzes the possible negative effects of the relationship revealed by the US-Greece relations on the general alliance relationship, military affairs, and the effect of the US-Greece relations on the social forces in Greece. Moreover, in the mentioned framework, distribution of capabilities analysis is rarely performed in the context of balance of power relations. In the study, the inductive method was used to define the alliance relationship. In addition, examining the distribution of capabilities effect through the balance of power systemic perspective has been supporter of the inductive method. Thus, it is aimed to contribute to the literature with both the application of the theoretical perspective and the rarely discussed scope of this application. In the first part of the study, it is defined that the sociological, economic, military and administrative structure of Greece is influenced by the US in the context of balance of power that emerged between the US and the USSR. In the second part, the effect of the Russian Federation on the balance of power despite Greece's search for a multidimensional policy and the reflections of the former Warsaw Pact member states to NATO membership on the US-Greece relations are discussed. At this stage, it is examined that the US keeps Greece in alliance despite its sociological structure with its impact on economic, military aid and administrative capacity within the framework of its distribution of capabilities. The analysis made throughout the study are based on the premise that Greece is affected by the extent of capacity utilization of the US and its choices are restricted.

### 1. Structural Problems in US-Greek Relations

Structure is one of the most controversial concepts in international political studies. In addition, there are important ontological and epistemological debates in the context of the agent-structure relationship in terms of the units that make up the structure (Wendt, 1987). In addition to these discussions, it has been argued that the guiding power of the US at the systemic level has gradually lost importance, especially after the crises in the 1970s (Keohane, 2005: 218). These approaches developed later on and became the basis for the conviction that the place and importance of the state in international politics has disappeared. However, as defined by Robert Gilpin, there are various rules that emerge in order for states to influence each other, which are wars and international agreements concluded through negotiations (1981: 36). Under these conditions, the distribution of capabilities comes into play. Waltz explains the capabilities as the attributes of the state as a unit (2010: 98). However, the distribution of capabilities is a system-wide concept (Waltz, 2010: 98). This explanation shows the importance of attributes in the mutual positioning of states as acting units in the system, that capabilities are the attributes of the unit and the definition of power is based on this (Waltz, 2010: 98). From this point of view, it can be stated that states act as a unit in the systemic structure of international politics by positioning mutually. In addition, the attributes of states as units also have a direct effect on the formation of the unit's capabilities, although they do not directly affect the distribution of capabilities at the systemic level. Under these circumstances, a problem of the distribution of capabilities arises, with the US on the one hand and Greece on the other (Kontos & Georgiou, 2023). Because the capacity of the US and the capacity of Greece are unbalanced at a level that cannot be compared in any way. In addition, Greece's capacity to apply asymmetrical power is at a very low level. In other words, there is no great power that it can create and direct through its regional sphere of influence. Instead, the search for a basis for foreign policy practices under a great power hegemony comes to the fore. The distribution of capabilities has a significant impact on the

formation of the systemic structure. Attributes are also important for the formation of this effect. However, self-help also stands out as one of the important features that affect the way of acting in the systemic structure. The breadth of the state's own capacity also directly affects the way it acts in the international political environment.

The distribution of capabilities also brings with it the possibility of producing a collaboration. This situation should lead to harmonious results both in terms of sovereignty rights and self-help (Keohane, 1986: 1). Considering in terms of Keohane's proposition, an international political sphere is seen in which the distribution of capabilities is based on self-help, but on the other hand, the sovereignty of the state is taken into account. An important part of this aid or cooperation is economic or directly related to the economy. In this respect, economic power becomes a power managed by the state for the provision of its own interests (Lacher, 2003: 526). The process of creating the structure, which is revealed by economic power, has emerged with a network of relations directed from the state that has the economic power and military power to the state that has less of them. The foreign aid and military support provided by the US played an important role in the emergence of this structure after the Second World War. This policy was also applied by the US towards Greece.

### 1.1. US-Greece Relations in the Structure Formation

The US and the USSR emerged as two important units in the reconstructed structure as the victorious and allied states of the Second World War. The devastating results of the Second World War and the fact that atomic power was at a level to be used by both the US and the USSR also revealed restrictions in the use of military power. These restrictions have also been effective in the formation of alliance relations between the parties. Walt argues that states are in balance rather than following the main threat to their independence, in addition, states do not form alliances only because of the distribution of capabilities, but states are more likely to rely on aggregated power, geographical proximity, offensive military capacity, and intentions understood by states (1992: 450). In this power projection, an alliance issue, which is especially affected by geographical proximity, remains very weak in the context of US-Greece relations. Moreover, the characteristics of the alliance between the US, which has a developed economic capacity, and Greece, which has a much weaker economic capacity, show that Walt's perspective is lacking. Economic aids, transnational influence and ideological perspective defined as of secondary importance by Walt (1992: 450) have a very high importance in US-Greece relations.

At this stage, it is important to review the formation process of the US-Greece alliance. In the international political structure that emerged at the end of the Second World War, the first example that states revealed an alliance relationship in the context of the distribution of capabilities was formed by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Britain declared to the US on February 21, 1947 that it could not provide further economic aid to Greece and Türkiye (Merrill, 2006: 31). This situation also gave the first signs of the new international political structure that emerged after the Second World War. After the Second World War, the British Empire moved away from being an effective unit in the distribution of capabilities. In this period when the balance of power was re-established, the US used its economic capacity to create an order against the USSR. The US carried out containment activities in the face of the USSR's effort to expand the sphere of influence. The preparation of the infrastructure of the political initiatives created by the US for the containment of the Soviets (Logevall, 2004:475) also caused the two allies to become rivals to each other. At the same time, while Greece was dealing with the problems of a corrupt government, it also witnessed the armed actions of socialist-influenced groups that did not recognize the results of the elections held in 1946 (Merill, 2006: 31). This situation turned into a civil war. The support of the socialist groups in Greece by the peripheral states under the influence of the USSR, such as Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria, revealed an important political problem for the US.

Greece, which has such structural problems and witnessed internal turmoil, is also insufficient in terms of administrative capacity. The Prime Minister of the time, Constantine Tsaldaris, was described as incredibly weak, stupid and venal in American reports (Merill, 2006: 31). This definition also shows the weakness of Greece as an acting unit in the international political environment. Therefore, it is a known fact that the US has a much wider range of opportunity and capabilities than Greece in terms of distribution of capabilities. In such a case, a form of political relationship emerges in which the stronger unit naturally directs the weaker unit regarding the distribution of capabilities. According to the official assessment of the US, the analysis that the communist structure could change the balance of power in eastern Europe gained strength in the early years of the Cold War (Leffler, 1984: 349). Based on this view, the US has put forward the widest possible dissemination effort by using its lead in distribution of capabilities. Thus, by filling the power vacuum created by Britain, the US started the attempt to regulate the balance of power, first with military and economic aid, and then with ideological and cultural influence imposition.

In the last years of the Second World War, the United States sought to protect and sustain its global interests on a wider scale. Based on this purpose, efforts were made to support various regions and states from Latin America to Türkiye and Greece economically and militarily (Leffler, 1984: 355-356). These efforts carried out by the US also show that it has directiveness as the most important unit in terms of the way it acts in a systemic structure and the distribution of capabilities. Within that period, the CIA produced analyzes based on the views that the USSR would not be able to control Western

Europe with military methods, that it would not be possible to control the anti-socialist groups in the region, that these attempts could lead to a war with the US that would not be won, and that it would want to achieve dominance by using political and economic means (Leffler, 1984: 359). Thus, the West and East of the European continent were somehow shared by the US and the USSR. An important obstacle for the US to create a sphere of influence against the USSR is the period that started with the conflict of communist groups in Greece with the government and turned into a civil war.

The Greek civil war is the war whether the state will take place in the Communist or in the Western Block (Nachmani, 1990: 489). The economic and social conditions of Greece in the period of turmoil until the end of the civil war in 1949 were also very decisive (Nachmani, 1990: 491). The economic loss caused by the occupation of Greece by Nazi Germany was 8,500 million dollars, which is a huge figure in the economic conditions of that period (Nachmani, 1990: 491). During the occupation period, 75% of the forests were destroyed by burning or chopping down, and 400 thousand buildings, corresponding to 23% of the total buildings in Greece, were destroyed (Nachmani, 1990: 491). In this period, when more than two thousand villages were destroyed, industry and exports stopped (Nachmani, 1990: 491). As the means of communication disappeared, Greece also faced enormous inflation (Nachmani, 1990: 491). Three quarters of the Greek merchant fleet sank, and as of September 1949, when the civil war ended, the cost of living increased 254 times compared to the pre-war period, and 2 million 400 thousand people approached the starvation limit (Nachmani, 1990: 491). In addition to the internal turmoil that Greece experienced from 1940, when it entered the Second World War, to 1949, when the civil war ended, this economic picture is an important and clear indicator of what kind of collapse it is in.

In addition to economic problems, social problems also emerged in Greece. The occupation, which started with Mussolini's Italy and reached a very large level with Nazi Germany, also caused an important internal migration problem. During this internal migration, 700 thousand people had to migrate to big cities, had to live in unsuitable shelter conditions such as slaughterhouses and old prisons, and tried to survive with jobs such as street vending because they sold their herds (Nachmani, 1990: 491- 492). One of the main reasons for these migrations is the destruction of agricultural lands. Two-thirds of the tobacco workers in the Kavala region were unemployed by 1948, which corresponds to 10 thousand people (Nachmani, 1990: 492). The combination of such social problems and the above-mentioned economic problems naturally became an important political problem. As stated, Britain had to cut economic support to Greece, and the Italian and German occupations also triggered social problems. Paul A. Porter, from the Economic Mission of the US, stated that in 1947 the Greeks did not take corrective measures unless necessary for the problems, and took minimum precautions if necessary (Nachmani, 1990: 493). Porter also states that the Greek public administration is extremely ineffective and incompetent, and that this level of incompetence is something that is rarely encountered (Nachmani, 1990: 493). The ineffectiveness of the public administration resulted in the majority of the aid made within the framework of the Marshall Plan falling into the black market by being in the hands of an elite class living in Athens rather than the needy regions in the north of Greece (Nachmani, 1990: 493). Eight governments changed in Greece between the summer of 1945 and November 1946 (Nachmani, 1990: 494). Social problems, inadequacy of public administration and government crises have created quite challenging elements for the US policy towards Greece. Under these circumstances, the US had to make an attempt not only for an aid process that had an economic impact, but also for the restructuring of Greece as a state. This situation shows that within the framework of the distribution of capabilities, the strong state does not take steps towards cooperation by only recognizing the sovereign rights of the weak. The relationship in question also constitutes a phase of orientation and restructuring from a strong state to a weak state. This phase also shows that the strong state's ideological and socio-cultural understanding uses its guiding capacity to penetrate the mechanisms of the weak state and configures the alliance relationship.

## **1.2. Post-Civil War Greece's Statification Process and The Influence of the US**

After the civil war, which started with the involvement of Greece in the Second World War and continued until 1949, the Greek domestic policy entered a period of reconciliation with the influence of foreign policy practices. In this process, while the socialist and anti-socialist bloc conflicts continued, the relations with the US were carried out through the Korean War, the Cyprus problem and the European Union (EU) membership discussions. These facts, on the one hand, influenced the establishment of a modern state structure and pluralistic administration understanding of Greece, and on the other hand, its relations with the US. This interaction also revealed important turning points for understanding the basis of the international political relations of Greece until today (Papadopoulos, 2023: 8-10). In order to deal with the statification process of Greece, the stages of the reconciliation process should be discussed. The first of these is the process that emerged right after the civil war.

According to some views, the Greek civil war is also an extended version of the Cold War (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 560). From this point of view, the resolution of internal conflicts is in direct interaction with the effects of international politics (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 560). As a result of the political developments experienced by Greece after the civil war, the unification around the goal of EU membership also created a political goal partnership for the Greece's new political sphere. Thus, the political background of Greece's location on the Western Hemisphere has emerged. One of the important

indicators of Greece's efforts to be included in the western hemisphere is that the western supporters who won the civil war define the struggle of socialist groups, which they claim to have started the war, as bandit war (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 562). Even this negative definition is an important example of the political hegemony established by the winning side over the defeated side. The death of 60 thousand people during the 1943-1950 period, when the effects of the Greek civil war continued, also created a significant trauma (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 562). At the end of this period, the US' support for the emergence of democracy in Greece by using its political influence also resulted in the containment of the USSR and the suppression of the communist movements that were effective in Greece (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 563). The attempts of the US to establish democracy in Greece also result in the manipulation of a state by influencing the attributes from the international political level. During Greece's transition to democracy, the Central Service of Information (KYP) had 60 thousand salaried informants and volumes of files in which the records of the majority of the population were kept as of 1962 (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 564). During the rule of both Marshall Alexandros Papagos and his successor Konstantinos Karamanlis, the anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold War era was used. This situation was used both to fortify relations with the US and to suppress parties such as the United Democratic Left (EDA) in domestic politics (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 564). With a legal regulation that came into force in 1948, shortly after the US started Marshall Aid, certificate of social reliability was required to work in the public sector, to obtain a passport or driver's license, so the society was divided into two as nationally minded and those deemed harmful to society (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 564). On the other hand, the prohibition of socialist movements in Greece based on legal regulations such as the laws enacted in 1947 left the socialist movements without a leader, as well as the search for US support with issues such as the Korean War, the Nuclear Arms race and the Cyprus issue, which was considered illegally by Greece, thus splitting the Greek society into two. (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 564). The second phase of the reconciliation period started when Georgios Papandreou came to power in November 1963 with the slogan of restoration of democracy. The Papandreou government put forward the view that a solution would be produced through liberalization instead of putting pressure on communist foci. This perspective of Georgios Papandreou and his softening relations with the communist Eastern European states caused the officers in the Greek Armed Forces to put forward the idea that the state would be sold to the communists (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009: 565). Georgios Papandreou's effort to unite the parties in his own way resulted in the opposite direction, further increasing the divisions, and this resulted in a coup.

### **1.3. The Beginning of Conflicts in the US-Greek Relations and Coup D'état**

From the end of the Second World War until the April 21, 1967 coup d'état in Greece, the US supported the government bodies, which it supported economically with the Marshall Plan, to have an anti-communist attitude with the discourse of promoting democracy. However, during the reconciliation period in Greece, Georgios Papandreou not only sought a common ground, but also ensured the development of the Greek government's relations with the Communist states. The fact that Greece is an underdeveloped, small and economically inadequate state has revealed the necessity of a mono dimensional and one-sided dependence political method (Coufoudakis, 1983: 373-374). This situation brought about the evaluation that Greece should be supported by strategically requirements by the US (Kalaveras, 2004: 3). Therefore, the US has an influence, at least indirectly, in the events that took place in the domestic political structure of Greece. The development of economic relations by the government of Georgios Papandreou with Eastern Europe and the USSR has been an important problem in terms of the US' containment policy. Prior to Papandreou's government, Greece began to seek multidimensional foreign policy when it was under the rule of Konstantinos Karamanlis. Relations between Greece and Romania were normalized in 1956-1957, negotiations between Greece and Bulgaria continued, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR visited Athens for the first time since 1917, and a trade agreement was signed between the two states (Hatzivassiliou, 2008: 348). These preferences in the foreign policy behavior of Greece also appeared as a search for support at the UN from these states regarding the Cyprus dispute that started with Türkiye in the same period. With the return of the government in exile in the last years of the occupation of Greece, Gegorgios Papandreou stated to the British authorities that the combination of Liberal Anglo-Saxonism and Socialist Pan Europa was necessary in order to stand in front of Communist Pan Slavism (Hatzivassiliou, 2008: 337). Looking at these explanations, it can be seen that the change in international politics affects the decision-making focus of government leaders and has variable reflections. While the foundation of close relations with the US was laid during the Karamanlis government, Papandreou, who was in power about 15 years before this government, talks about the combination of Anglo-Saxon and Socialist Pan Europa. Despite the fact that the US became an effective power by getting ahead of Britain, the Papandreou government's increasing relations with the USSR and Eastern European states, contrary to the rhetoric of 1944, paved the way for the coup in Greece.

The clientage and patronage characteristics of the political structure in Greece were also influential in the process leading up to the coup (Brown, 1975: 311). From the point of view of the US, Greece seems to be a state that could not gain stability despite all the investments made until 1967 and could easily establish relations with the Soviet bloc. The tension between the US and Greece brings with it the view that the 1967 coup in Greece was carried out by the US or at least with the support of it. This point of view also deeply shakes the trust environment needed by bilateral relations. Quite a few

explanations have been made to justify the claims that the US authorities gave support to the coup in Greece, albeit indirectly (Klaveras, 2004). Of course, it is not an acceptable outcome for the US to lose the advantages gained by Greece as an ally, after providing long-term economic and military support. On the other hand, the expectation that the USSR will cut off contact with various political foci within Greece will mean that Moscow's interests in the region are ignored. Moreover, it is not possible for the USSR to lose its contact with the socialist power foci in Greece while Greece's relations with the Eastern European states are developing. Under these conditions, it is clear that the US has an interest in terms of its results, even if it is not directly involved in the 1967 coup d'état. The escalation of the Cyprus Question in the same period brought the relations between Greece and the US to another dimension. This period is the time when a flow from the US to Greece is much more intense in terms of the distribution of capabilities as a form of action within the structure between the US and Greece. At the same time, the low self-help capacity of Greece is another factor that reveals the intensification of this flow. These conditions have created significant security problems. In this period, while the US was trying to keep Greece in the structure, political events emerged where the balance and the structure were challenged.

## 2. Structural Security Issues in Greek-US Relations

Greece, ignoring all political conflicts in the structure, states that it plays a privileged role in its relationship with the US, relying on its membership in NATO since February 1952 (Melakopides, 1992: 73). In the Greek theses, which started in the early sixties and reached its peak in 1964 (Kiralp, 2023: 519) and tried to be justified with the claim that the Greek majority lived on the island of Cyprus, NATO membership and the encirclement of the USSR, and the presence of American bases in Greece were used as an important trump card in relations with the US. Despite this approach, the rapprochement of the Greek governments with the Eastern European states and the USSR was also considered as a transition from a one-dimensional policy to a multi-dimensional policy, but it was evaluated by American policy makers and security bureaucrats as political attitudes that would cast doubt on the alliance relationship. Because, on the one hand, the support that started with the US Marshall Plan, including military aid and forming the Greek intelligence (KYP) according to the CIA model, was made visible at the highest level (Melakopides, 1992: 75-76), on the other hand, the Greek governments sought to balance this intense dominance. The multi-dimensional policy tried to be put forward by the Greek governments has also raised questions about whether Greece will be in the desired alliance relationship despite the intense support given by the US. Especially in terms of the Cyprus problem, this tension has increased as the unconditional demands of Greece cannot be accepted by the US without question.

Anti-Americanism gradually increased in the domestic political environment of Greece (Karamouzi, 2022). The demonstration by Polytechnic students in November 1973 was one of the important examples of anti-Americanism (Melakopides, 1992: 78). However, in the context of international political problems, the view of the US is to maintain the military capabilities and alliance relationship it has acquired in Greece, regardless of the administration (Melakopides, 1992: 77-78). In addition, both the Greek Junta and the US administration have a common view about the evaluation of Makarios, who is the leader of the Greek Cypriots, as a Red Priest or as Castro in the Mediterranean (Melakopides, 1992: 78). Therefore, the demonstrations that Greece was right about the Cyprus Question were not evaluated positively by the US. In the period leading up to the Cyprus Peace Operation, power factors such as Türkiye's large military capacity, geopolitical position and population affected the decision-making processes of the US (Melakopides, 1992: 81). Lyndon Johnson insisted on Georgios Papandreou in 1964 that he accept the Acheson Plan and give the island of Meis to Türkiye, and also told the Greek Ambassador Alexander Matsas that Greece and Cyprus are a flea and the US is an elephant. Johnson stated that if Papandreou continued his stance with rhetoric such as the parliament or the constitution, they would not be able to continue their existence no longer survive (Melakopides, 1992: 81-82). Under these circumstances, the US considered the dominance of the island of Cyprus to be under the NATO member state or states, based on the strategic importance of the island of Cyprus (Melakopides, 1992: 81). In this period, which can be considered the most critical period of Greece-US relations, US policy makers defined Greece as a state that should be disengaged as it is possible to take place outside the US alliance by being supported by the USSR and states such as Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria under the influence of the USSR. Greece withdrew from the military wing of NATO, based on the view that it could not respond to its demands and that it was meaningless to be in its military wing. With this decision, Greece has made an effort to show that it has self-help capacity on the one hand, and to show that it is an indispensable partner of the US and NATO alliance, on the other hand. However, its dependence on the US and other NATO states in terms of distribution of capabilities is too high to be covered by the Socialist Bloc.

### 2.1. Greece's NATO Crisis and the Balance

While Greece was under the administration of the Karamanlis government after the junta, it announced on August 14, 1974 that it withdrew from the military wing of NATO by the transition to the second phase of the Cyprus Peace Operation (Papacosma, 2001: 364). With this decision, Greece's relations with NATO, which is one of the two important states in the

Mediterranean basin for the US, weakened at an undesirable level (Demir & Dalmış, 2022: 209). In addition, especially the supporters of communism welcomed this decision taken by Greece (Papacosma, 2001: 364) and this situation created an important advantage for the Soviet Bloc against the US. By leaving the military wing of NATO in a limited way, Greece has developed a security structure that is unrelated to NATO's military activities in peace conditions such as the Norwegian type, and under NATO in war conditions (Papacosma, 2001: 365). Greece's failure to completely sever its military ties in its effort to leave NATO does not only highlight Greece as a state that meets NATO's regional security needs in terms of this study. In addition, Greece needs the support of both NATO in the context of alliance relations and the US in the context of bilateral relations. Greece's withdrawal from NATO after Türkiye's Cyprus Peace Operation is not an attempt to collapse the alliance or make it dysfunctional, but an effort to attract attention and prove existence with a protest show. As a result of this initiative of Greece, the US adopted the approach that the weakening of NATO's Southern Flank against the USSR would be a significant loss of the Cold War period (Stearns, 1992: 134). Under these conditions, the US also negotiated with Türkiye for the return of Greece to its active position in the military wing of NATO. Because the containment of the USSR, the security of Europe and the American interests in the Mediterranean basin are based on the inclusion of Greece and Türkiye under the umbrella of NATO. Based on this approach, Greece returned to its active role in NATO's military structure as a result of Türkiye's goodwill in 1980 (Stearns, 1992: 143). Three years after Greece's return to its active role in NATO's military wing, it signed a new defense cooperation agreement with the US in 1983 (Coufoudakis, 1985: 186). Greece returned to the military wing of NATO, from which it had withdrawn as a result of not getting the political results it wanted from the US, without meeting its demands. Thus, it became clear that the withdraw of Greece from NATO would not affect the structure, but instead, Greece would not be able to get results by leaving the alliance relationship due to its insufficient self-help. Despite this, after Greece assumed an active role from the military wing of NATO, it seems that the demands for a military cooperation agreement with the US were met. Thus, a modern version of Greece's traditional foreign policy based on being supported by foreign states began to be seen more clearly.

Türkiye and Greece formed two foundations for the USSR's containment strategy, which was put forward by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in the post-World War II period. Based on this foundation, Greece received more help than Türkiye due to its internal turmoil and unstable government structure. Yet both states are strategically important to US strategy and NATO's Southern Flank. However, the tensions between Türkiye and Greece, especially the Cyprus issue, and the FIR line and the territorial waters issue, in parallel with this, resulted in Greece taking on a lower-level task in the military wing of NATO, creating an important crack in the post-World War II policy of the US. With this crisis, it has been proven that a strategy that the US will put forward by supporting one side will surely fail. Despite this, the US has started to make a political approach to not losing Greece even more evident.

## **2.2. Period of Tensions and Its Negative Effects on the Structure**

After Türkiye's Cyprus Peace Operation, the modernization of the Greek armed forces began in 1974 (Tsilikas, 2001: 3). Even this initiative of Greece alone constitutes an example of the effort of the state to act in the international political environment in the context of the principle of self-help. Because, as of 1974, Greece, based on the view that it could not get the full support it wanted from NATO and the US, turned to a strategy based on the need to take care of itself in case of a crisis (Tsilikas, 2001: 3). From another point of view, this strategy marks a period in which the negative effects of the structure tried to be constructed by the US also emerged. As of 1976, the Balkan States Summit was held in Athens by Constantine Karamanlis in Greece (Larrabee, 2005: 407). After Karamanlis, PASOK leader Andreas Papandreu pursued a similar policy, trying to increase the influence of Greece in the Balkans on the one hand, and to create a support and unity against Türkiye on the other hand (Larrabee, 2005: 407). With this strategic attitude, Greece has chosen to seek the support of NATO and the US, by trying to show that it is an effective power in the context of the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the EU, both by developing its military power and expanding its sapphire of influence.

The changing strategy of Greece has once again revealed the result of the negative evaluation of the US due to the fact that the Balkan states with which it has relations are under the influence of the USSR. During the Papandreu period, the agreement signed with Bulgaria in September 1986 aimed to improve the relations between the two states and to prevent the so-called irredentism of Türkiye and Macedonia (Larrabee, 2005: 407). The Papandreu government also signed a friendship treaty with Albania, ending the state of war that has been going on since 1940, and also made an attempt to eliminate the nuclear weapons in the states in the Balkans (Larrabee, 2005: 407). However, this attempt was rejected by NATO allies such as the US and Türkiye and the Greek Armed Forces and was shelved as of 1984 (Larrabee, 2005: 407). The effort to establish contact with the Balkan states and to gain strategic advantage, which was once again tried to be used by Greece as a result of its multidimensional policy, turned into a problem with the opposition of the NATO members. The efforts to establish an alliance between Serbia and Greece after the collapse of the USSR were also met with suspicion by the US' policy makers. In addition to the rapprochement between the social forces of Greece and Serbia, both states tried to create an obstacle for Türkiye and Bulgaria to be effective in the Balkans (Larrabee, 2005: 410). The fact that the embargo imposed by the UN on the Serbs, who were the cause of the greatest humanitarian tragedy in the middle of

Europe after the Second World War, was broken by Greece and that military intervention was stopped until 1994 was not considered as a positive political attitude for the US (Larrabee, 2005: 410). However, while Greece's ability to satisfy its citizens with a relatively positive economic structure in the 1980s showed that it had a relative power, it started to lose this feature as of the 1990s, which also triggered the foreign dependency of the state (Sitirin & Azzellini, 2014: 76). The weakening of the economic structure and the crises with the US, which is a very important ally in the international context, put the situation of Greece in a difficult situation.

After the collapse of the USSR, the states that emerged from the former Yugoslavia, such as Serbia, also fueled the irredentist approaches in Greece. After Christodoulos, the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, became head of the church in May 1998, he supported both anti-Western, anti-American and pro-Serb sentiments by bringing the liberation of unredeemed areas inhabited by the Greek minority (Takis, 2002: 111). In addition, Greek Prime Minister Papandreou pointed out the events that took place in the Balkans as of 1994 and stated that there was an opportunity to be in line with Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia and Moscow based on the common Orthodox identity (Takis, 2002: 113). The rapid progress of Greece in an anti-Western and anti-US line shows a structural wear. In addition, if attention is paid to the fact that the Russian Federation has not yet adopted the effective role it has gained recently by gaining power, it is seen that the relationship between Greece and the Russian Federation will adversely affect the systemic capacity of the US that emerged after the Second World War.

While Greece took a confrontational stance with Türkiye in connection with the Cyprus Question, the Greek Cypriot side continued its relations with the Warsaw Pact member states as an alternative to NATO. Based on these relations, arms sales from the Greek Cypriot part to Czechoslovakia took place during the Makarios period and the Southern Cyprus joined to non-alignment movement (Gorvett, 1998: 149). On the one hand, Greece was able to establish relations with Moscow through its Orthodox identity and on the other hand, its connection with the Greek Cypriot part of both the USSR and the Russian Federation. One of the most problematic phases of this relationship for the US was the sale agreement between the Russian Federation and the Greek Cypriot side of the S-300 missiles. With this agreement, in 1998, the Papandreou Government put into effect the Common Defense Doctrine with Southern Cyprus and sent the Greek soldiers to the Greek Cypriot part within the framework of the Military Cooperation Agreement (Öztürk, 1999: 141). Greek Defense Minister Akis Tsochatzopoulos paid an official visit to Moscow Duma Chairman Gennady Seleznev stated that Greece has the right to cooperate in the field of defense with anyone they want, and that Greece and the Russian Federation have similar views in the fields of diplomacy and defense (Gorvett, 1998: 151). In the post-Cold War period, the Greek and Greek Cypriots created significant problems in the defense of the Southern Flank of NATO, which was established under the leadership of the US. The S-300s were not only examined by the Greek Cypriot side, but also by the Syrian Arab Republic based on the joint defense agreement between Greece and Syria, an exercise was held in Moscow in 1997 for the Syrian officers and it was decided to repeat the exercise every year (Öztürk, 1999: 142-143). Under these conditions, it is clear that Greece and Southern Cyprus are in a defense cooperation by coming together with Syria, which is under the influence of the Russian Federation. This situation has been an indication that the possibility of the US to see Greece in the ranks of Russian Federation continues in the post-Cold War period. Of course, an important factor is that Greece's conflict with Türkiye comes to light from time to time with crises such as Kardak and S-300 missiles. Although these types of crises do not directly affect the US-Greece relations, they become directly related to the US-Türkiye relations and the definition of the conflict between the two NATO members.

The Kardak crisis emerged based on the rescue activities of a Turkish commercial ship. Greek Prime Minister Simitis accused Türkiye of being the aggressor and stated that they would resist with all their means as of January 29, 1996 (Şihmantepe, 2013: 138-139). For NATO, this crisis emerged in the post-Cold War period as another event that has the potential to cause a conflict between Türkiye and Greece. The emergence of the Kardak Crisis directly affected both the NATO allies in terms of NATO's Southern Flank and the US as a crisis that emerged between the two important allies of the US in the region. During the crisis, British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana called on the parties to stay away from activities that would have negative consequences and affect the entire alliance (Bayar & Kotelis, 2014: 251). However, US officials have taken a much higher-level stance regarding crisis intervention. US President Bill Clinton, the Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, was directly involved in the crisis and met with the parties (Bayar & Kotelis, 2014: 251). As a result of these negotiations, the parties did not enter into a conflict and the efforts of the US yielded results. As a result of these efforts, the conclusion of the event by keeping the parties away from a conflict has been defined as an example of leadership for the US. Richard Holbrooke defined US' efforts in the Kardak Crisis as an event that shows the necessity of the continuation of the global leadership of the US (Bayar & Kotelis, 2014: 251). Holbrooke's statement is an important example in terms of showing that the state with great power affects the systemic structure in terms of the distribution of capabilities and has the ability to keep it together.

The Kardak and S-300 crises that emerged post-Cold War have clearly shown that Greece can come to the brink of conflict with another NATO ally, and that it can contact a non-NATO state, moreover, by not recognizing the UN and NATO

resolutions. Although this situation is generally tried to be called an example of the establishment of a new world order in the post-Cold War period, it is seen that Greece seeks cooperation with the Warsaw Pact member states through its multidimensional policy implementation efforts during the Cold War period. It is clear that this search for cooperation is not a historical process, but rather a search to increase the capacity for self-help and to reveal this capacity with attributes such as the common denominator of Orthodoxy and closeness to the socialist view. Even though Greece's foreign policy making process has brought about being affiliated with the US during the Cold War, as a necessity of rational interests, the same interests have led to the search for alternatives to the US. As a result of these searches, Greece tried to establish relations with Slavic and socialist origin states at a level compatible with its attributes, but the institutional structure capacity brought by the stratification process prevented its relationship with the US from completely disappearing. The US, on the other hand, has tended to support Greece as a usable unit against the USSR/Russian Federation in the Southern Flank of NATO, as it has supported Greece since the stratification process and intensified its sphere of influence on institutional actors. This trend has continued to develop and thus the US has prepared the conditions for creating a negative effect in the balance of power while trying to keep Greece within the alliance structure.

### **2.3. The US Policy of Retaining Greece and NATO's Southern Flank**

The debates that emerged after the collapse of the USSR were that bipolarity came to an end and a new world order emerged (Waltz, 2000). In fact, the views that a new world order was formed due to the popular uprisings and system change that emerged in Eastern Europe immediately after the collapse of the USSR were also evaluated in academic circles (Petrović, Raos & Fila, 2023: 273). During the development of negative views on communism in Eastern Europe, it was revealed that the citizens of the states where the events took place were not opposed to the idea of communism, but to the way it was implemented. Accordingly, a significant part of the citizens of Eastern European states are suspicious of free-enterprise and there is sympathy for central planning and collective ownership (Kuran, 1991: 31). Despite this, it has emerged that the change in the practice of socialism will be more effective than the production of an alternative to socialism (Kuran, 1991: 33). However, the result has led to the fundamental change in Eastern European states becoming a part of the liberal system rather than a socialist state (Coman & Volintiru, 2023). Thus, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved and the security structure and understanding known until that day gained a new dimension. In this process, the US has also improved its relations with the former Warsaw Pact member states against the Russian Federation, which strives to have a similar sphere of influence after dissolution of the USSR. Thus, with the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in 1999, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004, Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020 the states that were former members of the USSR or the Warsaw Pact became new NATO members. At this point, it is necessary to mention the expansion of the US and the Western Bloc in the systemic structure of international politics that emerged after the Second World War, rather than a structure to be defined as the new world order. Under these conditions, Greece continued to maintain its importance for the US and NATO for the containment policy of the Russian Federation.

In the process of NATO's enlargement, North Macedonia's request to join the alliance constituted an important resistance point for Greece. It was claimed that the territorial integrity of Greece was threatened when North Macedonia took the name of the Republic of Macedonia after the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Panagioutu, 2008: 228). After the approval of the name North Macedonia as a result of the demands of Greece, the NATO membership process was initiated as of 2019 (Pandeva, 2021: 106) and in 2020, North Macedonia officially became a NATO member. Greece's negative attitude towards North Macedonia's NATO membership was partially softened by the interventions of the US and other member states. Greece's objections and political discourses are balanced at a certain point and their irredentist approaches can be prevented. This is an important indication that the US, as the leading state of NATO, has emerged as a balancing and guiding factor. This situation is similar in terms of Eastern Mediterranean political disputes as well.

The Eastern Mediterranean issue should also be evaluated as an important area in the context of Greek-US relations. The Eastern Mediterranean represents a geopolitical region that should be used in order to execute containment policy the US in terms of the Russian Federation. The relationship of the Russian Federation with states that are directly in the region or in areas that may have an impact on the region, such as Egypt, Syria, Israel, Jordan and Bulgaria, constitute a risk area for the US (Altman, 2016: 78). The Russian Federation is trying to carry out a policy of containment of the US in the Eastern Mediterranean region, which is similar to the policy of containment of the Russian Federation, which the US tries to implement by developing its relations with the Eastern European states (Altman, 2016: 78). Blocking the access of the US to the region (Anti access/Area denial-A2/AD) will also bring along the fact that the access to resources in the Suez Canal, Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean will be under the initiative of the Russian Federation (Altman, 2016: 72). Under these circumstances, the US has to implement a reverse containment policy against the Russian Federation, and one of the main players of this policy is Greece.

As a result of the end of the Cold War, the joining of the Eastern European states, which were allies of the Russian Federation during the USSR period, to NATO brought along an important strategic problem. The Russian Federation has increased its efforts to expand its relations with Greece, with which it has certain common points, due to its quest to preserve and develop its alliance system and strategic structure. This relationship became evident as of the beginning of the 2000s, and the military superiority of the Russian Federation in Syria as of 2014 became clear with the strengthening of the alliance it formed with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, the US has accelerated the military aid process in order to make its relations with Greece a higher level. Greece has emerged from the economic crisis and its relations with the US have started to progress positively (Pagoulatos & Sokou, 2021: 3). In this process, Greece has highlighted the view that Türkiye's regional interests will be directed by the US and Ankara's policies have negative effects on the alliance relationship (Pagoulatos & Sokou, 2021: 4). With this strategy, Greece strives to assume a wider and more acceptable role in the eyes of the United States, while trying to create the image that Türkiye, another NATO member state, does not fulfill its alliance commitments adequately.

The mitigation of the crisis in Greece, as of 2010, with the help of the US has created the capacity to act together on issues such as terrorism, immigration, Ukraine and Libya (Pagoulatos & Sokou, 2021: 5). The fact that Greece remained in the Eurozone with the effect of US economic aid is an indicator of the US' economic steering capacity on both Greece and the EU. The US helped reduce anti-Americanism under favor of its economic aid to Greece (Pagoulatos & Sokou, 2021: 5). In 2016, the US Department of State stated that Greece is an ally in promoting stability and economic development in the Balkans, supporting Türkiye's accession to the EU and diversifying Europe's energy supply (Ploumis, 2018: 98). The US continues to support Greece economically and militarily, as it did during the Cold War, for the stability of the EU and the continuation of its regional interests, based on the possibility of its A2/AD to the Eastern Mediterranean being blocked by the Russian Federation.

For the US, the Souda Bay American base on the island of Crete is of strategic importance. In addition, the US continues to provide support for the modernization and equipment of the Greek Armed Forces (Ploumis, 2018: 98). Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that Greece is among the states that continue to comply with NATO commitments by allocating 2% of its GDP to military expenditures (Ploumis, 2018: 98). The continuation of Greece's military expenditures within the scope of NATO's burden sharing was thanks to the increase in the economic and military aids provided by the US, although Greece had difficulty in exhibiting the necessary performance until 2015 (Çoban & Taşkın, 2018: 69). If Greece is supported militarily and economically by the US, as it was during the Cold War, its participation in the alliance of the Russian Federation will be prevented. The prevention of this situation depends on the continuation of foreign aid to Greece and the continuation of its military power with the contributions of NATO member states, especially the US. Based on the Franco-Greek Defense Agreement, Greece also took steps with France in 2021 for the development of the Greek Navy (Perot, 2023: 2). Thus, in order to prevent Greece from taking sides with the Russian Federation, the powerful states of the alliance, especially the US, are supported. The policy of supporting Greece leads to a negative structure by damaging the balances within the alliance when the relations with Türkiye are taken into consideration. This situation jeopardizes the strategy of ensuring the balance and maintaining the structure by supporting the allies economically and militarily, which the US adopted in the post-World War II period. Because the US adopts periodic initiatives with a reactive political attitude rather than an effort to maintain the distribution of capabilities in a balanced and effective way.

## Conclusion

The relations of the US with Greece are based on the principle of controlling the sphere of influence of the USSR and then the Russian Federation, as well as the expansion of two states' regional interests. In the post-World War II period, the US used its wide capacity in the formation and maintenance of the structure in favor of Greece. The low self-help capacity of Greece as an acting unit in the international politics enabled it to be influenced by the US. As seen in the examples of civil war and coup, the US turned the influence of Greece on state institutionalization into an advantage and ensured the prevention of social groups under the influence of the USSR/RF. Greece continued to use its Orthodox common identity and level of relationship with the USSR/RF as a threat and a means of gaining benefits, even though it was in the US' alliance structure. Greece became the party that was able to obtain its demands by using its Orthodox identity and its relationship with the USSR/RF against the US. Thus, the US started to operate the policy of supporting Greece based on the effort not to lose it.

The continuation of this US' policy prepares the infrastructure for the formation of a unilateral imbalance within the structure in the context of the distribution of capabilities. This situation led to the deterioration of the alliance relations put forward by the US after the Second World War. Although unilateral disruption of the balance results in keeping the state within the structure, which is aimed in the short term, it enables other units of the structure to turn to other alternatives. For this reason, the United States has to similarly evaluate the interaction of all states within the structure that have the capacity

to act with it, so that the structure can be supported through the distribution of capabilities. Otherwise, capacity building and uneven distribution of capabilities may cause structural problems to become evident, negatively affecting the alliance or even disintegrating it.

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