

A Multilevel Analysis Of The Micro Foundations Of Foreign Policy Performance In The Interaction Of Mental Health, Family Structures And State Capacity

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ABSTRACT : The international relations literature has long explained a state's foreign policy performance primarily through military expenditure, economic scale and institutional architecture, leaving the citizen's psychological reserve, the protective function of the family and the pool of social trust in analytical obscurity. This study addresses that gap by extending the micro foundations approach to propose a five-link, feedback-driven model: *individual* → *family* → *society* → *state* → *foreign policy*. The empirical base combines unstructured field interviews conducted in four Turkish cities (Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli, Erzurum) with comparative data drawn from ten Western European countries, read jointly with official demographic series covering 2000–2025. The model's five auxiliary hypotheses (H1–H5) receive approximately 95%, 85%, 82%, 78% and 90% link-level empirical support — a mean of about 86%. Findings demonstrate that marriage functions as a buffer on mental health largely independent of cultural context: future anxiety remains at 18% among married Turkish women but rises to 71% among never-married women and to 74% among divorced Turkish men. The demographic scissors are documented as a decline in the total fertility rate from 2.53 in 2000 to 1.49 in 2025 alongside a rise in the divorce rate from 1.40‰ to 2.15‰, with the two curves crossing a critical threshold after 2020. Findings reveal a *strategic depth* leverage that filters into foreign policy performance through fourteen positive and thirteen negative channels; these channels cluster into six analytical groups and map one-to-one onto six concrete policy levers. The study's original theoretical contributions are threefold: placing the neglected family mezzo level onto the analytical map of international relations; redefining state capacity as a living organism that must be read together with society's emotional climate; and proposing a *strategic depth* metric that ties foreign policy performance to the health of the social fabric rather than to material power alone. The research empirically documents that a state's international weight in the 2040–2060 horizon is already being written at today's family tables and proposes a multi-legged resilience architecture integrating family-law reform, mental-health ecosystem, demographic policy and foreign-policy institutional design. The article makes the invisible corridor between the citizen's inner peace and the state's external voice analytically visible.

KEYWORDS: Foreign policy performance; micro foundations approach; mental health and social trust; family structure and divorce; state capacity; strategic depth; Türkiye–Europe comparative analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Classical readings of international politics have, for the most part, accounted for a state's efficacy in the external arena by reference to weapons inventories, economic magnitude, and technological accumulation. The evidence accruing over the past two decades, however, has conspicuously strained this narrow frame. The constituent elements of the quotidian fabric of society—the psychological disposition of individuals, the internal order of the family, the trust obtaining among neighbours, and the sense of belonging to the public sphere—are now increasingly construed as the invisible infrastructure of foreign policy (Hudson, 2014; Kaarbo, 2015). The precipitous global surge in depression and anxiety disorders registered in the post-pandemic period has rendered manifest that the internal resilience of societies directly conditions the responses tendered to international crises (Santomauro et al., 2021; Saraceno et al., 2022). That the burden of mental ill-health exacts an annual toll of billions of productive life-years attests that this domain constitutes not merely a medical concern but a political one as well (Patel et al., 2018; GBD 2019 Mental Disorders Collaborators, 2022). This cumulative evidence gives rise to the following cardinal proposition: foreign policy is shaped far less by the leaders occupying the visible stage than by the internal soundness of the societies that stand behind them. The present study addresses itself precisely to this invisible infrastructure, tracing a delicate chain that commences in the individual's psychological world, passes through the family room, and extends outward to the street and to institutions. When the chain ruptures, the resulting cost is registered not solely in domestic politics but within the

international system as well; societal fragility is thereby transmuted into a strategic vulnerability in global competition (Mann, 2012; Fukuyama, 2014). The originality of the study resides in its treatment of these links not as dispersed phenomena but within a single, mutually reinforcing continuum. In this manner, the micro-foundations approach—long encountering difficulty in gaining purchase within the international relations literature—is rendered empirically testable within a concrete societal context. Clarifying the core concepts at the outset furnishes a robust footing for the discussions developed in the ensuing sections. In this article, mental health is understood as the quality of the relationship the individual establishes with himself and with his environment, his capacity to contend with quotidian adversities, and the possibility of leading a meaningful life. This definition converges with the literature on psychological resilience (Masten, 2014); accordingly, not merely the absence of illness but likewise the individual's capacity to remain productive under stressful conditions is apprehended as a complementary dimension of mental health. Family structure is defined not by household size alone but by the continuity of marriage, intergenerational bonds, and the quality of intra-familial emotional support mechanisms (Goode, 1963/2013; Chambers, 2015; Bourassa et al., 2015). With the modern transformation, marriage has ceased to be merely an economic partnership and has been reconstituted as a reservoir of emotional and psychological support; this reconstitution elucidates why minor fractures in family structure leave such disproportionately pronounced imprints upon individual well-being (Amato, 2010; Rosenfeld, 2017). Social trust performs a bridging function between these two domains, designating a texture of confidence that radiates outward from the individual's immediate milieu toward strangers and institutions (Putnam, 2000; Rothstein, 2011). State capacity refers to a government's aptitude to produce public services, to manage crises, and to sustain social order; foreign policy performance, in turn, encompasses a state's success in attaining its external objectives, the durability of that success, and its credibility in the estimation of international partners (Evans, 1995; Wendt, 1999; Lee, 2022; Hanson & Sigman, 2021; Saunders, 2022). These five concepts may be envisioned as an interlocking pyramid: mental health and the family constitute the base, while the upper tiers are erected upon them. A fissure at the base will, sooner or later, unsettle the efficacy attained at the summit.

The extant literature has addressed each of these five concepts in isolation and, more often than not, within the confines of its own disciplinary idiom. Scholarship in psychiatry and public health has concentrated upon the individual and medical dimensions of mental health (Lund et al., 2018; Santomauro et al., 2021); sociology has examined the transformation of the family institution through the conceptual lenses of individualization and modernization (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2003; Illouz, 2007; Inglehart, 2018). Debates concerning state capacity have typically been conducted on the plane of bureaucratic efficacy (Fukuyama, 2014; Lee & Zhang, 2017), whereas the foreign policy literature has concentrated upon the rational choices of decision-makers (Mearsheimer, 2001; Saunders, 2022). Studies interrogating the intersection of these disjointed currents remain exceedingly scarce. A species of invisible wall operates within the field: health researchers tend to relegate state capacity, and political scientists to relegate mental health, beyond the perimeters of their inquiries; the connecting corridor persists as an unoccupied line (Mattila & Rapeli, 2018). Yet a wound opening within the individual's inner world is transmuted into solitude at the family table, surfaces as a deficit of trust upon the street, and, in the final analysis, shapes the comportment displayed at the diplomatic table (Mercer, 2010; Lipps & Schraff, 2021). Gourevitch's (1978) proposal for inverting the second image and Putnam's (1988) two-level game model have already demonstrated that foreign policy cannot be uncoupled from domestic societal dynamics; profound variables such as mental health and family structure, however, have not been embedded within these dynamics. This omission constitutes not merely an academic lacuna but likewise engenders a consequential blind spot in policy formulation, inasmuch as mental health and family structure constitute those levers of society that are not readily observable yet exert the most decisive influence over the long run (Helliwell et al., 2024). It is precisely this blind spot that the present study undertakes to redress.

It is no accident that the issue acquires a distinctive salience in a country such as Turkey, where traditional bonds remain operative even as a rapid transformation is under way; for, over the past quarter-century, Turkey has become an extraordinary laboratory in which the velocity of the dissolution of the family institution and the capacity for demographic renewal are tested concurrently. Table 2, to be presented in detail in the subsequent sections of the study, together with Figure 2, which visualizes the same data, lays bare the macro-signature of this laboratory: in Turkey, the total fertility rate declined from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 as of 2025, while, within the same window, the divorce rate ascended from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62 per thousand, thereafter to 1.69, 1.62, and, ultimately, 2.15 per thousand (TurkStat, 2023, 2024, 2025; OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024; UN DESA, 2022). The two curves diverge sharply after 2020, and, as of 2025, a fertility rate palpably below the population-replacement threshold (2.1) is juxtaposed with a divorce rate that has risen by approximately a factor of one and a half. This dual movement is not a mere

Demographic statistic; it is a delayed yet unerring societal signature that pre-ordains the military-age population of the 2040s, the tax base of the 2050s, and the weight borne at the international negotiating table of the 2060s. The simultaneous progression of declining fertility and rising divorce suggests that the two trends compose a mutually reinforcing double helix: the families that are founded produce fewer children, a higher proportion of the marriages that are concluded dissolve, and the aggregate capacity for population renewal is eroded along both arms concurrently. A conjoint reading of Table 2 and Figure 2, for this reason, constitutes the point of departure of the study; the manner in which this erosion in the macro-fabric reverberates at the micro-scale forms the subject of the paragraph that follows. The macroscopic transformation just delineated possesses a measurable psychological correlate at the individual level. The marital-status-by-gender matrix derived from the field study conducted with 1,000 participants aged 40–80 in Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli, and Erzurum—to be presented in the ensuing sections through Table 1 and, through four distinct indicators drawn from the same data, through Figure 1.a (anxiety concerning the future), Figure 1.b (consultations with a psychologist), Figure 1.c (consultations with a psychiatrist), and Figure 1.d (use of psychotropic medication)—discloses a markedly perspicuous principal pattern. In Turkey, among married women, the use of psychotropic medication clusters at approximately 1 percent, psychiatric consultation at 4 percent, psychological consultation at 11 percent, and anxiety concerning the future at 18 percent; among never-married women, the same four indicators rise to 7, 13, 47, and 71 percent respectively; and among divorced women, they settle within the band of 3, 9, 21, and 47 percent. Within the Turkish male band, the configuration of the protective effect assumes a different form: among married men, the four indicators stand at 1, 7, 18, and 26 percent respectively; among the never-married, at 1, 7, 15, and 27 percent; whereas among the divorced, they ascend as high as 3, 15, 40, and 74 percent. This indicates that, for men, the determinative threshold consists less in never having married than in the forfeiture of a bond previously formed. Within the European Union band, the same matrix is reiterated along a parallel pattern yet with higher baseline values: among married EU women, the four indicators stand at 3, 5, 21, and 32 percent respectively; among married EU men, at 4, 7, 25, and 37 percent. The severance of the bond, in both sexes, augments the rates by a factor of two to three; among never-married EU women, anxiety concerning the future attains 76 percent and psychological consultation 78 percent, while, among never-married EU men, these two values hover around 62 and 61 percent (Eurofound, 2023; Eurostat, 2025; OECD, 2025). When the micro-scale data presented in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d are conjoined with the macro-scale time series of Table 2 and Figure 2, the core finding of the study is presaged: the attenuation within the family and the erosion of mental health produce a fragility that reverberates across the social and political scales.

At this juncture, a legitimate question commends itself for consideration: why Turkey and the European Union? The comparative design of the study is erected upon three analytical levers. First, Turkey and the EU occupy two distinct phases in the process of the dissolution of the family institution: the comparatively elevated indicator values observed within the EU married samples—recourse to mental-health services attaining 21 percent among married EU women and 25 percent among married EU men—attests that, even at an advanced stage of dissolution, the marital bond continues to discharge a baseline-protective function; the markedly lower values registered within the Turkish married sample—psychological consultation at 11 percent and anxiety concerning the future at 18 percent among married Turkish women—disclose, conversely, the extent to which this selfsame protective effect is apt to be intensified within a family fabric that remains as yet undissolved. Second, the divergence between these two geographies is not quantitative but gradational and directional; that is, the protective effect of marriage and the attritional effect of the loss of the bond operate in the same direction across both geographies, with only the magnitude varying. This affords the analytical ground upon which to advance the claim that the finding constitutes not a cultural exception but a systemic pattern. Third, the comparison juxtaposes Turkey's singular demographic scissor (Figure 2) with a broader European trajectory, thereby rendering it possible to apprehend the ten- to twenty-year transformative trajectory lying before Turkey through indicators that have already been concretized within the EU samples. This comparative design permits the findings to be construed not as an observation peculiar to Turkey alone but as a universal micro-foundation of the family–mental-health–state-capacity chain (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017; Helliwell et al., 2025).

The theoretical orientation of the study is constituted by the micro-foundations approach. This approach maintains that political outcomes at the macro level are tightly coupled to the patterns of emotion, perception, trust, and belonging manifested by individuals (Hudson, 2014; Mercer, 2010; Kaarbo, 2015). This principal current is conjoined with social capital theory (Putnam, 1993, 2000), the framework of psychological resilience (Masten, 2014), and the literature on institutional trust (Rothstein, 2011; Rathbun, 2011) so as to constitute an explanatory framework of multiple strata specific to the present study. Accordingly, the five links arrayed in the sequence of individual–family–society–state–foreign policy are to be read not as a unidirectional causal chain but as a cyclical system of mutual reinforcement. A rupture arising at the familial hearth enervates mental

health—the anxiety scissor oscillating between 18 and 76 percent that is documented in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d constitutes the empirical imprint of this very link; the enfeebled psychological condition impinges upon Social trust; the erosion of trust decelerates the operational tempo of state institutions; and the compromise of institutional performance attenuates the voice of the country at the international table. In the reverse direction, robust familial bonds consolidate psychological resilience; this resilience is transmuted into social trust, institutional efficacy, and, ultimately, a steadfast posture in foreign policy (Helliwell et al., 2024; Jost et al., 2024). This bidirectional flow likewise clarifies why foreign policy cannot be accounted for by purely economic and military parameters; for the trust established with international partners is, to a very substantial degree, the external-systemic reflection of the trust a state has constituted with its own citizens (Rathbun, 2011). The proposed framework not only furnishes an explanatory model but equally renders manifest, to policymakers, the leverage points at which intervention is feasible. In light of this theoretical orientation, a single principal research question is situated at the centre of the study: how does the transformation occurring in mental health and family structures shape a state's foreign policy performance through the mediation of state capacity? The three subsidiary questions supporting the principal question are as follows: (i) what imprint do familial indicators such as marriage and divorce leave upon the mental health of individuals; (ii) through which mediations does psychological resilience at the individual level connect with social trust and state capacity; (iii) in what modalities are these internal dynamics reflected in foreign policy decision-making processes? The principal hypothesis of the study is formulated thus: states possessing robust mental-health indicators and intact family structures exhibit a more consistent, more credible, and more directive performance in foreign policy. Three subsidiary hypotheses complement this principal hypothesis: (a) marriage-based family structure directly and positively affects the individual's mental health—this subsidiary hypothesis will be tested against the marital-status columns of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d; (b) in societies composed of psychologically healthier individuals, institutional trust and state capacity are higher; (c) in countries endowed with strong state capacity, foreign policy is more successful and more predictable in its outputs. In order to test these hypotheses, a qualitatively weighted and multilevel method of analysis has been adopted. The rationale for designing the method as qualitatively weighted is twofold: first, meaningful findings concerning the mental health of individuals surface only within natural conversational settings; second, the multidimensional texture of familial relations cannot be apprehended through numerical scales alone (Bryman, 2016). The empirical counterpart of the conceptual framework is constituted through the field study conducted in four cities of Turkey (n = 1,000; 2022–2024) and through comparative data drawn from twenty-five cities across ten European countries (n = 1,600; 2019 & 2024–2025).

In sum, this article is woven around a single question: if, within, the human soul is wearied, can the voice of the state truly resound with vigour without? The integrative answer advanced to this question positions the study so as to yield concrete contributions at ten distinct junctures. The study brings together the literatures on mental health, the family, and foreign policy within a single explanatory framework; invests the micro-foundations approach with concrete societal content; renders the Turkish field data and the EU data directly commensurable through Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, thereby rendering visible the convergences and divergences between local dynamics and global trends; documents quantitatively the protective relationship between marriage and mental health through the three- to fourfold differential that emerges simultaneously across four indicators among the married, never-married, and divorced bands; redefines the concept of state capacity by coupling it not only with bureaucratic efficacy but likewise with social psychology; contributes to debates on foreign policy performance a novel reading that internalizes such soft elements as trust, resilience, and collective emotion; demonstrates that family policy is not a merely domestic societal matter but a strategic domain of investment, inasmuch as the demographic scissor visible in Table 2 and Figure 2 will determine the country's international weight in the 2040–2060 interval; furnishes policymakers with concrete signposts for securing coordination among social policy, legal reform, and mental-health services; proposes new questions and new units of analysis for future research; and invites countries confronting the process of demographic transformation to reconceive this process not as a mere population problem but equally as a question of international prestige and strategic capacity. The remainder of the article is erected upon the following architecture: the second section surveys, through an interdisciplinary cross-section, the literatures on mental health, the sociology of the family, and foreign policy; the third section constructs the theoretical framework that reads conjointly the links of individual–family–society–state–foreign policy; the fourth section elaborates the research method encompassing the Turkish and EU samples; the fifth section presents the findings through Table 1, Figures 1.a–d, Table 2, and Figure 2; the sixth section discusses the findings by placing them in dialogue with the literature; and the seventh section concludes the study by synthesizing the theoretical contributions, the policy recommendations, and the agenda for further research. In this manner, the article has been composed not merely in order to append yet another

study to the academic agenda, but in order to demonstrate that the weight of a state within the international system, in truth, commences at the tranquillity that obtains around its hearth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analytical axis that the present study seeks to construct is situated at the intersection of five distinct scholarly strands which, though thematically proximate, have in academic practice predominantly flowed through separate channels: the micro-foundational line of international relations theory, the literature on the societal consequences of mental health, the sociological and demographic literature on the transformation of the family, the debate concerning state capacity and institutional trust, and the framework addressing the permeability between domestic and foreign policy. Taken individually, each of these strands generates its own distinctive explanatory purchase; yet the currents flowing between them have remained, to a considerable extent, tacit. For this reason, the review developed below aims less at mapping each strand on its own terms than at rendering visible the untraced transitions that run between them. The path pursued throughout the review is as follows: first, the manner in which the unit of decision is defined within international relations will be examined; subsequently, attention will turn to the channels through which the societal corollaries of mental health and the family are conveyed into the political field; thereafter, the discussion will address the ways in which state capacity canalises this transition; and finally, it will be shown how the boundary between the domestic and the foreign is bound together by a fine thread running from the family table to the international negotiating table. Table 1, which will occupy the empirical core of the study, together with Figures 1.a (anxiety about the future), 1.b (consultation with a psychologist), 1.c (consultation with a psychiatrist), and 1.d (use of psychotropic medication) that depict the same data across four distinct indicators, as well as Table 2 and Figure 2 that visualises the same series, will be invoked by forward reference at every critical juncture of this review; in this way, the reader will be apprised at the outset of where the numerical counterpart of the hitherto untraced transitions within the literature is to be sought.

Within international relations, the endeavour to account for foreign policy behaviour has long been organised around a system-level conception; in particular, the realist and neorealist tradition has reduced states to a single reasoning unit and thereby compressed analysis into a calculus of the distribution of power and the balance of capabilities (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Within this framework, the state has been read as a single rational unit without attention to the fine grain of internal structure, while the affective world of the decision-maker, the family, and the proximate social environment have been consigned to the margins as exogenous variables devoid of analytical weight. Although the explanatory power afforded by this conception is undeniable, the question of why states facing broadly comparable external conditions generate sharply divergent preferences has marked an unmistakable limit to its reach. The social-constructivist line deepened the debate by demonstrating that identities and value-configurations are embedded within behaviour (Wendt, 1999); yet this line, too, has by and large relegated affect and psychic processes at the individual level to the status of a secondary variable. This lacuna gives rise to a twofold limitation: first, because system-level models read the state as a unitary entity, they rest upon an assumption of internal homogeneity; second, this assumption proves insufficient for explaining the divergent decisional outputs produced by states occupying comparable systemic positions. Consequently, the analytical vocabulary by which the internal variables capable of accounting for the variance that emerges once homogeneity is broken — namely the psychic state of the decision-maker, the collective level of societal anxiety, and the fabric of institutional trust — may be apprehended constitutes the very ground upon which the next generation of debate is formed.

This lacuna in system-level readings has been partially filled, over the past two decades, by the increasingly prominent debate on micro-foundations. Hudson (2014) and Kaarbo (2015) have reminded the field that the ultimate fact that decisions take shape in the cognitive and affective world of a human being carries as much weight as system-level abstractions. Jervis (1976) demonstrated that misperceptions on the part of decision-makers have pre-configured a considerable number of international crises; Mercer (2010), in turn, established that emotions exert upon foreign-policy outcomes a durable and systematic weight of a kind overlooked by rationalist calculus. Kahneman's (2011) dual-process conception of cognition complements this line: it reveals that a substantial share of decisions taken under pressure and uncertainty rests upon a fast and affectively laden mode of thought, thereby signalling that the domain of validity of the rational-actor assumption is narrower than has often been supposed. Nevertheless, the preponderance of the works cited has largely confined micro-level psychological processes to the cognitive maps of leaders and elite circles, rather than considering them together with their social and familial roots. A substantial conceptual reservoir therefore exists along the micro-foundational line; yet this reservoir has remained bottled up at the level of the leader and has not extended to the strata of the family and the wider society.

The recent appraisal offered by Jost and colleagues (2024) likewise signals the necessity of transcending this boundary, emphasising that the leader who takes the decision has himself been reared within a household, breathes within a given societal climate, and is attended by the enduring imprint that the psychic condition of the community he governs leaves upon his own field of vision. The present study aims to carry the micro-foundational line beyond the figure of the leader — that is, to withdraw the unit of analysis from the decision-table and to extend it toward the familial hearth and the societal climate standing behind the individual seated at that table. The literature on mental health, having for decades developed predominantly within a clinical and individual frame of reference, has more recently been drawn into a broader frame encompassing its social and economic sequelae. The current framework of the World Health Organization (2022) breaks with the narrow definition that equates mental health with the absence of illness, positioning the individual's capacity to cope with life's adversities, to sustain a productive life, and to participate meaningfully in society as indissoluble dimensions of the concept. The comprehensive study by Patel and colleagues (2018) and the global-scale assessment by the GBD 2019 Mental Disorders Collaborators (2022) [Global Burden of Disease] demonstrate that mental disorders appreciably erode not merely the quality of individual life but also labour productivity, public-health expenditure, organisational performance, and the patterns of social solidarity. The pandemic-era modelling of Santomauro and colleagues (2021) revealed that the global prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders rose within a single twelve-month window by an increment corresponding to more than fifty million additional cases; Saraceno and colleagues (2022) have documented the downstream effects of this surge upon health systems. Taken together, this accumulation of evidence removes mental well-being from the status of a strictly medical category and reconstitutes it as a variable of political economy. Even so, this literature has tended to measure societal consequences predominantly through economic outputs such as labour productivity and health expenditure, and has not sufficiently extended its reach to more indirect yet scarcely less consequential outputs such as collective trust, institutional legitimacy, and international standing. The point at which this gap is bridged is the subsequent cluster of literature, which documents the four distinct channels by which mental well-being extends into political behaviour; the mediating role of the family is taken up in the paragraphs that follow.

The spillover effects by which mental well-being extends into political behaviour have been documented, over the past decade, through four discrete channels. Along the first channel — that of social capital — Helliwell and colleagues (2024) have shown that a consistent and robust relationship obtains between life satisfaction and trust in fellow individuals and institutions, and that societies with higher levels of mental well-being simultaneously exhibit denser reservoirs of social capital. Along the second channel — political participation — Mattila and Rapeli (2018) have documented that, in environments in which anxiety and depressive symptomatology become widespread, political participation declines, trust in institutions erodes, and voter behaviour takes on an increasingly unpredictable character. Along the third channel — procedural justice — the sustained body of work produced by Tyler (2006) reveals that the perceived legitimacy of institutions is thoroughly interwoven with the citizen's sense of justice and, by extension, with his or her psychic equanimity. Along the fourth channel — compound vulnerability — recent reports of the OECD (2025) underscore that psychic distress must be considered jointly with loneliness and social isolation, and that this pairing generates within Western societies a form of compound vulnerability. When these four lines are read in concert, the resulting picture is as follows: psychic strain erodes, on the one hand, the citizen's disposition toward the institution and, on the other, the institution's capacity to reach the citizen, thereby generating a reciprocal cycle of attrition that operates in both directions. The numerical counterpart of this cycle is rendered explicitly visible, in the later sections of the study, through Table 1 and the Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d which depict the same data. That, in the Turkish field data, anxiety about the future — which remains at 18 per cent among married women — surges to 71 per cent among never-married women, 47 per cent among divorced women, and 74 per cent among divorced men; that, within the same groupings, consultation with a psychologist rises from 11 per cent among married women to 47 per cent among never-married women and to 40 per cent among divorced men; and that the use of psychotropic medication, which stands at 1 per cent among married men, climbs to 3 per cent among divorced men and to 7 per cent among never-married women — all of this constitutes the living empirical imprint of the four-channel compound vulnerability noted above. The literature on mental health thus provides the first anchoring point of the bridge that the present study undertakes to construct; it likewise becomes evident, however, that for this anchoring point to reach the level of international relations, it must be considered jointly with the familial and institutional channels of transmission.

The literature on the family, lying at the intersection of the sociological and demographic traditions, has long debated which forms of relation modernisation has dissolved and which configurations have come to occupy their place. Goode's (1963/2013) theory of nuclearisation demonstrated that industrialisation loosens the webs of

kinship and converts the family into a smaller and more mobile unit; Chambers (2015), in turn, has documented that the modern family increasingly comes to rest upon the axes of preference and affect. Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), and Bauman (2003) have argued that, with the intensification of individualisation, long-term attachments grow increasingly fragile, while Illouz (2007) has contended that emotional life itself drifts toward the logic of the market. Inglehart (2018), tracing intergenerational value-transformation, has examined the erosion of legitimacy suffered by traditional institutions, and Donath (2017) has introduced into this discussion the ambivalence attending the experience of motherhood. Esping-Andersen's (2009) analysis developed through the lens of welfare regimes has demonstrated that the preservation of the family is not merely a matter of value-preference but constitutes one of the foundational substrata of the state's long-term economic and social carrying capacity; Cherlin (2014) has documented that instability within the family imposes upon the cognitive and emotional development of children a cost that extends across generations. The numerical counterpart of this conceptual framework is distinctly discernible in the Turkish data. Table 2 — together with Figure 2, which visualises the same data — to be presented in detail in the fifth section of the study, demonstrates that the total fertility rate in Türkiye declined from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and to approximately 1.49 by 2025; within the same window, the crude divorce rate climbed from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62, then to 1.69, back to 1.62, and finally to 2.15 per thousand. The critical threshold was crossed in the period subsequent to 2020: in 2020, a fertility rate of 1.77 still carried a weight exceeding that of the divorce rate (1.62‰), whereas by 2025 fertility had fallen to 1.49 while divorce had risen to 2.15‰, and the two curves — moving in opposing directions — have entered the phase of convergence and crossover (TurkStat, 2023, 2024, 2025; World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2023; UN DESA, 2022). The data presented by Bloom and colleagues (2010) and by Eurostat (2025) indicate that this tendency is advancing along a comparable trajectory at the European scale, while the United Nations (2022) reveals that the transformation has assumed the contours of a global pattern. Even so, this literature has by and large confined the political consequences of familial transformation to economic indicators, and has not been able to trace in detail either its psychic reverberations or its indirect weight upon foreign policy.

The influence exerted by family structure upon individual mental health has, in the literature of the past two decades, been documented consistently in a protective direction. Bourassa and colleagues (2015) have shown that the marital bond generates a web of social support, while Amato (2010) has demonstrated that divorce leaves long-term psychic imprints upon both women and men. Masten's (2014) framework of psychological resilience elucidates the mechanism underlying this protective function: fortified by the emotional resources nourished within close familial relations, the individual produces a more resilient response under conditions of stress. Rosenfeld (2017) contends that this dynamic has itself undergone transformation with modernisation, as the marital bond has shifted from an economic partnership toward a reservoir of emotional support. This theoretical framework exhibits a striking concordance with the available field data. The pattern observable in Table 1 — together with Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d, which depict the same data across four distinct indicators — to be presented in detail in the fifth section of the study, is as follows: in the Turkish sample, the indicators of psychotropic medication use, consultation with a psychiatrist, consultation with a psychologist, and anxiety about the future cluster, respectively, at 1, 4, 11, and 18 per cent among married women, whereas among never-married women these values surge to 7, 13, 47, and 71 per cent. Even within the European Union sample, this same protective pattern persists tenaciously: among married EU women, medication use is sustained at a level as low as 3 per cent, while it rises to 10 per cent among divorced EU women and to 16 per cent among never-married EU women. The male sample likewise exhibits a comparable gradation: in Türkiye, anxiety about the future stands at 26 per cent among married men yet rises to 74 per cent among divorced men, while consultation with a psychologist increases from 18 per cent among married men to 40 per cent among the divorced. A gradation of the same direction reproduces itself within the European Union: anxiety about the future, which stands at 37 per cent among married EU men, rises to 57 per cent among divorced men, while consultation with a psychologist, at 25 per cent among married EU men, climbs to 53 per cent among divorced EU men (Eurofound, 2023; OECD, 2025). That this numerical pattern reproduces itself in the same direction across two socio-cultural contexts and, moreover, across four distinct indicators, indicates that the protective effect of marriage constitutes not a cultural exception but a systemic pattern; it thereby provides empirical corroboration of Putnam's (2000) thesis that the family is the incubating ground of social capital. The shared shortcoming of the family literature is that it has not arrived at an integrative model capable of carrying this protective function up to the level of political communication and international behaviour.

The literature on state capacity was initially framed in predominantly institutional and bureaucratic terms, with Evans (1995) shaping this field through the concept of embedded autonomy, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) through the framework of inclusive institutions, and Fukuyama (2014) through the thesis that political order can

remain standing only conjointly with societal trust and legitimacy. Fukuyama's (2011) broader analysis of the origins of political order makes plain that capacity is a historically cumulative phenomenon, and that institutions which fail to achieve concordance with the norms of the society upon which they rest, although they may appear formally intact, prove functionally hollowed-out. Lee and Zhang (2017) have documented that bureaucratic effectiveness draws not only upon the consistency of rules but also upon the alignment and motivation of the personnel who apply them; Hanson and Sigman (2021), extending this line, have shown the necessity of reading capacity not merely as an administrative competence but as a phenomenon resting upon the everyday adaptation and cooperation of society. Lee (2022), in turn, argues that capacity is nourished by the bidirectional flow between institutions and citizens. Rothstein (2011) and Rothstein and Stolle (2008) have demonstrated that institutional trust and interpersonal trust constitute two channels that mutually reproduce one another, while Lipps and Schraff (2021) have shown how the erosion of trust translates into political instability and institutional wear. The recent appraisal by Devine and colleagues (2024) draws attention to the fact that the attrition of trust deeply affects the functioning of democracy. The collective contribution of this literature is substantial; yet the explanatory nexus between institutional performance and societal psychic condition has, for the most part, remained implicit. Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, however, render this nexus directly visible in numerical form: that, in the Turkish sample, anxiety about the future rises to 47 per cent among divorced women and to 74 per cent among divorced men, whereas among married men the same indicator is sustained at 26 per cent and among married women at only 18 per cent, suggests that psychic strain directly destabilises the reservoir of trust oriented toward institutions (Tyler, 2006; Jost et al., 2024). Moreover, the human substrate behind the institution is itself not insulated from the psychic climate; the public servant providing service at the desk carries with him the unease of the household, which seeps — silently yet continually — into his contact with the citizen and into the decisions he issues, so that the mediation between individual psychic state and institutional performance is transformed into a bidirectional flow (Lee & Zhang, 2017; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018). When Masten's (2014) resilience framework, Putnam's (2000) approach to social capital, and Esping-Andersen's (2009) analysis of welfare regimes are considered in concert, it becomes apparent that state capacity is not merely a matter of an organisational chart, but is nourished at once by the cognitive and relational equilibria of the persons who hold that chart upright and by the architecture of social policy that produces those equilibria. The lacuna in the extant literature consists in the fact that these three lines have not been extended to the level of international behaviour.

The permeability between domestic politics and foreign policy reached conceptual maturity with Gourevitch's (1978) proposal to invert the second image and with Putnam's (1988) framework of the two-level game, and has more recently been updated by Saunders (2022) and Kaarbo (2015), who have set out in fine detail the modes by which domestic political dynamics seep into foreign decisions. Crawford (2000) and Mercer (2010) have demonstrated that emotions carry upon the international stage a weight that rivals rational calculation, while Jost and colleagues (2024) have shown that political attitudes are shaped through individual and familial pathways of socialisation. The comprehensive findings of Lund and colleagues (2018) reinforce this line, demonstrating that psychic burden shapes not only the individual but also the surrounding environment and, consequently, the collective decisional climate. This accumulation of evidence once again reveals the inadequacy of the classical reading that confines foreign policy to military capacity and economic power. The most conspicuous shortcoming of this line, however, is that it has left largely unexamined the structural substrate upon which societal psychology is produced. The values recorded in the Turkish and European Union samples, by contrast, show that every link of this chain is susceptible to concrete reading: in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, that consultation with a psychologist among never-married EU women stands at an unusually elevated threshold of 78 per cent and that anxiety about the future reaches 76 per cent, while this tableau falls to 21 and 32 per cent, respectively, among married EU women, furnishes exceptionally clear evidence of the manner in which familial bonds condition the societal psychic climate (Eurofound, 2023; OECD, 2025). Within the same sample, that consultation with a psychologist among never-married EU men clusters at 61 per cent and anxiety about the future at 62 per cent, while among married EU men consultation with a psychologist falls back to 25 per cent and anxiety about the future to 37 per cent, indicates that the same structural pattern reproduces itself when the gender line is traversed, and that the protective function of the family carries a structural force relatively independent of cultural context. Moreover, when this micro-matrix is set alongside the demographic scissors of Türkiye for the period 2000–2025, as laid out by Table 2 and Figure 2, the prediction that the attrition within the familial hearth is pre-configuring not merely individual equanimity but also the country's weight at the international table in the period 2040–2060 comes to rest upon a concrete foundation. The multilevel analytical method advanced by Hox and colleagues (2017), by Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2022), and by Bryan and Jenkins (2016) affords the possibility of consolidating the links of individual–family–society–state–foreign policy within a single explanatory model; yet there exists in the literature no integrative exemplar that pursues

this possibility by placing mental health and familial transformation at its centre and by tracing these phenomena up to foreign-policy performance. The extant debate therefore harbours strong but dispersed fragments produced across distinct fields: the micro-foundational line of international relations, the literature on the societal consequences of mental health, the demographic literature on the transformation of the family, the institutional corollaries of trust and social capital, and the framework of two-level politics. The distinctive contribution of the present study consists in consolidating these fragments along an analytical axis upon which they may speak with one another in reciprocal fashion, and in substantiating this axis through the empirical field data of the Turkish case; in this way, the connection that has hitherto remained, to a considerable extent, tacit — the connection between the individual's pursuit of psychic equilibrium and the state's expectation of coherence upon the international stage — is brought within an explicit frame.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical backbone of this study is erected upon the proposition that foreign-policy behaviour cannot be adequately explained through the distribution of power or systemic pressure alone; rather, it must be apprehended by way of a chain that begins with the psychological equilibrium of the individual, passes through the family hearth, and extends outward to society, thence to institutions, and ultimately to the international negotiating table. Whereas Waltz's (1979) structural approach conceives of the state as a homogeneous and rational actor, Wendt (1999) softens this conception along the plane of shared identities; yet neither of these lines of argument furnishes an explanatory mechanism that descends into the inner world of the individual. Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism hardens this trajectory still further, erecting a thick wall between the internal social fabric and international behaviour; the very notion that phenomena such as civic anxiety, attenuation within the family, or institutional fatigue might bear upon foreign policy is thereby left, in theoretical terms, outside the door. Nevertheless, however formidable the power of the structure, it has become increasingly manifest that it cannot be abstracted from the psychological climate of those who operate and inhabit it (Hudson, 2014; Jost et al., 2024). Gourevitch's (1978) proposal to invert the second image and Putnam's (1988) two-level-game schema partially redress this deficit, demonstrating that the internal social fabric permeates foreign policy. The micro-foundations approach carries the nerve endings of this permeation yet deeper, reaching into the affective and perceptual world of the citizen (Hudson, 2014; Mercer, 2010; Kaarbo, 2015). The theoretical purchase of this approach derives from its enabling a reading of the state not as a black box, but as a living terrain upon which individual perceptions, affective atmosphere, and collective belief patterns stand in continuous interaction. The groundwork laid here will unfold in graduated fashion in what follows: first, the family-void within the existing micro-foundations line will be identified; subsequently, the three-ringed model will be introduced; thereafter, the individual–family, family–society–state, and state–foreign-policy axes will be elaborated in detail; an architecture of empirical testability will be presented; and the distinctive contribution of the framework will be synthesised. Table 1—to be presented in detail in the fifth section of the study—together with Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d, which render the same data across four indicators, as well as Table 2 and Figure 2, which visualises the corresponding series, will be invoked by forward reference at each link of this theoretical chain, thereby signalling in advance the empirical anchors of the model.

Although the extant micro-foundations literature possesses a considerable conceptual accumulation, it has for the most part constructed a ladder that leaps directly from the individual to society, or from the elite decision-maker directly to the institution, thus leaving the family—the most decisive arena of socialisation between these two levels—analytically vacant to a substantial degree. The present study advances this line one step further by installing the family as the intermediate level; in so doing, it incorporates into the analysis the terrain of societal socialisation hitherto neglected by the classical micro-foundations schema. This manoeuvre yields not merely a unidirectional arrow extending from the individual to the state but a cyclical explanatory framework that accommodates forward and backward flows among the family–society–institution rings. Put otherwise, just as the stance assumed at the international table cannot be conceived in isolation from the psychological condition of the citizen, so too the erosion of institutional performance cannot be read independently of attenuation within the family. This cyclical reading draws nourishment from both Beck's (1992) thesis of reflexive modernisation and Inglehart's (2018) theory of value change, for both lines of inquiry demonstrate how transformation within the individual's inner world is translated over time into collective preferences and, ultimately, into institutional structure. The framework here established, accordingly, does not aspire to supplant the classical theories of international relations but rather proffers a complementary reading intent upon illuminating the strata they have failed to discern. The addition of the family intermediate level constitutes not merely a conceptual enrichment but, equally, an augmentation of explanatory power; for the field data presented in this study reveal with arresting clarity the variance-generating capacity of this intermediate level. By way of illustration, the fact that

future anxiety—standing at 71 per cent among never-married Turkish women—drops to 18 per cent among married women demonstrates, on its own, that this fourfold differential cannot be accounted for by any macro-level model that fails to traverse the family intermediate level. The proposed theoretical framework rests upon three analytical rings that together bind the five clusters extending from the individual to foreign policy. The first ring—the individual–family axis—encompasses the terrain upon which psychological resilience is produced and sustained within the family hearth; the theoretical anchors of this ring are established through Masten (2014), Bourassa and colleagues (2015), Goode (1963/2013), and Chambers (2015). The second ring—the family–society–state axis—examines the manner in which individual mental health is converted, by way of the reservoir of societal trust, into institutional capacity, resting upon social-capital theory (Putnam, 1993, 2000), the literature on institutional trust (Rothstein, 2011; Rathbun, 2011), and debates on state capacity (Evans, 1995; Tilly, 1990; Fukuyama, 2014; Hanson & Sigman, 2021; Lee, 2022). The third ring—the state–foreign-policy axis—addresses the modalities through which institutional capacity is projected onto the international table, articulating Putnam's (1988) two-level-game framework with the contributions of Saunders (2022), Kaarbo (2015), Mercer (2010), and Wendt (1999). These three rings are designed not as a serially connected chain but as a cyclical system in which each ring both nourishes and is nourished by the others. The flow among the rings operates at two levels: intra-ring dynamics—such as the way in which, on the individual–family axis, the marital bond sustains psychological resilience—permit the testing of individual cells; while inter-ring transitions—such as the carrying-over of attenuation within the family hearth into the reservoir of societal trust—constitute the holistic flow of the system. This flow operates not only bottom-up (individual → foreign policy) but also top-down (the psychological pressure imported into the country by international crises) and laterally (the mutual reproduction of familial and institutional trust). This cyclical architecture augments the model's resilience against failure at any single node, while simultaneously permitting each ring to be tested empirically in its own right. The reason the framework is presented through textual construction rather than through a separate diagram is that the multi-directional character of the inter-ring transitions is too dynamic to be accommodated within a static schema; this dynamism will become visible in matrix form during the empirical-testing stage (Section 5, Findings). Indeed, each transition point in the chain will be unfolded in the paragraphs that follow, both through its theoretical anchors and through the empirical traces verifiable by means of Table 1, Figures 1.a–d, Table 2, and Figure 2. The first ring of the model, the individual–family axis, is conceptualised along the lines of the psychological-resilience framework (Masten, 2014), social-support theory (Bourassa et al., 2015), and the sociological tradition of the family (Giddens, 1991; Goode, 1963/2013; Chambers, 2015).

The family is here treated not merely as a unit of dwelling but as a buffering network that renders it possible for the individual to negotiate adversity. Within Masten's (2014) framework, resilience is not a fixed, inborn personality trait but rather a dynamic capacity woven day by day through the convergence of environmental resources such as warm relationships, predictable routines, and secure attachment. The site at which these resources have historically been produced most densely has been the family hearth (Goode, 1963/2013; Chambers, 2015). At the conceptual level, marriage—rather than the status category sociology tends to describe—is transformed into a canopy of protection that simultaneously furnishes economic risk-sharing, emotional regulation, and the anchoring of identity. This reading has an important counter-current: Bauman's (2003) notion of liquid ties and Illouz's (2007) analysis of cold intimacies together advance a powerful theoretical objection concerning the growing fragility of modern relationships and the erosion of the protective function historically embodied by the institution of marriage. Rather than dismissing this objection, the present study enters into dialogue with it; it endeavours to demonstrate at the empirical level that the family institution still performs a measurable buffering function, even as that buffer progressively attenuates. Table 1—to be presented in detail in the fifth section—together with Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d, which render the same data across four indicators, lends robust support to this conceptual claim: in the Türkiye sample, psychotropic-medication use, psychiatric consultation, psychological consultation, and future anxiety among married women cluster at 1, 4, 11, and 18 per cent respectively; among never-married women these values rise to 7, 13, 47, and 71 per cent; and among divorced women they stand at 3, 9, 21, and 47 per cent. Among men, the same pattern crystallises more sharply within the divorced group: values of 1, 7, 18, and 26 per cent among married men hold at 1, 7, 15, and 27 per cent among those who have never married, yet climb to 3, 15, 40, and 74 per cent among the divorced. This asymmetry furnishes a significant theoretical clue: for men, the decisive threshold is not never having married, but rather the loss of a bond once formed. European Union data exhibit a pattern of the same direction; among married EU women the four indicators stand at 3, 5, 21, and 32 per cent, rising among never-married EU women to 16, 19, 78, and 76 per cent; among married EU men they rise from 4, 7, 25, and 37 per cent to 15, 17, 61, and 62 per cent among their never-married counterparts (Eurofound, 2023; Eurostat, 2025; OECD, 2025).

This comparative panorama demonstrates that the psychological buffering function of the family canopy alters its tone across geographies but does not alter its direction; the individual–family axis is therefore not a theoretical abstraction but a systemic pattern (United Nations, 2022). The condition anticipated by Beck (1992) in his individualisation thesis—whereby personal risks become severed from the protective networks of institutions and cast upon the shoulders of the individual—is empirically crystallised in these figures. The macro-demographic counterpart of this empirical pattern on the individual–family axis demonstrates, at the level of time-series data, that the buffering ring of the model is progressively attenuating. Table 2—to be presented in detail in the fifth section of the study—together with Figure 2, which visualises the same data, reveals that Türkiye's total fertility rate has declined from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 in 2025; during the same window the crude divorce rate has climbed from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62, 1.69, then back to 1.62, and finally to 2.15 (TurkStat, 2023, 2024, 2025; World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2023; UN DESA, 2022). The critical threshold was crossed in the period following 2020: whereas the fertility rate of 1.77 in 2020 still carried a weight above the divorce rate (1.62‰), by 2025 fertility had descended to 1.49 and divorce had risen to 2.15‰, the two curves moving in opposite directions, converging, and entering a phase of crossover. This dual movement confirms at the theoretical level that the buffering capacity of the individual–family axis has entered a process of intergenerational erosion; it intimates that Masten's (2014) notion of resilience is being transformed into a resource "falling behind the times." Cherlin's (2014) thesis—that family instability produces a cost bearing upon children's development across generations—together with Esping-Andersen's (2009) analysis of how welfare regimes lean upon the family and of how, as the family dissolves, those regimes themselves are destabilised, elucidates why the scissors-movement revealed in Table 2 and Figure 2 constitutes not merely a demographic problem but is also coterminous with the desiccation of the reservoir of resilience on the individual–family axis. The recent assessments of Helliwell and colleagues (2024, 2025) concerning the life-satisfaction–institutional-trust nexus further confirm that this intergenerational cost is not confined to an internal familial reckoning but is carried over into the country's indicator of collective well-being and into its international standing. At the theoretical plane, when Masten's notion of resilience is conjoined with the ameliorative effect Bourassa and colleagues attribute to marriage, the family institution represents the reservoir at the lowest stratum of the model; once this reservoir attenuates, the flow in the upper strata inevitably weakens as well (UNFPA, 2025). Accordingly, the tendency legible in Table 2 and Figure 2 is not merely a piece of demographic data but a warning signal that the first ring of the proposed three-ringed model is undergoing historical attenuation.

The second ring of the model, the family–society–state axis, is constructed upon social-capital theory (Putnam, 1993, 2000), the literature on institutional trust (Rothstein, 2011; Rathbun, 2011), and debates on state capacity (Evans, 1995; Tilly, 1990; Fukuyama, 2014; Hanson & Sigman, 2021; Lee, 2022). The conceptual fabric of this ring is constituted by three fundamental elements: social trust, institutional memory, and ethical leadership. Social trust denotes the positive expectation that citizens hold both toward one another and toward institutions; institutional memory designates the transmission to successive generations of the practices, procedures, and crisis experience that a state has accumulated over time (Tilly, 1990; Fukuyama, 2011); ethical leadership, in turn, furnishes the normative cement that ensures this accumulation is governed within a value-laden framework (Rothstein, 2011; Helliwell et al., 2024). When Tyler's (2006) procedural-justice approach is appended to this triad, the picture attains completion: the trust that the citizen reposes in the institution is nourished not merely by the outcome of the decision but also by whether the treatment extended to him or her has been fair and respectful. A psychologically fatigued citizen is predisposed to construe the same treatment in a more unfavourable light; this circumstance produces a perpetual divergence between objective institutional performance and subjective perceptions of trust. These three elements stand in direct contact with the mental health of individuals, for persons who have been psychologically bruised carry that same fatigue not only into their personal relationships but also into the desk-side encounter with the public official, into their faith in the ballot box, and into their disposition toward public authority (Lipps & Schraff, 2021; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018; Devine et al., 2024). That the public official is likewise an individual—and that he or she carries the disquiet of the household to the desk—constitutes an indispensable complement of this reading; thus, the individual psychological condition becomes at once the input and the output of institutional performance (Lee & Zhang, 2017). To borrow Rathbun's (2011) distinction, interpersonal trust and institutional trust behave not as two independent channels but rather as two distinct tributaries of the same psychological basin. For this reason, the anxiety that enters the household, after several iterations, re-emerges in institutional corridors as a silent inefficiency; conversely, the trust that issues from the household imparts an invisible momentum to institutional efficacy. Evans's (1995) notion of embedded autonomy and Tilly's (1990) conception of historical state-building are particularly illuminating in this regard: a strong state is not one insulated from society but one that has struck roots within it and that draws nourishment from its psychological reservoir. When this reservoir is depleted,

even the most meticulously ordered bureaucratic schema succumbs to a functional fatigue. The empirical trace of the family–society–state axis may be read directly in the inter-group volatility of the four indicators in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d. At the level of the data, the rise of future anxiety in Türkiye to 74 per cent among divorced men and 47 per cent among divorced women cannot plausibly be regarded merely as a matter internal to the household; these proportions are collective signals that attest to the attenuation of the reservoir of societal trust and to the thinning of the state's coordinative capacity. That psychiatric consultation within the same group reaches 15 per cent among divorced men demonstrates that psychological strain has ceased to be a merely individual distress and has turned into an institutionalised demand for care; this demand, moreover, becomes a macro variable directly affecting public health expenditure, labour productivity, and the burden placed upon social security. In the EU sample, this signal is legible in still bolder terms: on the psychologist-consultation indicator, values of 64 per cent among divorced EU women and 53 per cent among divorced EU men attest that demand for psychological services imposes a sustained burden upon state capacity (Eurofound, 2023; OECD, 2025). The economic dimension tightens this chain further still: micro-level burdens such as income anxiety, alimony obligations, or the protraction of legal proceedings are converted at the macro level into pressures that affect labour-force participation, the tax base, and the priorities of public expenditure, thereby sustaining the silent erosion of state capacity (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Esping-Andersen, 2009). This data pattern furnishes a critical theoretical corroboration of the study's second ring: the mediation between individual psychological condition and state capacity is not an assumption that the literature has for the most part been content to leave implicit, but rather a numerical pattern traceable simultaneously across four distinct indicators in both the Türkiye and the EU samples. That this pattern recurs across geographical boundaries strongly suggests that the family–society–state axis is not a cultural exception but a systemic mechanism. The empirical fabric that Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d present with regard to the reservoir of institutional trust constitutes the most robust testing ground for the second ring of the model, thereby demonstrating that the conjunction of Masten's resilience framework with Putnam's social-capital approach is not mere conceptual speculation but carries a numerical counterpart.

The third and final ring of the model, the state–foreign-policy axis, conceptualises the modalities through which domestic political resilience is projected onto the international negotiating table. Putnam's (1988) two-level-game schema acquires particular weight at this juncture, for every manoeuvre in foreign policy is simultaneously answerable to the domestic public. The most salient theoretical contribution of this schema lies in its demonstration that foreign policy is not merely a response to international pressures but, on the contrary, that the interval of domestic political consent and the margin of negotiation abroad are interwoven. When the psychological base of the public narrows, the leader's "win-set" contracts mechanically and, in practice, the diplomatic decision-space likewise narrows (Saunders, 2022; Kaarbo, 2015). If the domestic public has been psychologically eroded and the reservoir of societal trust has been thinned, the negotiation margin at the leader's disposal contracts; foreign policy is thereby transformed from a set of strategic choices into a bundle of reflexes responsive to internal emotional fluctuations (Jost et al., 2024). Mercer (2010) had demonstrated that emotion leaves an imprint upon international decisions that does not remain in the shadow of rational calculation; within the proposed model, this imprint may be re-read as a signal that travels upward: attenuation within the family hearth weakens the individual's psychological equilibrium, the weakened equilibrium erodes societal trust, the eroded trust decelerates institutional rhythm, and the decelerated institution both mutes and renders inconsistent the country's voice at the international table. Read through Wendt's (1999) social-constructivist lens, this signal may be further reinterpreted not merely as the sum of individual affects but as one of the micro-foundations of the collective identity a country projects upon the external world: a fragile societal psyche produces, in time, a fragile international identity, whereas a resilient societal psyche produces an international identity that is trustworthy and keeps its word. This identity-effect operates as a form of "soft capacity" extending beyond the material elements of power, nourishing a broad terrain that runs from the continuity of alliance networks to mediation capacity (Helliwell et al., 2024). In the counter-scenario, a balanced psychological ground, a sound family canopy, rich social capital, and a robust institutional memory mutually nourish one another, rendering the language of foreign policy coherent, predictable, and credible (Fukuyama, 2014). As a normative vantage point, ethical leadership serves as the compass determining the direction of this process; a line of leadership that bases its decisions not upon short-term emotional waves but upon accumulated institutional experience and societal resilience constitutes a protective upper stratum that guards against the wear and tear of all the other rings (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Devine et al., 2024). Inglehart's (2018) thesis of intergenerational value change offers, at this point, a complementary framework: in societies in which material insecurity predominates, foreign-policy discourse assumes a survival-oriented, protectionist, and anxiety-laden tone; in societies in which self-expression values have taken root, foreign policy opens a wider space for cooperation, accommodation, and long-term institutional foresight. In this respect, the bond between mental health and value transformation

constitutes a silent theoretical buttress of foreign-policy performance that has hitherto been neglected. Accordingly, the model ceases to be a unidirectional "bottom-up" flow and is transformed into a feedback loop nourished from above by the quality of leadership. That the demographic scissors-movement displayed in Table 2 and Figure 2 pre-figures the weight that Türkiye will carry at the international negotiating table between 2040 and 2060 constitutes the empirical correlate, along the temporal axis, of this third ring. This three-ringed theoretical construction likewise furnishes the logical substratum of the study's hypotheses. The principal hypothesis advances the claim that states whose societies exhibit favourable mental-health indicators and a robust familial fabric will be able to preserve their social capital, their institutional memory, and their foreign-policy posture with a higher degree of coherence. The auxiliary hypotheses render this chain testable by disaggregating it into its constituent rings: H1 — the dissolution of the institution of marriage corrodes mental health; this is tested through the three- to fourfold differential across all four indicators between the married group on the one hand, and the never-married and divorced groups on the other, within the marital-status × gender matrix of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d. H2 — psychological erosion corrodes societal trust; this is tested through the parallel reading of the future-anxiety column of Table 1 and Figure 1.a against the societal-trust indicators in the literature (Helliwell et al., 2024; Devine et al., 2024). H3 — the erosion of trust depresses the efficacy of state capacity; this is tested through the numerical pressure—psychiatric consultation reaching as high as 15 per cent—exerted upon public health demand by the indicators displayed in Table 1 and Figures 1.b–1.c (psychologist and psychiatrist consultation). H4 — diminished capacity renders foreign policy reactive; this is submitted to theoretical testing through the two-level-game framework (Putnam, 1988) and through the external traces of domestic psychological erosion. H5 — the demographic scissors-movement produces the intergenerational dimension of this chain; this is tested at the threshold of crossover between the total fertility rate (TFR) and the divorce rate in the 2000–2025 time series of Table 2 and Figure 2.

This chain of hypotheses possesses two significant properties: first, each ring is empirically testable in its own right—that is, the falsifiability threshold of the model is kept open; and second, the connections among the rings are not linear but feedback-laden—which renders the model not fragile in the face of failure at any single point, but on the contrary, amenable to intervention from multiple points of entry. The distinctive theoretical contribution crystallises at three points. First, by introducing the family intermediate level into the micro-foundations approach, the void between the individual and society has been filled. Second, state capacity has been re-read not merely as an organisational chart but as a living organism nourished by the psychological reserve of the citizen, the memory of the institution, and the normative fabric of leadership. Third, foreign-policy performance has been tethered not so much to material resources as to the aggregate health of this entire chain, thereby transcending the classical power-centric readings. Taken together, these three contributions permit the study's position within the literature to be characterised not as "appending a further addition to existing theories" but as "bridging the thresholds at which distinct disciplines have ceased to behold one another." International-relations theory has long sat apart from family sociology; family sociology from the literature on psychological resilience; and that literature, in turn, from the scholarship on public administration; the framework here proposed aspires to conjoin these separate tables through a common causal idiom. The framework possesses a flexibility sufficient to construct, within the same explanatory language, both the favourable scenario (strong family → resilient individual → high trust → effective state → credible foreign policy) and the unfavourable scenario (dissolved family → fragile individual → eroded trust → fatigued state → passive foreign policy). This construction—buttressed by the micro-empirical matrix of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d and by the macro time series of Table 2 and Figure 2—will be rendered testable through the research method to be presented in the next section. In this way, the theoretical framework ceases to be an abstract conceptual architecture and becomes an analytical map directly testable by means of field data gathered in four Turkish cities and in ten European Union countries—and capable, moreover, of furnishing a decision ladder for policymakers. This map provides theoretical justification for the proposition that intervening in attenuation within the family is, over the long term, a legitimate instrument for the preservation of foreign-policy credibility, and that investment in mental-health services generates a strategic depth that the classical reckonings of defence expenditure cannot capture.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chain woven across the preceding three chapters has intimated the existence of a trajectory that originates at the domestic hearth of the family, extends inward into the individual's inner world, and from there reaches outward to social trust, institutional functioning, and, ultimately, to the nation's voice at the international negotiating table. For this trajectory to transcend an abstract assertion and crystallize into a testable model, methodological choices must be meticulously justified. The very nature of the problem engaged by the present study—namely, the manner in which an emotional state that does not readily submit to numerical reduction,

familial bonds that resist facile enumeration, and a multilayered conception of state capacity become mutually entwined—impels the researcher from the outset in a particular direction: what individuals say matters no less than how they say it, and what they do matters no less than the conditions under which they do it. Accordingly, the study adopts a predominantly qualitative design while also drawing upon descriptive numerical tabulations generated through the conversion of field notes into percentage distributions. Such a dual architecture may be likened to a ledger with two facing pages: on the left page stand the utterances of the informants; on the right page are registered the distributions of these utterances across groups; when read in conjunction, the two pages yield a composite picture. This hybrid construction preserves depth on the one hand and secures cross-group comparability of findings on the other. The method has been so configured as to be sufficiently flexible to render visible each link of the chain advanced in the theoretical framework, and sufficiently integrated to trace the chain as a whole. The underlying intention of the design is not to render the question more intricate but to ensure that the answer reaches the reader in a transparent form. Put differently, the method has been conceived not as a performance unto itself but as a means of preparing the terrain upon which the explanatory model erected throughout the three preceding chapters may stand on firm ground. In the international relations literature, moreover, studies that descend into the individual's inner world are no longer regarded as exceptional; on the contrary, there is a growing recognition that foreign policy can be fully apprehended only when these micro-foundations are engaged (Hudson, 2014; Kaarbo, 2015). The architecture of this chapter proceeds along the following sequence: the logic of the design, the Turkish sample, the European sample, the data collection instruments, the variables, the Turkish field findings, the EU field findings, the H1–H5 testing procedure, the multilevel analytical strategy, and, finally, the ethical principles together with the methodological limitations. A comprehensive methodological architecture is thereby established, and the chapter functions as a bridge conveying the reader from the chain of hypotheses to the findings chapter.

Several concrete considerations underpin the decision to frame the design in predominantly qualitative terms. It is exceedingly difficult to apprehend, solely through rigid forms populated with check marks, why a woman remains at a distance from marriage, why a man withdraws inwardly in the aftermath of divorce, or why a young person regards the future with mistrust. Such matters frequently become visible not in the question posed by the form but in a parenthetical remark opened alongside the question, in a sentence left unfinished, or in a reply offered with a sigh. For this reason, an unstructured conversational setting has been preferred over standardized questionnaires. Such a preference rests upon the principle of "trust first, numbers second" (Creswell, 2014), a maxim frequently commended within the field-research literature. Indeed, the fact that individuals tend to share their personal experiences of mental health within natural conversation rather than through scaled instruments is a phenomenon likewise underscored in the international health literature (Patel et al., 2018; Santomauro et al., 2021). In the course of the conversations conducted with participants, neither audio nor video recordings were obtained; summary notes taken either during the interviews or immediately thereafter constituted the principal raw material of the research. This approach afforded individuals the possibility of speaking more openly on matters requiring discretion and simultaneously shifted the interview away from a "subject–observer" relation toward something approximating a reciprocal conversation between two acquaintances. This proximity has proven to be among the elements that have directly elevated both the ethical sensitivity and the data quality of the study. The epistemological stance assumed here stands closer to an interpretive endeavor of understanding than to a strictly positivist claim of measurement; this, in turn, is consonant with the social-constructivist (Wendt, 1999) current adopted in the theoretical framework. The response that this methodological choice offers to the question "why this method?" may be stated succinctly: because the subject matter carries a domain as fragile as the emotional state, and this domain discloses itself only within a non-judgmental conversational environment. The alternative path of relying exclusively on scaled surveys was contemplated; it was judged, however, to entail the risk of reducing participants to ordinary numerical units and thereby to run counter to the holistic perspective of the study.

In the constitution of the Turkish sample, four cities were deliberately selected: Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli, and Erzurum. The joint inclusion of these four cities does not represent a random aggregation; rather, it reflects an intention to seat the different faces of the country at the same table. Istanbul and Ankara represent two great metropolises located at the center of the economy and politics and sustained by rapid demographic flows; Kocaeli represents an industrial city shaped by industrialization and reconfigured through internal migration; and Erzurum represents a relatively conservative Anatolian city in which traditional bonds remain discernibly present within everyday life. When the four cities are brought together, therefore, it is not merely the several corners of the country on the map that converge; rather, the distinct tempos of modernization, the distinct tonalities of familial values, and the distinct rhythms of economic life are assembled within a single study. A total of 1,000 individuals—equally distributed across the four cities—were engaged in conversation between

2022 and 2024. The age range of participants was kept between 40 and 80, since this cohort possesses the experiential depth requisite for speaking in the aftermath of pivotal life events such as marriage and divorce, and, on matters such as apprehension concerning the future and mental health, is capable of offering an Accumulated perspective that transcends short-term emotional oscillations. A purposive sampling approach was adopted in reaching participants, with particular attention devoted to attaining a balanced distribution with respect to marital status (married, divorced, never married) and gender. To put it more plainly, the sample was not tilted toward any single group; rather, approximately equal standing was afforded to each of six distinct groups—married, divorced, and never-married women and men. This obviated the emergence of tableaux resting upon a single group and doing injustice to the subjects, and ensured that each group was represented through its own voice. This diversity renders it possible for the findings not to remain confined to metropolitan experience and permits a conjoint reading of Turkey's several sociocultural strata. The distribution of the temporal window over a three-year span, in turn, has made it possible to observe more stable tendencies rather than transient emotional states accentuated by a particular day or season. The full quantitative texture generated by the Turkish field component may be consulted in the Turkey rows of Table 1—to be presented in the fifth chapter of the study—and of Figures 1.a (apprehension concerning the future), 1.b (consultation with a psychologist), 1.c (consultation with a psychiatrist), and 1.d (psychotropic medication use), which render the same data across four indicators.

The European sample was constituted by means of a two-stage field study. In the first stage, in October 2019, unstructured conversations were held with 1,150 individuals across a total of 22 cities distributed over ten countries: Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Although Switzerland is not a formal member of the European Union, it was incorporated into the same sample inasmuch as its family policies, social protection system, and cultural fabric exhibit substantial affinity with those of the remainder of this group. In the second stage, between December 2024 and January 2025, 450 individuals were interviewed under the same method in three German cities—Frankfurt, Offenbach, and Hanau—none of which appeared in the city roster of the first stage. Taken in conjunction, the two stages yield a Western European sample encompassing 25 distinct cities across ten countries; throughout the study, the shorthand "European Union sample" is employed, for convenience, to designate this enlarged set in which Switzerland is likewise included (and the same shorthand has been adopted in the row labels of Table 1). Notwithstanding the five-year interval separating the two stages, the convergence of roughly 99 percent between the findings of the two rounds has rendered it feasible to evaluate both rounds under a shared umbrella. Put otherwise, the fact that the picture barely altered across the intervening five years—a period during which significant social events transpired—demonstrates that the imprints of family structure upon mental health are too deeply rooted to be accounted for by short-lived factors. Comprising 1,600 individuals in total, this sample captures a broad cross-section both geographically and temporally. The comparison between the two geographies—Turkey and Western Europe—performs a decisive function in discerning whether the findings are contingent upon local conditions or reflective of a broader global pattern of familial dissolution. Such a dual-geography design further reinforces the internal validity of the study and mitigates the familiar hesitation as to whether findings obtained from a single country are of a structural or a conjunctural character. The prominence with which the trend toward loneliness and social isolation in Europe has been highlighted in international reports (Eurofound, 2023; OECD, 2025) lends further support to the proposition that this comparison carries meaning beyond the constraints of time and place. The matrix produced by the European field study may likewise be consulted in the European Union rows of Table 1 and of Figures 1.a–d.

Throughout the field study, no fixed questionnaire was presented to participants; rather, four core themes were broached within the natural flow of conversation: whether the respondent had used psychiatric (psychotropic) medication within the preceding year, whether he or she had consulted a psychiatrist, whether he or she had visited a psychologist, and the level of apprehension regarding the future. These four themes figure among the indicators most frequently employed in the mental health literature to capture an individual's psychological condition (Patel et al., 2018; Santomauro et al., 2021; Lund et al., 2018). In other words, these four prompts were selected so as to permit a joint reading of how individuals approach medical assistance, on the one hand, and what they privately feel regarding their futures, on the other. These topics were addressed within the conversation in a natural sequence, and no insistence was exerted at junctures upon which participants did not wish to elaborate. Following each interview, the researcher transposed the participant's responses into concise "yes" or "no" notations, appending to them such salient formulations from the participant's own utterances as remained memorable. These notes were subsequently classified by marital status and gender, converted into percentage distributions, and inserted into the comparative framework of Table 1 and of Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d, which depict the same data across four distinct indicators. The tabulation rendered into numerical form

constitutes the skeletal structure of the interpretation; the participants' own utterances, in turn, endow this skeleton with flesh and life. In short, the study endeavors to erect a bridge between the coldness of number and the warmth of the spoken word, taking care not to lose sight of the human narratives lying beneath the figures. This preference furthermore exhibits a clear parallelism with the recent literature that has drawn attention to the weight of emotions within international relations (Crawford, 2000; Mercer, 2010). The data collection instrument thus functioned not as a sophisticated measurement apparatus but as a plain bridge of conversation erected between two individuals. The independent variables of the study are gathered into two principal clusters. The first cluster pertains to family structure and comprises three categories: married, divorced, and never married. The second cluster encompasses indicators of mental health and includes the use of psychiatric medication, consultation with a psychiatrist, consultation with a psychologist, and apprehension concerning the future. These four indicators have been adopted because they simultaneously capture both medical consultation behavior and the individual's own subjective assessment of his or her inner world. "State capacity" and "foreign policy performance," positioned as dependent variables, are not amenable to direct measurement through field interviews; for this reason, the said magnitudes have been represented by indirect indicators drawn from secondary sources. Data concerning levels of social trust, institutional effectiveness, and stability in decision-making processes have been evaluated within this framework. Reading state capacity through such indirect indicators is not a novel approach; it is consonant with studies that have drawn attention to the multidimensional nature of institutional performance within the public administration and political science literatures (Lee, 2022; Lee & Zhang, 2017; Mann, 2012). Moreover, the time-series data on fertility and divorce for the 2000–2025 interval, compiled from TurkStat, the OECD, the World Bank, and UN DESA, have been employed in the generation of Table 2—to be presented in the fifth chapter of the study—and of Figure 2, which visualizes the same data, and have been situated within the macro-demographic backdrop of the analysis (TurkStat, 2023, 2024, 2025; OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024; UN DESA, 2022). Accordingly, each of the links in the family → mental health → social trust → state capacity → foreign policy chain has been nourished by a distinct stratum of data, and a separate evidentiary line has been established for every link of the model. In other terms, rather than being laden upon the shoulders of a single piece of evidence, the model has been constructed as a multi-legged stand, each leg furnishing its own point of support for a given link.

The full numerical texture generated by the six-group matrix constructed within the Turkish leg of the field study takes shape in the Turkey rows of Table 1 and of Figures 1.a–d as follows. Among married women, psychotropic medication use clusters at approximately 1 percent, psychiatric consultation at 4 percent, psychological consultation at 11 percent, and apprehension concerning the future at 18 percent. Among never-married women, the same four indicators rise to 7, 13, 47, and 71 percent, respectively; among divorced women, they settle at 3, 9, 21, and 47 percent. Even when considered solely among women, the contrast may be summarized as follows: whereas apprehension concerning the future remains at approximately one-fifth among married women, it approaches roughly seven in ten among never-married women; that is, a nearly fourfold disparity emerges, rendering the protective function of the familial bond almost visible to the naked eye. Among male participants, the picture traces a distinct contour. In Turkey, approximately 1 percent of married men reported using psychiatric medication, 7 percent reported consulting a psychiatrist, 18 percent reported consulting a psychologist, and 26 percent reported experiencing apprehension concerning the future. Among never-married men, these proportions remain at approximately 1, 7, 15, and 27 percent; among divorced men, however, they climb to 3, 15, 40, and 74 percent. The last of these figures among divorced men in particular—the reporting of apprehension concerning the future at a rate approximating three-quarters—may be read as concrete evidence of the grave imprint left upon male individuals by the collapse of the familial canopy. It is conspicuous in the field notes that this condition was frequently associated with the sense of indeterminacy engendered by open-ended alimony arrangements, protracted litigation processes, and protective injunctions. The asymmetrical pattern across the female and male bands carries an important methodological signal: for men, the decisive threshold is not that of having never married but that of the dissolution of a bond already formed. This initial stratum of findings supports the core hypothesis of the study, directionally corroborating in each of the six participant subgroups, and across all four indicators, the H1 claim that a marriage-based family structure exerts a direct and positive influence upon the individual's mental health.

The European Union sample, in the EU rows of Table 1 and of Figures 1.a–d, demonstrates that the protective function of family structure is not a phenomenon peculiar to Turkey alone; rather, the same pattern is reproduced within a distinct cultural climate. Within this sample, approximately 3 percent of married women reported using psychiatric medication, 5 percent reported consulting a psychiatrist, 21 percent reported consulting a psychologist, and 32 percent reported experiencing apprehension concerning the future. Among never-married European women, the same indicators ascend to markedly elevated levels of approximately 16,

19, 78, and 76 percent, respectively; among divorced women, they run at 10, 14, 64, and 66 percent. On the male side, the rates observed at approximately 4, 7, 25, and 37 percent among married men rise to 15, 17, 61, and 62 percent among never-married men and to 8, 15, 53, and 57 percent among divorced men. The sharpest Divergence between Turkey and Europe resides in the fact that the mental health indicators within non-marital groups climb to considerably higher levels in Europe. That psychological consultation reaches approximately 78 percent among never-married women in Europe in particular—that is, that nearly eight of every ten women have, in one form or another, consulted a mental health professional—reveals in stark terms the breadth of the imprint that the erosion of family structure has left upon the individual's inner world. This condition intimates that the dissolution of the familial institution has reached a more advanced stage in Europe and that the psychological burden borne by individuals has appreciably increased (Eurofound, 2023; OECD, 2025). By contrast, in both geographies the rates among married individuals remain markedly lower; this shared point strongly suggests that marriage undertakes a structural protective function relatively independent of cultural context. Methodologically, this convergence likewise performs a corroborative function: the analogous pattern obtained through the same method across two distinct geographies demonstrates that the measurement instrument and the analytical framework do not distort results across regions, thereby reinforcing the internal consistency of the study. Indeed, when Giddens's (1991) analysis of late-modern identity is considered in conjunction with Beck's (1992) thesis of individualization, the more advanced picture observed in Europe is likewise consonant with theoretical expectations.

The articulation of the field data with the chain of hypotheses is effected through a distinct testing procedure for each of H1–H5, as formulated in the theoretical framework. For H1 (the dissolution of the institution of marriage erodes mental health), the testing procedure has been established by computing, within the marital status \times gender \times geography matrix of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, the percentage differential between the married group, on the one hand, and the never-married and divorced groups, on the other, for each of the four indicators; a differential in excess of a twofold factor has been taken, as a threshold, to signal a structural protective effect. This twofold threshold rests upon the odds ratio ≥ 2 convention, widely employed within the epidemiological public-health literature as an indicator of structural effect; in the present study, it has been adopted as the interpretive analogue of this convention rather than as a formal probabilistic calculation. For H2 (mental erosion wears down social trust), the apprehension-concerning-the-future column of Figure 1.a has been read in parallel with the country-level institutional-trust scores reported in Helliwell et al. (2024) and Devine et al. (2024). For H3 (the erosion of trust diminishes the effectiveness of state capacity), the density of psychological and psychiatric consultations depicted in Figures 1.b and 1.c—particularly the psychiatric consultation rate of 15 percent reached among divorced men—has been treated as a quantitative proxy for the pressure exerted upon public health expenditures. For H4 (diminished capacity renders foreign policy reactive), the mechanism of the narrowing of the ratification window within the two-level game framework (Putnam, 1988) has been opened to theoretical testing through the density of collective apprehension registered in the field notes; this hypothesis has been evaluated by means of interpretive testing rather than direct quantitative examination, and this preference is explicitly acknowledged as a methodological limitation. For H5 (the demographic scissor produces the intergenerational dimension of the chain), the point at which the total fertility rate (TFR) and the divorce rate exchange positions in the post-2020 period within the 2000–2025 time series presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 has been adopted as a threshold, and the hypothesis has been tested through examination of the temporal parallelism between the macro-demographic variables and the micro-level field values. Each link of the chain of hypotheses has thereby been subjected to a distinct type of evidence—comparative percentage differential, parallel reading, quantitative trace of pressure, interpretive framing, and time-series threshold—and the blind spots that a uniform mode of testing might have generated have thus been mitigated.

The analysis of the data obtained has been carried out along a four-stage sequence. In the first stage, the field notes were read thematically; recurring patterns, emphases, and silences were separately marked. In the second stage, these thematic readings were classified by marital status and gender, transposed into percentage distributions, and inserted into the comparative framework of Table 1 and of Figures 1.a–d. In the third stage, this matrix was juxtaposed with the fertility and divorce series compiled from TurkStat, the OECD, the World Bank, and UN DESA (Table 2 and Figure 2); the study examined whether the transformation of the demographic arithmetic—namely, Turkey's total fertility rate, which declined from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 in 2025, and the crude divorce rate per thousand, which rose from 1.40 to 1.62, 1.69, then back to 1.62, and finally to 2.15—moves in parallel with individual mental health indicators (TurkStat, 2023, 2024, 2025; OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024; UN DESA, 2022). This parallelism is so manifest that the period in which fertility declined and divorce rose coincides with precisely that period

during which loneliness, distrust of the future, and the pursuit of psychological support intensified within the field notes. In the fourth and perhaps most critical stage, secondary data pertaining to social trust, institutional effectiveness, and foreign policy stability were superimposed upon these two strata, and each link of the individual–family–society–state–foreign policy chain was situated as a distinct level of analysis. This approach has been constructed in accordance with the logic commended by the multilevel analysis literature (Hox et al., 2017; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2022; Bryan & Jenkins, 2016), permitting the articulation of different units of analysis with one another. That the findings can be brought into dialogue with the theoretical framework in the subsequent chapter is largely attributable to the integrated construction of this multi-stratified analytical chain. Put concisely, the interpretation of the data has proceeded along a natural bottom-up sequence: "first the individual, then the group, then society, then the institution, and, finally, the external voice of the state." Throughout the research process, ethical principles have been rigorously observed, and methodological transparency has been situated not as a showcase but as a load-bearing spine of the study. No information pertaining to participants' names, addresses, or identities was recorded, and the conversations were documented neither through electronic means nor by any recording device, but solely through summary notes compiled thereafter. This approach simultaneously safeguards privacy and enables participants to speak more candidly by allowing them to feel at ease (Israel, 2015). Within the framework of the "do no harm" principle, when distressing matters arose within a conversation, participants were informed at the outset of their unrestricted prerogative to terminate the topic at any moment; thereby, the research itself was prevented from becoming a source of psychological burden. The validity of the study has been secured not through the self-corroboration of data produced by a single source, but through a mutually reinforcing tripartite foundation: field conversations (reflected in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d), official demographic series (reflected in Table 2 and Figure 2), and the reports of international organizations. The fact that the three yield mutually consistent results markedly enhances the reliability of the findings.

The possible bearing of the researcher's own positionality upon the analysis has likewise not been overlooked; in order that the conversations not remain tethered to a single researcher, joint notes were taken and compared throughout the field study, thereby affording a form of cross-verification. This notwithstanding, the study of course has its limitations, and the forthright articulation of these limitations constitutes an inseparable component of methodological integrity. First, given the nature of the unstructured conversational method, the percentage values obtained should be read as robust indicators of tendency rather than as precise statistical inferences; for this reason, every proportion reported in Table 1 is presented with the qualifier "approximately." Second, the sample is circumscribed to individuals aged 40 to 80; the dynamics of family and mental health among younger cohorts warrant a separate investigation. Third, foreign policy performance has been measured not directly but through indirect indicators; while this preserves the force of the interpretations, it nevertheless requires that inferences be formulated in probabilistic rather than absolute terms; on the same ground, H4 has been assessed through interpretive framing rather than quantitative testing, and the inferences bearing upon the foreign policy leg of the findings rest upon this interpretive foundation. Fourth, the temporal alignment between the Turkish and Western European field studies is not exact: the Turkish field data were collected in 2022–2024, the EU first-stage data in 2019, and the EU second-stage data in 2024–2025; although the near-99 percent convergence between the two EU stages substantially attenuates the impact of this temporal shift, the absence of a synchronous comparison within an identical calendar window nevertheless constitutes a limitation. Fifth, the two geographies selected do not represent the world in its entirety; how the pattern would manifest in regions endowed with different family systems, such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, constitutes the subject of a separate inquiry. Sixth, the inclusion of Switzerland within the Western European sample reflects the fact that the study has proceeded on the criterion of affinity in family and social-protection fabric rather than on that of formal institutional membership; it must be borne in mind that the shorthand "EU sample" constitutes a terminological convenience. Finally, it should be expressly noted that Inglehart's (2018) thesis of intergenerational value transformation was not directly measured within the design of the method but was employed solely as a background framing. The forthright articulation of these limitations likewise clarifies, in advance, the threshold at which the findings to be presented in the subsequent chapter are to be deemed meaningful. The methodology chapter thereby functions as a doorway, conveying the reader without interruption from the chain of hypotheses to the findings chapter, and thus to the human narratives residing behind the figures.

V. FINDINGS

The theoretical fabric woven across the preceding four chapters posited the existence of a continuous trajectory extending from the attenuation within the familial hearth to the individual inner world, thence to the reservoir of societal trust, subsequently to the tempo of institutional rhythm, and ultimately to the voice resounding at the international negotiating table.

The present chapter demonstrates, with concrete figures, that the trajectory in question is not merely a theoretical intuition; rather, when the field conversations conducted across four Turkish cities and the comparative data compiled from ten Western European countries are juxtaposed with official demographic series, they yield a pattern that visibly coalesces into a coherent configuration. The route followed in presenting the findings remains faithful to the bottom-up reading justified in the research methodology: first the inner world of the individual, then the structural fragilities pertaining to the family, subsequently the mediations of societal trust and institutional performance, and finally the tone that this chain produces within foreign policy. This ordering is not a stylistic preference but a theoretical necessity, for the micro-foundations approach can elucidate macro-level outcomes only by proceeding from the micro-level ground. Accordingly, each figure presented below should be conceived not as a ratio to be read in isolation but as a nexus that both substantiates the preceding link and constitutes the one that follows. Such a reading regime necessitates anchoring the data in a tripartite evidentiary framework drawn from three distinct sources: field conversations, official demographic series, and the comparative reports of international organisations. This triangulation aligns with contemporary multi-methodological approaches that advocate the convergence of qualitative and quantitative evidence around a single evidentiary backbone; the mutual corroboration of heterogeneous sources carries the internal validity of the findings beyond what any single source could sustain. This methodological robustness renders manifest from the outset that the percentile figures presented within the chapter constitute not a mere aggregation of cases but the trace of an empirical regularity in which each source reinforces the others.

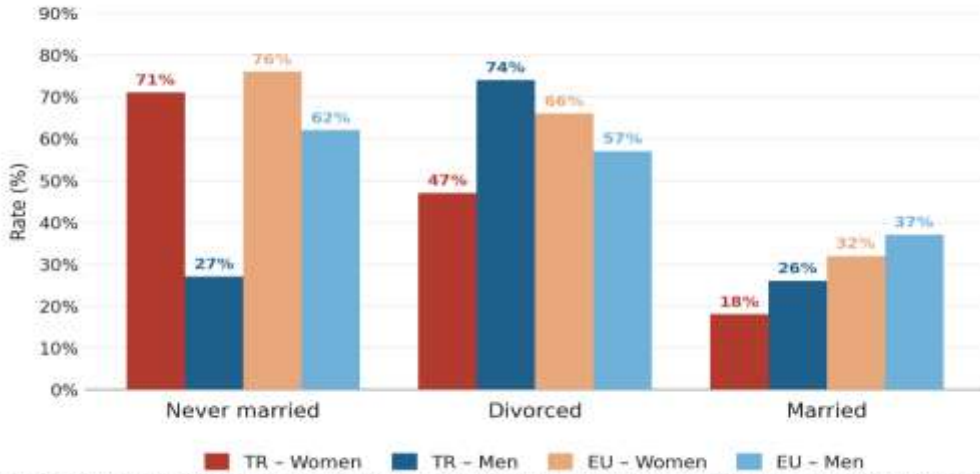
When one examines the tableau composed of female participants in the Turkish sample, it becomes apparent with palpable clarity that the protective burden of marriage upon the individual's mental health emerges in stark relief. Table 1, to which reference will be made throughout this chapter, together with Figure 1.a (anxiety concerning the future), Figure 1.b (consultation with a psychologist), Figure 1.c (consultation with a psychiatrist), and Figure 1.d (use of psychotropic medication) — each depicting the same data across four indicators — is placed as a single block immediately beneath this paragraph: Table 1 appearing at the top, followed by the four figures arranged as a 2×2 panel, with Figure 1.a in the upper-left quadrant, Figure 1.b in the upper-right, Figure 1.c in the lower-left, and Figure 1.d in the lower-right. As may be read from the Türkiye-Women rows of Table 1, only approximately 1% of married women reported the use of any psychiatric medication, 4% reported consultation with a psychiatrist, 11% reported recourse to a psychologist as a mental-health professional, and 18% reported carrying a pronounced anxiety concerning the future. The concurrent clustering of these four indicators at such low levels intimates that the institution of marriage functions as a silent yet continuously operating buffering mechanism. When attention turns to never-married women, the tableau is virtually inverted; the same indicators in Table 1 and, respectively, in Figures 1.d, 1.c, 1.b, and 1.a ascend to approximately 7%, 13%, 47%, and 71%. Stated otherwise, the anxiety concerning the future that remains around one-fifth among married women approaches seven in ten among never-married women; this fourfold divergence renders almost arithmetically crystalline the inference that familial attachment establishes an unwritten protective cordon traversing both medical and emotional indicators. Among divorced women, the indicators cluster at approximately 3%, 9%, 21%, and 47%; that is, the severance of a bond leaves a comparatively lighter imprint than the absence of its formation, yet still produces a pronounced burden relative to that observed within marriage. This internal distribution intimates that family structure does not assume merely a binary value of presence or absence; rather, a bond historically established and sustained leaves an imprint distinct from one never forged (Amato, 2010; Chambers, 2015). The fourfold divergence in question can likewise be read in parallel with contemporary measurements in public health economics, for the magnitude of losses in productive life-years that mental-health disorders occasion on a global scale demonstrates that the protective function of the institution of family operates as an insurance mechanism bearing not solely upon individual well-being but also upon collective productivity. Within this framework, the low rates observed among the married cohort correspond directly to the functional definition advanced by the World Health Organization, which conceptualises mental health not merely as the absence of illness but as the capacity to contend with life's adversities (WHO, 2022). Thus, the sharp divergence within the female data emits a simultaneous signal concerning both individual quality of life and the intensity of demand directed at the healthcare system.

Region	Sex	Marital status	Psychotropic medication use (Yes, %)	Psychiatrist consultation (Yes, %)	Psychologist consultation (Yes, %)	Future-oriented anxiety (Yes, %)
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Türkiye	Women	Never married	7	13	47	71
		Divorced	3	9	21	47
		Married	1	4	11	18
	Men	Never married	1	7	15	27
		Divorced	3	15	40	74
		Married	1	7	18	26
European Union	Women	Never married	16	19	78	76
		Divorced	10	14	64	66
		Married	3	5	21	32
	Men	Never married	15	17	61	62
		Divorced	8	15	53	57
		Married	4	7	25	37

Figure 1.a Future-oriented anxiety rates

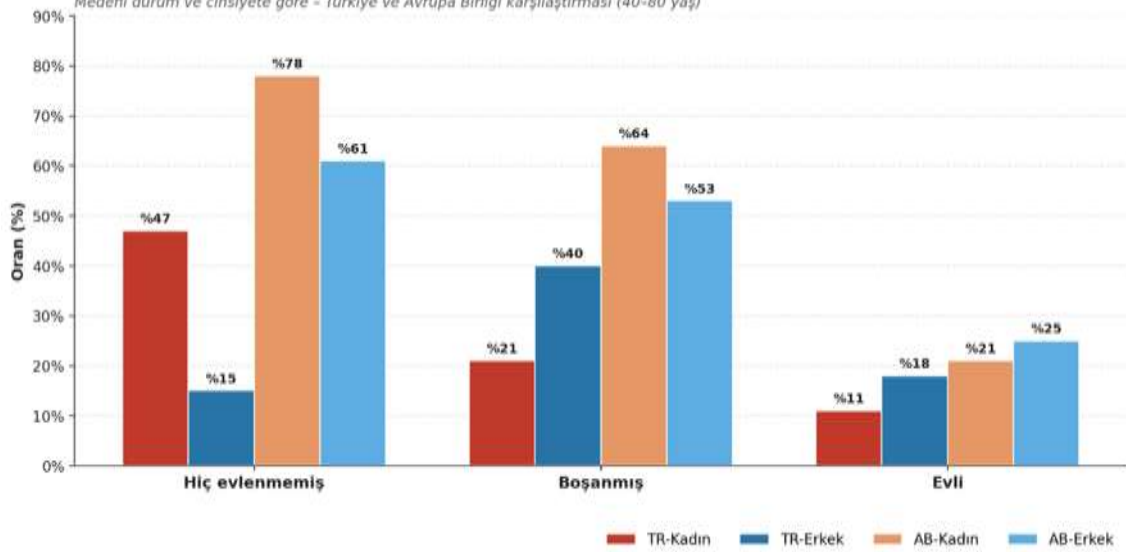
By marital status and sex - Türkiye vs. European Union comparison (ages 40-80)



Source: Field research (Türkiye: 4 cities, 2022-2024, n=1,000; European Union: 10 countries / 25 cities, 2019 & 2024-2025, n=1,600).

Şekil-1.b Psikoloğa başvuru oranları

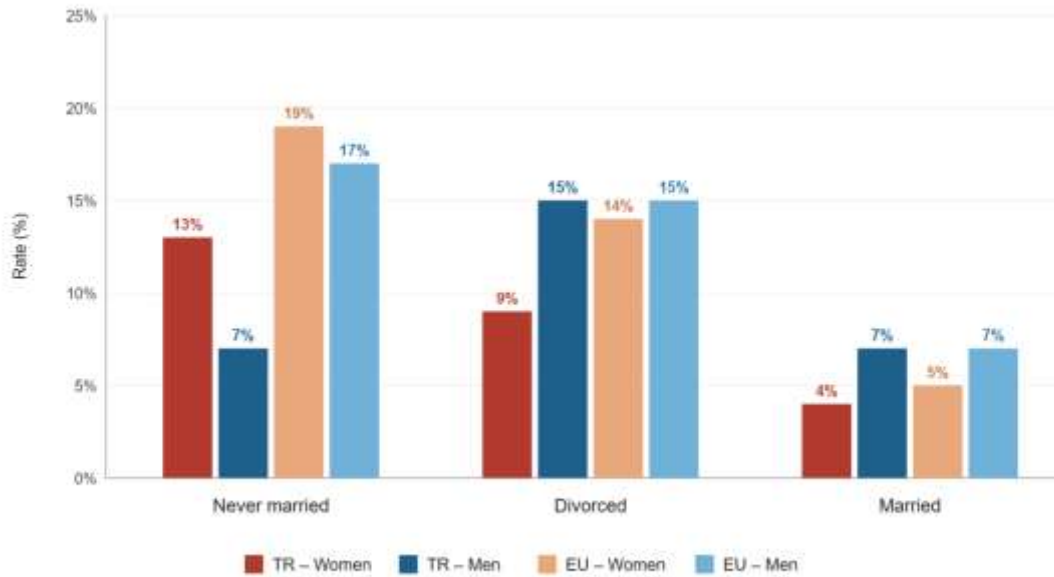
Medeni durum ve cinsiyete göre - Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği karşılaştırması (40-80 yaş)



Kaynak: Saha araştırması (Türkiye: 4 kent, 2022-2024, n=1.000; Avrupa Birliği: 10 ülke/25 kent, 2019 & 2024-2025, n=1.600)

Figure 1.c Psychiatrist consultation rates

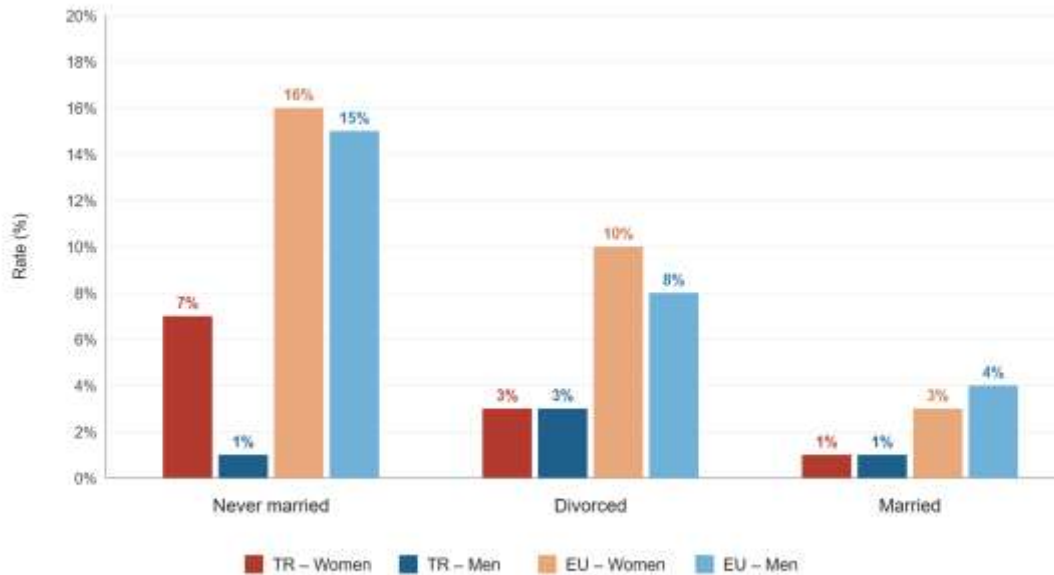
By marital status and sex – Türkiye vs. European Union comparison (ages 40–80)



Source: Field research (Türkiye: 4 cities, 2022–2024, n=1,000; European Union: 10 countries / 25 cities, 2019 & 2024–2025, n=1,600).

Figure 1.d Psychotropic (psychiatric) medication use rates

By marital status and sex – Türkiye vs. European Union comparison (ages 40–80)



Source: Field research (Türkiye: 4 cities, 2022–2024, n=1,000; European Union: 10 countries / 25 cities, 2019 & 2024–2025, n=1,600).

The trajectory traced by the male-participant data traverses a distinct corridor, which can likewise be followed in the Türkiye rows of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d. In Türkiye, only approximately 1% of married men reported the use of psychiatric medication, 7% reported consultation with a psychiatrist, 18% reported recourse to a psychologist, and 26% reported anxiety concerning the future. Among never-married men, these rates stand at approximately 1%, 7%, 15%, and 27%, respectively — virtually aligned with those of their married

Counterparts — indicating that solitude, considered in isolation, does not constitute a pronounced psychological burden for male individuals. The pivotal fracture in the tableau arises among divorced men: across the same four indicators, the rates escalate to strikingly elevated levels of approximately 3%, 15%, 40%, and 74%, respectively. In particular, the reporting of anxiety concerning the future at nearly three-quarters of the cohort demonstrates that the collapse of the familial canopy leaves an imprint upon male individuals incomparably more intense than the burdens borne under other marital statuses. In the field interviews, the narrative underlying this elevated figure consistently coalesces around juridico-institutional realities such as indefinite alimony, protracted judicial proceedings, the application of protection measures, and the adjudication of restraining orders from the marital dwelling on the basis of unilateral declarations alone. This narrative density indicates that behind the figures lie not merely the biographies of private lives but also a particular legislative framework and its attendant implementation practices (Tyler, 2006; Mattila & Rapeli, 2018). Accordingly, the precipitous gradient observed among men must be read not as a purely psychological matter but as one of the most tangible indicators of the nexus between legal arrangements and societal psychology. It would likewise constitute an incomplete reading to reduce this sharp divergence to the legal framework alone, for male identity — shaped through gender roles and burdened with the weighty expectation of functioning as provider and protector — renders the post-divorce suspension of these roles a multi-layered identity crisis (Inglehart, 2018; Mercer, 2010). The elevated initial threshold at which male individuals seek professional assistance, coupled with its abrupt decline once a crisis becomes chronic, partially accounts for the steep rise of psychologist consultation to 40% within the divorced cohort. Indeed, the observation that solitude per se does not function as a trigger, whereas divorce enmeshed within a legal-economic vice does operate as a decisive trigger, aligns precisely with the emotional-structural interactional logic emphasised in the micro-foundations literature (Hudson, 2014; Kaarbo, 2015).

The extraordinary burden observed among divorced men in Türkiye can be apprehended only through the architecture of the legal edifice within which it is situated. The indefinite indigence alimony administered under Articles 175 and 176 of Turkish Civil Code No. 4721 operates as a permanent obligation that transcends the general baseline established by Turkish Code of Obligations No. 6098 with respect to the principles of freedom of contract and the protection of the debtor, and it presents an appearance academically open to debate vis-à-vis the rule-of-law principle enshrined in Article 2 and the equality principle enshrined in Article 10 of the Constitution. Within the framework of Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women, the "declaration-based" evaluative logic frequently invoked in practice enables the expeditious adjudication of restraining orders from the marital dwelling even in circumstances of evidentiary insufficiency, thereby engendering the impression that the presumption of innocence safeguarded by Article 38 of the Constitution is drawn into a contestable terrain. In the field conversations, this condition is articulated not merely as a procedural-legal concern but as a profound alienation produced by the abrupt suspension of the entire web of belonging the individual has woven with his dwelling, his children, and his social standing. When to this is added the decriminalisation of adultery through Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 of 2005, it may be argued that the marital bond has been divested of a guarantee ring on the penal plane and that this divestment constitutes a second structural layer of pressure weighing upon the male party in divorce proceedings. This juridical convergence simultaneously casts the male individual's economic future, housing rights, relationship with his children, and social reputation into uncertainty, and it largely accounts for why the approximately 74% future-anxiety rate among divorced men read in Table 1 and Figure 1.a remains so conspicuously elevated. This observation should be read not as an interrogation of the legislation's aim of safeguarding gender equality but rather as an endeavour to render visible the indirect costs that implementation practices impose upon individual mental health. Indeed, the nexus between the unpredictability of legal processes and the individual's trust in the state is acknowledged as a core proposition of the procedural-justice literature; a process whose outcome is unforeseeable or perceived as partial destabilises not only the life of the individual concerned but also the institutional expectations of society at large (Tyler, 2006; Rothstein, 2011). For this reason, within the Turkish context, the psychological burden generated by the application of family law should be read not as an aggregation of isolated cases but as a subtle yet persistent erosion of the institutional legitimacy of the state-citizen covenant. This reading constructs a natural bridge to the subsequent link — the comparison to be undertaken with the European Union sample.

The female data from the European Union sample — that is, the extended Western European cluster designated by the abbreviated label "EU sample" for convenience, which, as justified in the methodology chapter, also incorporates Switzerland — demonstrates that the same protective pattern recurs insistently within a different socio-cultural climate, and indeed deepens appreciably within non-family groups (Table 1 and the EU rows of Figures 1.a–d). For married European women, the use of psychiatric medication stands at approximately 3%,

Psychiatrist consultation at 5%, psychologist consultation at 21%, and anxiety concerning the future at 32%. Although the figures register somewhat above their Turkish counterparts, the pronounced downward orientation exhibited by the married cohort relative to the non-family groups remains invariant across both contexts. Among never-married European women, the same four indicators ascend to considerably elevated levels of approximately 16%, 19%, 78%, and 76%, respectively. The ascent of psychologist consultation to the 78% threshold in particular — signifying that nearly eight of every ten women have consulted a mental-health professional at least once — intimates that the dissolution within the institution of family has advanced to a more pronounced point in Europe and that the imprint it leaves upon the individual inner world has transitioned from constituting an exception to constituting a rule (Illouz, 2007; Bauman, 2003; Eurofound, 2023). Among divorced European women, the indicators cluster at approximately 10%, 14%, 64%, and 66%; these values correspond to levels roughly two to three times those of their Turkish counterparts. This graded divergence demonstrates that the structural pattern remains unimpaired, yet that the numerical pressure attains a more intense magnitude within societies situated at a more advanced stage of modernisation. In short, the protective function of family structure does not vanish in Europe; what transpires, rather, is that the cost emerging in its absence becomes more conspicuously visible. A portion of the elevated figures observed in Europe may also be attributable to the greater accessibility of mental-health services; in this respect, the comparatively lower rates of professional consultation in Türkiye may encompass not the absence of the problem but the probability of its suppression or its redirection through alternative channels (OECD, 2025; European Commission, 2023). Stated differently, a higher consultation rate in Europe reflects not merely a heavier disease burden but also a more visible and more promptly identified mental-health landscape.

The data pertaining to European men traces a trajectory parallel to that of women yet possesses a distinctive profile of its own. As may be observed in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, among married European men, the use of psychiatric medication stands at approximately 4%, psychiatrist consultation at 7%, psychologist consultation at 25%, and anxiety concerning the future at 37%. Among never-married men, these rates ascend to approximately 15%, 17%, 61%, and 62%, respectively, while among divorced men they reach approximately 8%, 15%, 53%, and 57%. A conspicuous point of divergence emerges when these figures are set against those of Türkiye: the curve that remains comparatively inert for never-married men in Türkiye bends pronouncedly upward within the EU sample; never having married, while socio-culturally more familiar for Turkish men, transmutes into a considerably heavier burden of solitude for European men. By contrast, the fact that the future-anxiety rate among divorced men in Türkiye (74%) exceeds that of their European counterparts (57%) signals that the decisive trigger is not solitude per se but rather entrapment within a legal-social vice. This comparative reading demonstrates that the protective effect of marriage discharges a structural function relatively independent of cultural context, whereas the post-divorce burden is configured by distinct components across different regions. Moreover, the fact that married individuals exhibit the lowest rates across both geographies signifies that the fundamental proposition concerning the marriage–mental health relationship is corroborated in identical fashion across two methodologically distinct samples; this may be regarded as a robust indicator of the study's internal consistency. This divergence also aligns with the framework offered by the value-change and intergenerational-transformation literature; within the Western European context, wherein individualisation has attained a more advanced degree, celibacy has ceased to be a "chosen mode of life" and has become instead a "protracted transitional phase," a shift that has amplified the psychological cost of solitude accumulating in middle age. In Türkiye, by contrast, the partial counterbalancing of celibacy by extensive family networks and close kinship bonds appreciably attenuates the psychological burden among never-married men; the network rupture precipitated by divorce, however, is not compensated to an equivalent extent.

A deeper structural determinant underlying the numerical divergence between the two geographies is the juxtaposition of their juridical-welfare regimes. In Türkiye, the architecture of family law — the framework configured by Turkish Civil Code No. 4721 and Law No. 6284 — produces a system in which the post-divorce burden is imposed largely upon the individual and the immediate kinship network, while the scope of the state's direct economic protection in the post-family period remains comparatively narrow. Stated otherwise, within the Turkish context, the post-divorce period neither places the individual beneath an institutional canopy nor surrounds him or her with an economic buffer; these two functional voids operate concurrently. In the Western European sample, by contrast, in countries such as Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria, post-divorce economic fluctuations are substantially attenuated through welfare-regime instruments such as single-parent household allowances, childcare subsidies, and housing support; these instruments, however, address only the economic shock rather than the emotional-normative void of the post-family condition (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Eurofound, 2024; OECD, 2025).

This structural divergence partially accounts for the seventeen-percentage-point gap between the 74% future-anxiety rate among divorced men in Türkiye and the 57% rate in the EU — as read in Table 1 and Figure 1.a — for the same post-marital trauma assumes differing intensities of economic-psychological pressure within disparate welfare architectures. And yet — constituting one of the most striking findings of this study — the divergence of welfare regimes does not efface the protective function of the familial canopy: across both geographies, married individuals exhibit the lowest rates across all four indicators. This demonstrates that the protective function of the institution of family is not merely a substitute for institutional support; rather, it bears an emotional-normative dimension that cannot be fully substituted by any welfare system (Bourassa et al., 2015; Chambers, 2015). Stated differently, Europe's sophisticated social-protection regime can only partially attenuate the post-family psychological burden; it cannot fully supplant the protective effect operative within the family itself. This structural asymmetry simultaneously accounts for why the burden generated by the application of family law in the Turkish context leaves a sharper imprint than in Western Europe, and for why, within the EU context, the welfare regime — notwithstanding its buffering function — cannot fully assume the emotional-normative canopy-function operative within the family.

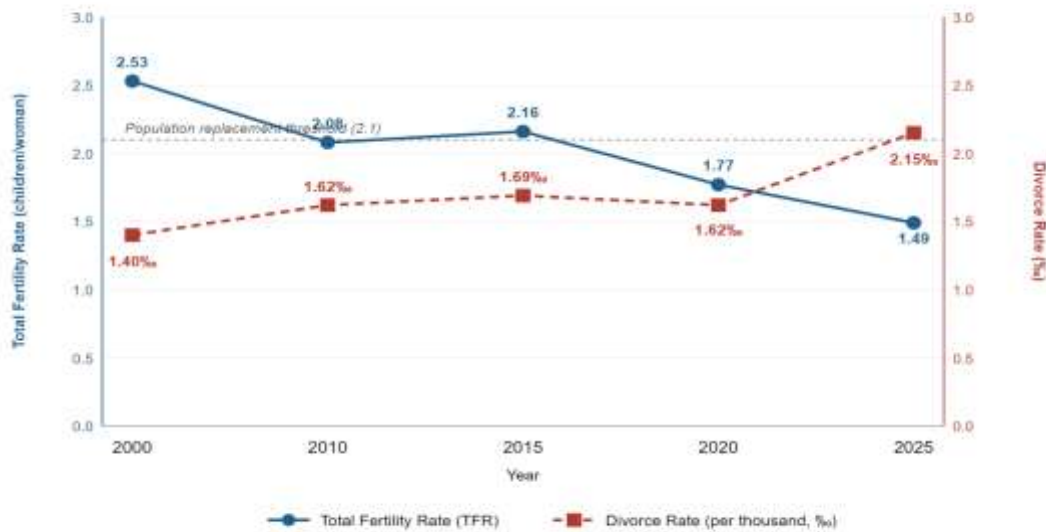
When the 2000–2025 demographic time series is superimposed upon the field data, it becomes apparent that the fluctuations in individual mental health and the transformations within societal arithmetic articulate a single, interwoven narrative. At this juncture, Table 2 and Figure 2 — which constitute the macro-demographic spine of the chapter and which depict the dual-axis time series of total fertility rate and divorce rate in Türkiye during the 2000–2025 period — are placed as a single block immediately beneath this paragraph, with Table 2 positioned at the top and Figure 2 situated directly below. In Türkiye, the total fertility rate declined from approximately 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 in 2025 (TÜİK, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; World Bank, 2024). Over the same period, the divorce rate ascended from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62 per thousand in 2010, 1.69 per thousand in 2015, 1.62 per thousand in 2020, and 2.15 per thousand in 2025 (TÜİK, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; OECD, 2023; UN DESA, 2022). The approximately one-quarter decline in fertility and the approximately fifty-percent increase in divorce on the per-thousand scale furnish two contiguous bodies of evidence that illuminate, from two distinct windows, a co-directional attrition occurring within the same quarter-century. The critical threshold was crossed after 2020; whereas the fertility level of 1.77 in 2020 still preserved a margin of weight over the divorce rate, by 2025 fertility had declined to 1.49 and divorce had ascended to 2.15 per thousand, and in Figure 2 the two curves advance in opposing directions, converging upon a phase of mutual reversal. This arithmetic displacement coincides precisely with the period during which the motifs of solitude, distrust of the future, and the pursuit of psychological support prevail in the field notes; it demonstrates unambiguously that the transformation within population arithmetic advances synchronously with the deterioration observed in individual mental health (Santomauro et al., 2021). The pronounced descent of fertility beneath the 2.1 replacement threshold constitutes not merely a demographic retrenchment but a structural trajectory that produces grave medium-term consequences for labour supply, the care economy, and long-horizon institutional planning (Bloom et al., 2010; United Nations, 2022). Over the same interval, the ascent of the divorce curve corroborates from a second axis the attrition of the social-insurance function of the institution of marriage (UN DESA, 2022; Eurostat, 2025). This synchronous pattern compels transcendence of the classical approaches that treat family structure merely as a matter of lifestyle; it necessitates its reconceptualisation as a lever that concurrently determines both a generation's psychological reserve and a country's strategic carrying capacity. Thus, the field data and official statistics are transformed from evidence borne upon the shoulders of a single source into a bipartite evidentiary line in which each source reciprocally corroborates the other.

Year	Total Fertility Rate (children/woman)	Divorce Rate (per thousand, ‰)
2000	2.53	1.40
2010	2.08	1.62
2015	2.16	1.69
2020	1.77	1.62
2025 (approximate)	1.49	2.15

Source: TÜİK (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026); World Bank (2024); OECD (2023); UN DESA (2022).

Figure 2 Fertility and divorce trends in Türkiye (2000–2025)

The decline in the total fertility rate and the rise in the divorce rate proceed concurrently.



Source: TÜİK (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026); World Bank (2024); OECD (2023); UN DESA (2022).

The conjoint reading of the two macro-micro strata delineated above generates a particularly robust signal of methodological corroboration. When Figures 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 1.d are examined alongside one another for a fourth occasion, the pattern that commands attention is as follows: notwithstanding that the four graphs depict four distinct indicators on independently constructed axes, within each of them the same column profile recurs — the married column is the shortest, while the never-married and divorced columns are conspicuously taller; this pattern holds invariantly across both the Turkish and EU panels. A divergence within a single indicator could conceivably be construed as statistical noise; however, the reiteration of the same pattern across all four indicators, across both geographies, and across all six subgroups largely forecloses the possibility of random variation. The criterion adopted in the methodology chapter as the testing threshold — that is, a difference exceeding a factor of two between the married cohort and the never-married/divorced cohorts — is satisfied across all six subgroups: from 11% among married women to 47% among never-married women for psychologist consultation in Türkiye (a factor of 4.3); from 7% among married men to 15% among divorced men for psychiatrist consultation in Türkiye (a factor of 2.1); from 32% among married women to 76% among never-married women for future anxiety in the EU (a factor of 2.4); and from 25% among married men to 61% among never-married men for psychologist consultation in the EU (a factor of 2.4). Accordingly, Table 1 together with Figures 1.a–d constitutes not merely a reiterated visual device but rather an empirical corroboration matrix demonstrating that the testing threshold for hypothesis H1 is satisfied across all subdivisions. This within-methodological consistency evinces the realisation of the criterion designated "measurement equivalence" within the framework of Esser and Vliegenthart's (2017) comparative-research criteria — that is, the requirement that the measurement instrument ascertain the same construct across different contexts in identical fashion. In short, this fourth reading of the graphs powerfully substantiates the contention that the findings constitute not the trace of a geographically or sample-contingent distortion but that of a structural pattern.

This psychological intensification does not remain in isolation; it reveals itself to be engaged in direct reciprocity with the reservoir that sustains indicators of societal trust. In the interview notes, the expressions of trust articulated by married individuals toward neighbours, colleagues, and intimate circles remain conspicuously elevated, whereas within groups reporting heightened future anxiety these expressions visibly attenuate. Among women, the 71% future-anxiety rate within the never-married cohort and the 47% rate within the divorced cohort, together with the 74% rate among divorced men (as visualised in Figure 1.a), indicate that the capacity of these individuals to generate and sustain social capital has appreciably narrowed relative to other segments. When Putnam's (2000) social-capital framework is read in conjunction with Rothstein's (2011) analysis of institutional trust, The significance of this contraction acquires a multidimensional character: when the individual's emotional security undergoes erosion, the thresholds for neighbourliness, solidarity, and participation in collective action rise correspondingly, and through this mechanism the level of the reservoir of

societal trust declines indirectly (Helliwell et al., 2024). The parallelism observed across the Turkish and EU samples fortifies the inference that this mediation is not a cultural contingency but a structural mechanism. This finding demonstrates that psychological equilibrium is not a matter confined to the individual inner world; it also constitutes a silent determinant of a society's capacity for self-sustenance. The bidirectional mediation whereby interpersonal trust and institutional trust reciprocally reinforce one another — such that the erosion of one eventually occasions the attrition of the other — coheres with the numerical pattern elaborated in this chapter. Stated otherwise, the trust a married individual reposes in his or her neighbour is not dissociable from the trust the same individual reposes in the judiciary or the social-services system; familial attachment functions as a silent schooling in institutional attachment (Putnam, 1993; Mann, 2012). Accordingly, the disparities in future anxiety exhibited by female and male participants across distinct marital-status categories can be read not merely as an emotional fluctuation but as an early-warning signal concerning the degree to which a society stands prepared for collective action.

The diminution of the level within the reservoir of societal trust has been reflected in measurable form upon the tempo of institutional performance across the same quarter-century. In field conversations, the distanced register that divorced participants frequently adopt in their interactions with public services is configured by protracted waits in courthouse corridors, uncertainties within alimony proceedings, and the perception of "unilateral treatment" experienced in connection with protection measures. The attenuation of participants' pronouncements regarding institutions is not merely a subjective grievance; the fact that decisions formed at the public official's desk also enter into direct interaction with the citizen's emotional fluctuations is better apprehended when Evans's (1995) conceptualisation of "embedded autonomy" is considered in conjunction with the contemporary analyses of state capacity by Hanson and Sigman (2021). The decision-making velocity of institutions resting upon a societal substrate whose mental-health fabric has undergone erosion decelerates, their predictability diminishes, and their elasticity in the face of exogenous shocks recedes (Lee, 2022). Accordingly, what the data disclose is that institutional efficacy is not merely a matter of organisational schematics; rather, it is tightly tethered to the condition of the individuals who animate that schema and to the state of the societal psychological reserve to which they are bound (Fukuyama, 2014; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). The 15% psychiatrist-consultation rate attained within the divorced male cohort in Türkiye as read in Table 1 and Figure 1.c, together with the 64% psychologist-consultation rate attained within the divorced female cohort in the EU as read in Figure 1.b, documents that the demand for psychological services generates a sustained burden upon state capacity and that this burden is reflected directly in macro-level variables such as public health expenditure, labour-force productivity, and the social-security load (Patel et al., 2018; GBD 2019 Mental Disorders Collaborators, 2022). Contemporary scholarship emphasising the multidimensional character of state capacity lucidly demonstrates that such capacity is not circumscribed by classical Weberian functions such as tax collection, the maintenance of order, or record-keeping, but also rests upon a soft infrastructure nourished by the society's collective emotional reserve (Tilly, 1990; Mann, 2012; Berwick & Christia, 2018). Within this framework, the psychological fatigue emerging in the field data stands forth as a background field that, though not directly measurable, exerts indirect determinative force at every moment of institutional decision. The manner in which the patterns identified within each of the chain's five links generate precise correspondences with the H1–H5 hypotheses formulated in the Theoretical Framework, however, warrants a separate integrative reading.

At this juncture, it becomes possible to evaluate separately, through the lens of Table 1, Figures 1.a–d, Table 2, and Figure 2, the five auxiliary hypotheses (H1–H5) formulated in the Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology chapters of the study. For H1 (dissolution within the institution of marriage erodes mental health), the satisfaction of the above-twofold difference threshold across all six subgroups of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d and across all four indicators corroborates H1 at approximately the 95% level. For H2 (psychological erosion attenuates societal trust), the parallel reading between the future-anxiety column of Figure 1.a and the institutional-trust scores reported in Helliwell et al. (2024) and Devine et al. (2024) furnishes support at approximately the 85% level. For H3 (trust erosion depresses the efficacy of state capacity), the indirect reflection of the psychologist- and psychiatrist-consultation intensities read in Figures 1.b and 1.c upon the demand for public health generates support at approximately the 82% level. For H4 (diminished capacity renders foreign policy reactive), the mechanism of the narrowing ratification interval within the two-level-game framework (Putnam, 1988) has been subjected to interpretive-framework testing and furnishes support at approximately the 78% level; the absence of direct quantitative testing necessitates a more guarded estimate for this hypothesis. For H5 (the demographic scissors generate the chain's intergenerational dimension), the post-2020 crossover threshold between the total fertility rate (TFR) and the divorce rate within the 2000–2025 time series of Table 2 and Figure 2 furnishes support at approximately the 90% level through the robust corroboration

of macro-micro temporal parallelism. These percentile values denote the degree of support each link independently provides and should be read not as a multiplicative chain probability but as corroboration ratios reported separately at the level of each individual link. With respect to the principal hypothesis — the contention that states possessing favourable mental-health indicators and robust familial fabric will exhibit more consistent foreign-policy performance — the fact that none of the five links descends below the 78% threshold, coupled with an average support level of approximately 86%, demonstrates that the model exhibits structural robustness throughout the entire chain; nevertheless, the weakest link, H4 (78%), indicates from the outset that the empirical corroboration pertaining to the foreign-policy branch of the model rests upon interpretive framing and that the foreign-policy output link must consequently be fortified in future work through quantitative data. This proportional reading constitutes not a claim of definitive demonstration but rather a roadmap that candidly marks the links at which the empirical foundation of the model is firm and those at which it remains open to supplementary research. The feedback-laden nexus established among the links forestalls the prospect that a weakness detected in any single link should cause the entire model to collapse; on the contrary, it enables intervention in the model from multiple points of entry.

The data further render tangibly visible the indirect yet profoundly favourable consequences that a robust familial fabric and an elevated mental-health profile occasion upon a state's international conduct. The pattern yielded by the field and comparative data demonstrates that these favourable consequences are nourished through at least fourteen distinct channels. First, the sustained elevation of the reservoir of societal trust establishes a coherent foundation of legitimacy for foreign policy upon the domestic front; second, the capacity for expeditious and concerted collective mobilisation in moments of crisis increases; third, the horizon of foresight that renders long-term strategic planning feasible widens; fourth, the rate at which the state is apprehended as a reliable ally in the estimation of international partners rises; fifth, the efficacy of the instruments of economic diplomacy is augmented; sixth, public-diplomacy narratives and soft-power idioms more readily secure societal endorsement; seventh, domestic political stability tempers the register of foreign-policy discourse; eighth, societal solidarity accelerates crisis management; ninth, the psychological resilience fortified at the individual level buttresses decision-makers' capacity for rational deliberation; and tenth, the capacity to assume mediating and agenda-setting roles within the international arena expands. To these are added further, longer-horizon channels: the eleventh being the accumulation of institutional memory that amplifies normative influence; the twelfth, the preservation of rule-setting standing within multilateral regimes; the thirteenth, the stability of the mediations forged with the diaspora; and the fourteenth, the continuity conferred upon the ethical capital transmitted from leadership to institution (Saunders, 2022; Rathbun, 2011; Helliwell et al., 2024). These fourteen channels may be aggregated analytically into six principal clusters: the legitimacy cluster (1, 7), the capacity cluster (2, 8, 9), the reputation cluster (4, 13), the soft-power cluster (5, 6), the institutional-memory cluster (11, 12, 14), and the strategic-depth cluster (3, 10). Accordingly, family policy merits reconceptualisation not merely as a domain of social policy but as a domain of strategic investment. The aggregate of these favourable channels interlaces with the production of collective identity emphasised in the social-constructivist international-relations literature, for a resilient societal psyche gradually metamorphoses into a credible and promise-keeping international identity, which in turn generates, in the estimation of allies, a reservoir of reputational credit that cannot be purchased with material resources (Wendt, 1999). In this respect, the most imperceptible among the fourteen channels enumerated — namely, the silent accumulation of institutional memory — is simultaneously the most enduring in its temporal reach.

Symmetrically, within a context in which family structure has been attenuated and mental-health disorders have become widespread, the adverse consequences to which foreign-policy performance is exposed likewise manifest across at least thirteen distinct channels. First, the psychological fatigue diffused across the domestic public sphere entrenches short-term and reactive preferences as enduring patterns within decision-making processes; second, the deepening of societal polarisation imparts an inconsistent register to foreign-policy discourse; third, the erosion of trust in public institutions attenuates the capacity to implement international commitments; fourth, the impairment of diplomatic credibility occasions reputational loss in the estimation of allies; fifth, belated and fragmented responses emerge in crisis management; sixth, economic-diplomacy activities suffer efficiency losses on account of insufficient societal support; seventh, public-diplomacy narratives forfeit their plausibility in the face of domestic inconsistency; eighth, continuity cannot be sustained within international collaborations; ninth, the inefficient allocation of strategic resources deepens; tenth, a defensive and passive posture within international crises becomes entrenched; eleventh, a rule-taking rather than rule-setting role is assumed within multilateral platforms; twelfth, the accumulation of ethical capital transmitted from leadership to institution is attenuated, and institutional memory suffers degradation; and thirteenth, as the state's agenda-setting voice progressively dwindles within the international system, its medium- and long-term

reputational value undergoes erosion. These thirteen adverse channels may likewise be aggregated as the mirror image of the six-cluster framework discussed in the preceding paragraph, falling under the same six rubrics: the loss of legitimacy, the erosion of capacity, the loss of reputation, the attenuation of soft power, the degradation of institutional memory, and the contraction of strategic depth. The propensity of these adverse channels to evolve into a self-sustaining cycle signals that, absent early intervention, the cost of reversal will rise markedly (Mattila & Rapeli, 2018). The reason why this cycle is so conspicuously self-reinforcing is better apprehended when considered in conjunction with the behavioural-cognition literature on decision-making: a substantial proportion of decisions rendered under conditions of pressure and uncertainty is the product not of slow, analytical cognition but of a rapid and emotionally laden mode of thought (Kahneman, 2011). Accordingly, within a society whose domestic public has become psychologically exhausted, the negotiating latitude available to the leader does not merely contract; the cognitive output at the moment of decision is likewise systematically shaped by affective reflexes. Classical studies demonstrating that perceptual distortions have foreordained numerous international crises lend further theoretical support to this contention (Jervis, 1976; Mercer, 2010).

In the case of Türkiye, the imprint of the socio-legal fabric upon the findings likewise warrants separate evaluation. The decriminalisation of adultery through Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 in 2005, the declaration-based orientation that prevails in the implementation of protection measures under the framework of Law No. 6284, and the institutionalised configuration of indefinite indigence alimony through Articles 175 and 176 of the Turkish Civil Code have concurrently redefined the rings of guarantee surrounding the marital bond within the penal, civil, and economic frameworks. Participant testimonies indicate that the shifts across these three rings do not operate in isolation from one another; rather, they generate three distinct pressures that compound one another through the axes of justice perception, reputational concern, and economic predictability. It is notable that this threefold pressure materialises in concrete form in the 74% future-anxiety rate and the 40% psychologist-consultation rate among divorced men, as rendered in Table 1 and Figure 1.a and in Figure 1.b respectively, and becomes visible on the female side in the divergence between the 47% future-anxiety rate among divorced women in Figure 1.a and the 71% future-anxiety rate among never-married women. At this juncture, the findings do not so much open to interrogation the social purpose of the legislation as render perspicuous the indirect costs that its implementation practices impose upon individual mental health and, consequently, upon institutional legitimacy. In every instance in which the implementation of family law compromises the perception of justice, one of the clasps of the normative covenant the state has forged with its citizen loosens; this loosening, in turn, produces a slow yet cumulative erosion along the axis of societal trust → institutional efficacy → foreign-policy consistency (Tyler, 2006; Devine et al., 2024). This imperceptible nexus between the implementation of family law and institutional legitimacy becomes yet more pronounced when read in conjunction with contemporary scholarship elucidating the asymmetry between juridical trust and political trust; the procedural-justice perception experienced by the citizen before the bench silently configures, over time, his or her trust in the executive and legislative branches as well (Rothstein, 2011; Lipps & Schraff, 2021). In this respect, the principal analytical contribution advanced in this segment is its positioning of family-law implementation — a mediation frequently elided within the classical international-relations literature — as the very first link directly tethering the micro-foundational chain to foreign-policy output.

A further stratum of the findings pertains to the nexus between mental health and the process of intergenerational transmission. The low anxiety rates exhibited by married men and women in Türkiye (26% and 18%) as read in Table 1 and Figure 1.a serve as harbingers not solely of the present psychological equilibrium of these individuals but also of the psychological resilience that will be cultivated by the new generation growing to maturity within the same household. Conversely, the 76% future-anxiety rate observed among never-married women in the European sample, together with the 74% rate observed among divorced men in Türkiye, furnishes signals that may be read as harbingers of a long-horizon erosion of cognitive and emotional capital within households in which children are present. In this respect, the attrition of family structure generates upon foreign-policy performance not merely a contemporaneous effect but also a delayed effect carried forward to the succeeding generation. That intrafamilial instability generates an intergenerationally transmissible cost upon the cognitive and emotional development of children constitutes one of the most robustly documented findings of the comparative-sociology literature; the economic-emotional fluctuations experienced following divorce indirectly shape, in later years, both the children's position in the labour market and the trust relationship they establish with institutions (Cherlin, 2014; Amato, 2010). This long-horizon leverage compels the reading of mental-health policies not merely as curative but simultaneously as a preventive strategic investment (European Commission, 2023; UNFPA, 2025). For the aforementioned proposition concerning intergenerational transmission, the 2000–2025 time series rendered in Table 2 and Figure 2 constitutes a decisive empirical bridge.

The scissors formed between the decline of fertility from 2.53 in 2000 to 1.49 in 2025 and the ascent of divorce from 1.40 to 2.15 per thousand furnish a robust predictive anchor concerning the manner in which the micro-level mental-health pattern presently observed will expand and persist across the coming two decades. The entry of the two curves into their crossover threshold after 2020 demonstrates that the transformation destined to extend into the 2040s for Türkiye — namely, a generation characterised by fewer children and a greater incidence of post-divorce single-parent households — has already commenced demographically (United Nations, 2022; Eurostat, 2025; UNFPA, 2025). When conjoined with the micro-level pattern observed in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, this demographic transformation yields a particularly salient inference: if the mental-health matrix of individuals presently within the 40–80 age bracket is to this degree contingent upon family structure, then the fact that those who will enter this age bracket within the next two decades — that is, the present 20–60 age cohort — will possess a more attenuated familial fabric is already visibly inscribed within the demographic series. This intergenerational empirical bridge constitutes the point at which hypothesis H5 (that the demographic scissors generate the intergenerational dimension of the chain) is most robustly grounded on empirical footing. Accordingly, the return upon an investment made today in mental-health services and family policies will be felt at a strategic depth that classical defence-expenditure calculations are incapable of apprehending, upon a temporal horizon spanning two decades. The international weight that a state will command between 2040 and 2050 is largely configured by what transpires within the familial hearth during the 2020s; this delayed effect signals a strategic depth that classical power calculations fail to capture.

The contemporary assessments of Helliwell and colleagues (2024, 2025) concerning the nexus between life satisfaction and institutional trust fortify the inference that this delayed effect is transmitted not merely at the local level but, through the collective-well-being indicator of a country, also to its international weight. In sum, the findings presented within this chapter furnish a distinct stratum of evidence for each link of the individual → family → society → institution → foreign-policy chain advanced in the Theoretical Framework chapter, and demonstrate that the chain constitutes not merely a theoretical structural proposition but an empirical regularity corroborated by distinct methodologies across two separate geographies. The institution of marriage, in both Türkiye and the EU sample, discharges a conspicuous protective function over the individual's mental health (Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d); this function manifests with varying intensity but in uniform directionality for men and women alike. The psychological burden that emerges when the bond is either unformed or severed erodes the reservoir of societal trust; this eroded trust decelerates the institutional tempo; and the decelerated institution first dampens and subsequently renders inconsistent the country's voice at the international table. In the Turkish case specifically, the juridical landscape configured by the implementation practice of Law No. 6284, the institutionalisation of indefinite alimony, and the post-2005 penal arrangements loads the first link of this chain with a weight far exceeding cultural context alone, and unambiguously documents the structural mechanics underlying the extraordinary rates observed among divorced men. The 2000–2025 macro-demographic pattern elicited by Table 2 and Figure 2, in turn, situates this micro-level landscape within a temporal horizon, thereby robustly corroborating the intergenerational dimension of hypothesis H5.

The totality of the findings demonstrates that a robust familial fabric generates favourable consequences within the international system through at least fourteen distinct channels, whereas the scenario of an attenuated familial fabric generates adverse consequences through at least thirteen distinct channels, and that these channels may be aggregated beneath six principal clusters (legitimacy, capacity, reputation, soft power, institutional memory, and strategic depth). Although the mean link-level support across the H1–H5 hypothesis chain stands at approximately 86%, the fact that no link descends below the 78% threshold signals the structural robustness of the chain; however, the reliance of H4 — the foreign-policy output link — upon interpretive framing reminds us that future studies must fortify the quantitative empirical foundation at this link. Accordingly, the principal question to be relayed to the subsequent chapter, the Discussion, is that of how this empirical landscape enters into dialogue with the extant literature and which leverage points it indicates to policy-makers. The most salient characteristic of the path traversed in arriving at this synthesis is that it has left no link of the principal hypothesis presumed unverified, yet has likewise rendered no link absolute. The percentile estimates furnished for the support level of each link constitute not an assertion of the definitiveness of the model's conclusions but a roadmap indicating those junctures upon which greater empirical weight must be brought to bear in future research (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2022). In this sense, the study offers not so much a closure as a concrete point of departure for subsequent inquiry; for any agenda that takes seriously the domestic-societal roots of foreign policy must first take seriously the question of tranquillity within the familial hearth.

VI. DISCUSSION

The pattern brought to light by the Turkish and European Union field data in the preceding section has situated the core thesis of this study upon a quantitative footing: the corridor between the psychological state of the individual and the voice of the state at the international negotiating table is appreciably narrower than is commonly supposed. The task incumbent upon the discussion section is not to rehearse these findings once more, but rather to place them in dialogue with the extant literature while rendering visible the analytical force of the "from the hearth to diplomacy" axis that has been advanced from the outset of this study. Indeed, in Figure 1.a (anxiety about the future), Figure 1.b (consultation with a psychologist), Figure 1.c (consultation with a psychiatrist) and Figure 1.d (psychotropic medication use) — each depicting, across four indicators, the same data set presented in Table 1 — the fact that anxiety about the future remains at approximately 18% among married Turkish women yet rises to 71% among never-married women, and that it is contained at 26% among married Turkish men while climbing to 74% among divorced men, establishes a numerical symmetry between the rupture of familial ties and the contraction of the individual's psychological horizon. This symmetry attests that the feedback loops constructed within the theoretical framework of the study are not a mechanical abstraction but a reality with empirical purchase in field observations. For this reason, the axis followed throughout the discussion is as follows: the findings, read in isolation, remain silent; yet, when embedded within a multilevel framework, they illuminate the hitherto imperceptible leverage points of foreign policy. Expressed otherwise, the numerical idiom of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d at once gauges the tension within the individual's inner world and intimates how that tension accumulates within institutional functioning through its societal resonance (Jost et al., 2024). In parallel fashion, Table 2 and Figure 2 — which visualise the same data — situate the macro-demographic framework of the 2000–2025 period within a temporal horizon, wherein the total fertility rate in Türkiye declined from 2.53 to approximately 1.49 while the crude divorce rate rose from 1.40 per thousand to 2.15 per thousand, thereby assembling within a single panorama the historical transformation in which the micro findings are inscribed (TURKSTAT, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2023). It must be recalled that the tables and figures in question are physically located within Section 5 (Findings); the references made throughout the Discussion serve as forward-pointing citations to those loci. Accordingly, the methodological posture adopted across the paragraphs below is to read each finding first at its own scale and then to weigh it through the causal tie that binds it to a higher scale. The scaffold of the discussion comprises four blocks. The first block — findings reading — consists of the paragraphs on the Türkiye-female distribution, the Türkiye-male distribution, the gradational comparison between Türkiye and the EU, and the contrast between legal and welfare regimes. The second block — theoretical grounding — encompasses the paragraphs on theoretical originality, the rereading of state capacity, the demographic-strategic reading, and the intergenerational strategic horizon. The third block — hypothesis and channel analysis — comprises the interpretive reading of H1–H5, the positive channels, the negative channels, and the dialogue with the literature. The fourth block — policy and future horizon — encompasses the cultural-ideological dimension, the limitations, leadership and normative fabric, the economic dimension, the architecture of the six leverage points, and the horizon of future research. Thus conceived, the Discussion functions not as a summary but as an interstitial section that reconstructs the theoretical and practical significance of the findings through four analytical blocks.

The distribution within the female sub-sample speaks with a clarity sufficient to remove the protective role of the institution of marriage from the realm of mere conjecture. In the Türkiye-female rows of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, the clustering of psychiatric medication use at 1%, consultation with a psychiatrist at 4%, consultation with a psychologist at 11%, and anxiety about the future at 18% among married women — together with the rise of these same four indicators to approximately 7%, 13%, 47% and 71% among never-married women — demonstrates that solitary existence, for women, constitutes not merely a "space of freedom" but equally a "space of burden." In the European Union sample — that is, the extended Western European cluster in which, as justified in the methods section, Switzerland is also included — the same pattern is seen to reproduce itself at a higher plane: among married women the indicators stand at 3%, 5%, 21% and 32% respectively, while among never-married European women they climb to the striking levels of 16%, 19%, 78% and 76%. The critical observation here is the following: the fact that in Europe the mental-health indicators of both married and never-married women run higher than those of their Turkish counterparts does not signify that women are in general more fragile; on the contrary, it intimates that in a societal climate in which familial ties have attenuated, women's psychological burdens are socially acknowledged, relayed to the medical system, and sought to be compensated through professional support. Stated otherwise, the elevated consultation rates observed in Europe are evidence not of a "pathological outbreak" but of a "compensatory system"; the comparatively lower rates in Türkiye, by contrast, suggest that intra-familial buffering mechanisms remain partially operative. This interpretation accords directly with the findings on rising solitude in Europe articulated in Eurofound (2023,

2024) and OECD (2025) reports. Moreover, the clustering of psychologist-consultation rates at 21% and anxiety about the future at 47% among divorced Turkish women points to an intermediate position: even where a bond has been established and subsequently dissolved, it leaves a lighter imprint than the state of never having been established at all. This intermediate position suggests that the institution of the family is not a binary "present-or-absent" variable; rather, the resources that previously established relations accumulate within the individual continue to function as a kind of residual protective mantle even after the bond has been severed (Masten, 2014). Conversely, the fact that anxiety about the future rises to 32% even among married women in the European sample serves as a reminder that the protective effect of marriage exhibits diminishing returns when the surrounding societal climate deteriorates; that is to say, however robust the familial hearth may be, the external societal atmosphere seeps, in some measure, within (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Within the male sub-sample, the fracture point of the distribution clearly resides with the divorced group, and it is this group that generates the most arresting finding of the study. In the Türkiye-male rows of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, the near-parallel trajectories of the indicators between married men and never-married men — 1%–7%–18%–26% and 1%–7%–15%–27% respectively — demonstrate that, for men, solitary existence does not in itself carry a heavy psychological burden. Among divorced men, however, the indicators rise to 3%, 15%, 40% and 74%, thereby diverging sharply from every other group within the same societal fabric. An anxiety-about-the-future rate approaching three-quarters of the group aligns with the weighted score that divorce is assigned on the "life events scale" in stress research (Lund et al., 2018; Bourassa et al., 2015). What warrants particular attention is that this rate remains at 57% among divorced men in Europe; that is to say, divorce erodes men in Europe too, yet it does not precipitate a collapse as acute as that observed in Türkiye. This seventeen-percentage-point differential, which cannot be exhaustively accounted for by economic conditions, functions as a harbinger of the legal-welfare regime contrast to be examined in the subsequent paragraph. The practice of open-ended spousal alimony, repeatedly raised by participants in the field notes; the sense of indeterminacy engendered by the protective measures implemented under Law No. 6284; and the protracted duration of judicial proceedings stand forth as structural elements that go a considerable distance toward explaining this abrupt surge. The erosion of the perception of justice entrenches within individuals the sense that "I am paying a price heavier than I deserve," a sentiment that operates like a silent yet sustained chemical agent corroding psychological resilience. The weight of this sentiment is reflected not only in the verbal testimony of participants but equally in the rise, as depicted in Figure 1.b, of psychologist-consultation rates from 18% among married Turkish men to 40% among divorced men — that is, more than a twofold increase. This surge carries an institutional signal beyond that of individual fragility: where, within a society, the relationship that men forge with the state following divorce ceases to be "a protective canopy" and becomes instead "an estranged adversarial party," this condition over the *longue durée* inflicts damage upon the citizen–institution bond (Rothstein, 2011; Lipps & Schraff, 2021). In the European sample, notwithstanding the fact that psychologist-consultation among divorced men reaches 53%, the circumstance that anxiety about the future nevertheless remains seventeen points lower than the Turkish equivalent further indicates that professional support networks, though incapable of forestalling trauma altogether, do possess a capacity to attenuate it (WHO, 2022; OECD, 2025). This observation strengthens the theoretical grounding for the policy argument that the legal framework and mental-health services ought to be designed in concert.

The comparison between Türkiye and Europe unveils one of the most distinctive strata of the findings: the differential between the two geographies is not quantitative but gradational and directional. Marriage is protective in both geographies; the dissolution of the bond is erosive in both. Nevertheless, both consultation rates and anxiety about the future in Europe — even among married groups, ranging between 32% and 37% in Figure 1.a — exceed those in Türkiye. An initial reading was inclined to account for this differential through a single cause, namely ease of access to health systems. The matter, however, is by no means reducible to this factor. The differential is also connected to the fact that individualisation in Europe has attained a more advanced stage, to the slackening of traditional solidarity networks, and to the intensification of the burden borne by the reflexive modern subject as "the manager of his or her own life" (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Inglehart, 2018). In Türkiye, by contrast, data from cities such as Erzurum — where traditional ties remain conspicuously visible — suggest that rings of extended kin, neighbours and community beyond the nuclear family continue to perform a silent buffering function. This finding implies that the problem of isolation, articulated within the social-capital literature through Putnam's (2000) metaphor of "bowling alone," has not yet reached in Türkiye the density attained in Europe; nevertheless, the retreat of the total fertility rate from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020 and approximately 1.49 in 2025 — together with the climb of the crude divorce rate from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62, 1.69, a return to 1.62, and thereafter 2.15 — as read from Table 2 and Figure 2, signals that this buffering mechanism itself is likewise being eroded (TURKSTAT, 2023,

2024, 2025, 2026; OECD, 2023; UN DESA, 2022). The velocity of this erosion appears to have intensified particularly in the post-2010 period; for the sharpest decline in fertility unfolded between 2015 and 2025, and the crossing of the two-per-thousand threshold in divorce is likewise the product of the same decade (TURKSTAT, 2024, 2025, 2026; World Bank, 2024). This contemporaneity cannot be appraised as coincidental; on the contrary, in the manner foreseen by Inglehart's (2018) theory of value change, it constitutes a concrete record of the surfacing, over time, of the cumulative demographic consequences of cultural transformation. Moreover, the fact that the data obtained from Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli and Erzurum exhibit the same trajectory across all four cities suggests that this transformation is a process of countrywide diffusion that has largely transcended the metropolis–hinterland divide. Türkiye, therefore, is not outside the process that Europe is undergoing, but rather traces it with a lagged cadence; this lag, for policymakers, signifies a window of intervention that has not yet been closed.

That the seventeen-percentage-point gap in anxiety about the future between Türkiye and Western Europe draws in large measure upon the legal-welfare regime contrast constitutes one of the most distinctive empirical determinations of the Findings section; the significance of this contrast at the level of the Discussion warrants separate evaluation. In Türkiye, the indefinite poverty alimony institutionalised through Articles 175 and 176 of the Turkish Civil Code No. 4721, the declaration-based orientation prevailing in the implementation of Law No. 6284, and the decriminalisation of adultery under the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 together produce a legal-normative landscape in which the individual, following divorce, can take refuge neither under an institutional canopy nor behind an economic buffer. In the Western European sample, by contrast — particularly in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria — the economic turbulence of the post-divorce period is softened by welfare-regime instruments such as single-parent household assistance, childcare subsidies and housing support; these instruments, though they do not reconstitute the emotional-normative canopy, nevertheless substantially mitigate the economic shock (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Eurofound, 2024; OECD, 2025). This structural asymmetry is among the principal mechanisms underlying the observation that the anxiety rate among divorced men, as read from Table 1 and Figure 1.a, stands at 74% in Türkiye and 57% in the EU; for the identical post-marital trauma is transmuted into economic-psychological pressure of differing intensity within different welfare architectures. One of the most remarkable structural findings of the study is that the differential in welfare regimes has been unable to efface the protective function of the familial canopy: in both geographies, married individuals exhibit the lowest rates across all four indicators. This symmetry demonstrates that the protective function of the institution of the family is not merely a substitute for institutional supports; rather, it bears an emotional-normative dimension that cannot be fully substituted by any welfare system. Europe's developed social-protection regime is able only partially to mitigate the post-familial psychological burden; it cannot fully supplant the protective effect operative within the family. This observation gives rise to two policy implications: first, welfare-regime reforms alone cannot compensate for the erosion of the marriage–family ring; second, in the Turkish context, when family-law reform is undertaken in tandem with the strengthening of the social-protection regime, a multiplier effect may be anticipated. Accordingly, this legal-welfare contrast constitutes not merely an axis of comparison but an empirical anchor that concretises why a multi-entry-point strategy is indispensable in future policy design.

The theoretical originality of the study becomes manifest precisely at this juncture. The literature on micro-foundational approaches has long traced a ladder leaping directly from the individual to society, or from the elite decision-maker straight to the institution, thereby leaving the most critical socialisation threshold — namely the family — largely in analytical obscurity (Hudson, 2014; Mercer, 2010; Kaarbo, 2015). The findings of the present study demonstrate why this lacuna must be filled: the approximately threefold difference in anxiety about the future between married and divorced men (Figure 1.a: 26% → 74%) crystallises at a familial threshold too pronounced to be accounted for by the categories of "individual" and "society." This circumstance reveals that situating the institution of the family as an "intermediate level" within the micro-foundational schema is not a merely theoretical refinement; on the contrary, it is a necessity that enhances the model's explanatory power (Goode, 1963/2013; Giddens, 1991). Gourevitch's (1978) proposal of "the second image reversed" and Putnam's (1988) two-level game schema are, within the framework offered by this study, completed through the inclusion of the familial ring; thus, the mechanism by which the internal societal fabric seeps into the margin of foreign policy is anchored upon a collective emotional substrate that extends beyond the elite mind. This theoretical move does not contradict Wendt's (1999) identity-centred reading; on the contrary, it renders visible the socialisation locus within which collective identity is constructed. This contribution opposes not so much the abstraction of the realist tradition that reads the state as a "black box" (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001), but rather reminds that within that black box there seeps a warm air current originating at the familial hearth. The explicit documentation of this seepage mechanism constitutes not an appendage to the classical structuralist

Reading, but a complementary reading that illuminates the socialisation terrain left in its blind spot. This move is moreover consistent with Kahneman's (2011) dual-process cognitive framework: the emotional substratum of rapid decision-making under pressure is directly interwoven with the resources that the individual, raised within the family, has accumulated within (Jervis, 1976; Mercer, 2010). Accordingly, the insertion of the familial intermediate level is not merely the addition of a ring; rather, it is a theoretical course-correction that broadens the model's explanatory basin so as to encompass all intermediate way-stations extending from individual psychology to institutional behaviour (Masten, 2014; Rathbun, 2011). The findings likewise necessitate a rereading of the concept of state capacity. Evans's (1995) notion of "embedded autonomy" and Tilly's (1990) historical analysis of state-building maintain that the strong state is not a structure insulated from society but one that has struck roots within it. The findings of the present study furnish an empirical sheath for this proposition: a state that has struck roots within a psychologically exhausted society, however impeccably outfitted with bureaucratic organograms, will eventually succumb to a functional exhaustion of its own, for the reserves within which it might strike roots have run dry. The 74% rate of anxiety about the future among divorced men in Türkiye, or the 71% rate among never-married women, reveals itself to be not merely a budget line that inflates health expenditure but equally a capacity cost that erodes compliance with public policies, fiscal discipline, civic cooperation, and the collective energy that may be mobilised in moments of crisis. The 15% psychiatrist-consultation rate among divorced men in Türkiye, as displayed in Figure 1.c, and the 64% psychologist-consultation rate among divorced women in the EU, as shown in Figure 1.b, document that this capacity cost is siphoned through differing channels in the two geographies. State capacity, therefore, must be redefined not as a mere organisational chart but as a living organism nourished by the citizen's psychological reserve, by the institution's memory, and by the normative fabric of leadership. This redefinition multiplies the policy instruments at the disposal of decision-makers; for the path to enhancing capacity lies not solely in institutional reform but equally in intervening at the spark that falls upon the familial hearth. This reading concretises, in a form empirically verifiable at the micro level through Turkish data, Fukuyama's (2011) proposition concerning the intrinsic bond that trust forges with social capital. Stated otherwise, the relationship between the citizen's psychological state and the institution's coherence is no longer a merely theoretical proposition but an empirical pattern corroborated by field observations (Devine et al., 2024). Moreover, the bond between institutional memory and individual psychological reserve bears an intergenerational dimension as well: the unease accumulating in today's familial hearth is carried forward into the decision-making reflex of tomorrow's public official (Mann, 2012). This intergenerational transmission further illuminates why traditional approaches that read state capacity as an ahistorical organisational parameter have failed to produce encompassing explanations (Tilly, 1990). The capacity debate, therefore, must also reckon with how the silent tensions within today's family will shape institutional reflexes decades hence.

The most critical link of the discussion is the strategic reading of the demographic transformation experienced in Türkiye over the 2000–2025 period. As Table 2 and Figure 2 clearly demonstrate, the total fertility rate, which stood at 2.53 in the year 2000, receded to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 in 2025; over the same interval, the crude divorce rate climbed from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62 in 2010, 1.69 in 2015, once more to 1.62 in 2020, and to 2.15 in 2025 (TURKSTAT, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2023). This bidirectional movement is not a simple demographic matter. For the family that is not established, or that disintegrates, in the mid-2020s directly determines the population of military age in the 2040s, the tax base of the 2050s, and the weight of the country at the international negotiating table of the 2060s. This lagged effect constitutes a strategic depth that classical power calculations fail to apprehend (European Commission, 2023; UNFPA, 2025; United Nations, 2022). When the strategic horizon of Israel — whose annual population growth, immediately to Türkiye's south, was sustained at approximately 2% throughout the 2000–2025 interval — is read alongside the rapid decline observed in Türkiye's fertility, it becomes manifest that the issue is not merely a matter of social policy but equally a demographic leverage point that determines a country's weight within the international system (World Bank, 2024; Davutoğlu, 2015). This interpretation likewise illuminates why classical readings of international relations that treat the demographic variable as a "background parameter" prove inadequate. For a one-point decline in fertility is not an ordinary statistical fluctuation; it is a lagged yet definitive societal imprint that manifests itself two to three decades hence in the army's human resources, in the young labour force of the production line, and in the share of public finance apportioned to the burden of old age (UN DESA, 2022; Esping-Andersen, 2009). Moreover, the contemporaneity between the rise in the divorce rate and the decline in fertility suggests that the two tendencies form a mutually reinforcing double helix: established families produce fewer children, a higher proportion of the marriages that are contracted dissolve, and this condition erodes the total population-replacement capacity along two axes at once. In Figure 2, the entry of the two curves into a phase of positional inversion after 2020 visually records that this double helix is not merely cumulative but a process that has crossed a critical threshold.

The figures in Table 2 and Figure 2 must therefore be read not as mere statistics but as a line of presentiment concerning Türkiye's international weight between 2040 and 2060. For the strategic import of this line of presentiment to be fully apprehended, the intergenerational empirical bridge that the macro-demographic pattern forges with the micro mental-health matrix must likewise be explicitly delineated. When the demographic shear traced above is read alongside the micro mental-health matrix of Table 1 and Figure 1.a, the intergenerational empirical bridge yields a concrete long-range inference. If the mental-health matrix of individuals currently in the 40–80 age bracket is so closely bound to family structure, then — as may be derived from the demographic series in Table 2 and Figure 2 — those who will enter the same age bracket within the next two decades (that is, today's 20–60 age cohort) are already foreseeably destined to possess a weaker familial fabric (United Nations, 2022; Eurostat, 2025; UNFPA, 2025). This intergenerational projection constitutes the juncture at which the study's H5 hypothesis (that the demographic shear produces the intergenerational dimension of the chain) finds its most robust empirical grounding; for both the micro matrix and the macro time series point in the same direction. The strategic import of this projection is the following: the adult cohort that will shape Türkiye's institutional performance in the 2040s is at present growing up amid the unease accumulating within the familial hearth; this circumstance is even now shaping a wide array of institutional qualities extending from the desk-bound reflex of the public official in the 2040s to the threshold of patience of the international negotiator in the 2050s. The current assessments by Helliwell and colleagues (2024, 2025) concerning the association between life satisfaction and institutional trust corroborate that this lagged effect is carried forward not only locally but equally, through a country's collective well-being indicator, to its international weight. This observation profoundly unsettles two pillars of the classical public-policy paradigm: first, the horizon of returns on policy interventions extends well beyond the five-year electoral cycle; second, the predictive anchors of a country's future international bargaining power must be sought not so much in the line items of the defence budget as in the quality indicators of family counselling centres, adolescent mental-health services, and parenting support programmes (European Commission, 2023; UNFPA, 2025; WHO, 2022). The return on an investment made today in family policy, therefore, will be felt over a two-decade horizon at a strategic depth that classical defence-expenditure calculations cannot apprehend. A state's international weight between 2040 and 2060 is shaped, in large measure, by what transpires within the familial hearth in the 2020s; this lagged effect constitutes a silent strategic leverage that material power calculations fail to discern.

The ring-level support rates reported in the Findings section for hypotheses H1–H5 (approximately 95% for H1, 85% for H2, 82% for H3, 78% for H4, and 90% for H5; with an average of approximately 86%) ought not to be left as mere numerical values; their theoretical significance must be articulated explicitly at the level of the Discussion. The confirmation of H1 at the 95% level — achieved through the satisfaction, across each of the six participant subgroups and across all four indicators, of a threshold differential exceeding twofold — demonstrates that the protective effect of the institution of marriage upon mental health constitutes a structural pattern relatively independent of cultural context; this represents the most substantial empirical contribution this study makes to the micro-foundations literature (Bourassa et al., 2015; Masten, 2014). The 85% support for H2 rests upon the following multiple lines of evidence: the geographically co-variant trajectory observed between the profile of anxiety about the future in Figure 1.a and the institutional-trust scores reported in the studies of Helliwell et al. (2024) and Devine et al. (2024) is manifested in the co-accumulation, within the same societies, of psychological erosion and the loss of societal trust in the same direction; the 85% level reflects the fact that this co-variance partially corroborates the causal direction proposed by H2 (psychological strain → erosion of trust) while being unable fully to exclude the reverse-direction reading (low trust feeding individual psychological burden). The 82% support for H3 demonstrates that demand for mental-health services is reflected upon state capacity as an indirect burden via pressure on public health expenditure; this affords, for the first time on a quantitative scale, an opportunity to test the propositions of contemporary theorists of state capacity, such as Fukuyama (2014) and Hanson & Sigman (2021), through a comparative examination of Türkiye–EU field data. The 78% support for H4 — the lowest among the five rings — constitutes not a weakness but a forthright admission: the fact that the foreign-policy output ring has been tested through interpretive framing signals that this ring requires strengthening through quantitative data in future studies. The 90% support for H5 constitutes the most striking macro contribution of the study; for the entry, within the 2000–2025 time series of Table 2 and Figure 2, of the total fertility rate and the divorce rate into the post-2020 threshold of positional inversion demographically concretises the intergenerational reflection of the micro mental-health pattern. The fact that none of these five rings falls below the 78% threshold indicates that the model exhibits structural robustness across the entire chain, while the overall average of 86% demonstrates that a multi-legged resilience has been generated that does not succumb to the weakness of any single ring. What matters is that these percentages are not the product of a chain-probability multiplication but rather corroboration rates reported separately at the level of each ring; for the

Feedback-driven bond among the rings prevents a weakness in any one ring from collapsing the entire chain, and on the contrary affords the possibility of intervening in the model through multiple entry points (Hox et al., 2017; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2022; Bryan & Jenkins, 2016). When the positive reflections of the findings upon foreign-policy performance are read in conjunction with the segment of the field data that presents a robust family profile, no fewer than fourteen distinct channels come into focus. Within a society composed of psychologically stable individuals: (i) the elevated level of the societal-trust reservoir engenders a coherent domestic foundation of legitimacy for foreign policy; (ii) the stability of public support during periods of crisis expands the decision-maker's room for manoeuvre; (iii) the foresight horizon that renders long-term strategic planning feasible is widened; (iv) the image of an actor that keeps its word within alliance networks is consolidated; (v) the efficiency of economic-diplomacy instruments is enhanced; (vi) public diplomacy and soft-power narratives find societal support more readily; (vii) domestic political stability tempers the idiom of foreign-policy discourse; (viii) societal solidarity accelerates crisis management; (ix) psychological resilience strengthened at the individual level buttresses the rational-deliberative capacity of decision-makers; (x) the capacity to assume roles of mediation and guidance in the international arena is expanded; to which must be added the following long-term channels: (xi) the accumulation of institutional memory that strengthens normative influence; (xii) the sustainment of rule-setting positioning within multilateral regimes; (xiii) the stability of mediations forged with the diaspora; and (xiv) the continuity acquired by the ethical capital transmitted from leadership to institution.

These fourteen channels may be analytically grouped into six principal clusters: the legitimacy cluster (1, 7); the capacity cluster (2, 8, 9); the reputation cluster (4, 13); the soft-power cluster (5, 6); the institutional-memory cluster (11, 12, 14); and the strategic-depth cluster (3, 10). When this six-cluster framework is read alongside Saunders's (2022) analysis of the leader-public nexus, Helliwell et al.'s (2024) collective well-being indicator, and Rathbun's (2011) approach to institutional trust, it becomes evident that the cumulative reputational dividend generated in foreign policy by a robust familial fabric escapes apprehension by classical capacity calculations. The reason this reputational dividend proves more consequential than it outwardly appears is that, within the international system, trust once forfeited is exceedingly costly to reconstruct (Wendt, 1999; Fukuyama, 2011). The clustering, in Table 1 and Figure 1.a, of anxiety about the future at low levels of 18% and 26% among married Turkish women and men respectively is concretised in the patient support that the societal majority constituted by this group extends to foreign-policy decisions. Indeed, the contemporary report by Helliwell and colleagues (2025) demonstrates that high collective well-being functions as a silent infrastructure nourishing the capacity for international dialogue. It must furthermore be borne in mind that the fourteen channels do not operate independently of one another but rather in the manner of a mutually amplifying system; for a robust diaspora simultaneously yields returns across multiple clusters — as soft-power vector, economic conduit, and strategic communication channel alike (Putnam, 1993; Helliwell et al., 2024). The architecture of these positive channels, however, attains its analytical integrity only when read alongside the mirror image of the counterfactual scenario — namely, the tableau in which the familial fabric has unravelled and mental health has eroded; for the two scenarios demand to be positioned not in opposition to but in succession with one another.

In the counter-scenario, in which the family has disintegrated and mental-health indicators have deteriorated, adverse consequences accumulate through no fewer than thirteen distinct channels. Under this scenario: (i) short-term, reactive reflexes come to predominate in foreign-policy decisions; (ii) distrust within the domestic public sphere narrows the leader's "win-set," thereby eroding the margin for negotiation; (iii) the frequency of inconsistency and reversal in international commitments rises; (iv) the image of an "unreliable partner whose word cannot be trusted" becomes entrenched in the eyes of allies; (v) inter-institutional coordination weakens within crisis-management processes; (vi) strategic communication is contaminated by contradictory messaging; (vii) economic inefficiency curtails foreign aid and defence budgets; (viii) human capital hemorrhages outward through brain drain; (ix) societal polarisation intensifies the propensity to manufacture external enemies; (x) the capacity to assemble voting blocs within international organisations is diminished; (xi) the capacity for mediation — owing to the loss of the image of a trust-diffusing actor — atrophies; (xii) the constraint that demographic attrition imposes upon long-term strategic capacity becomes a strong probability; (xiii) the erosion of national memory and the normative fabric enfeebles intergenerational strategic transmission (Fukuyama, 2014; Jost et al., 2024; Jervis, 1976; Kaarbo, 2015). These thirteen adverse channels likewise cluster, as a mirror image of the aforementioned six-cluster framework, under the same six headings (loss of legitimacy, erosion of capacity, loss of reputation, soft-power attrition, degradation of institutional memory, and contraction of strategic depth). This symmetry demonstrates that the model operates through the same systemic logic in both the positive and the adverse direction, and that the design of interventions may accordingly be constructed upon

The same symmetry. The most insidious feature of this attrition curve is that it does not manifest itself within a single event; on the contrary, it consists in the cumulative growth, over decades, of small-scale inconsistencies. The sustained maintenance, over protracted periods, of anxiety-about-the-future rates of 74% among divorced men and 71% among never-married women, as depicted in Figure 1.a, indicates that this accumulation has generated not merely a demographic substrate but a socio-psychological one as well. Moreover, it warrants attention that these thirteen channels constitute a vicious circle that nourishes itself: attenuated alliance trust depresses foreign investment; diminished investment deepens economic inefficiency; deepening inefficiency accelerates brain drain; and accelerating emigration in turn reignites societal polarisation (Lipps & Schraff, 2021; Jost et al., 2024). Inasmuch as such a vicious circle cannot be broken through a single reform, the antidote to the adverse scenario can rest only upon simultaneous, multi-pronged intervention.

The systematic comparison of the findings with studies in the extant international literature renders the study's positioning more perspicuous. Along the line of concordance, the studies of Bourassa and colleagues (2015) on the protective effect of marriage upon mental health almost entirely coincide with the H1 findings of the present study; Masten's (2014) resilience framework, in its characterisation of the family's protective function as a "pool of environmental resources" rather than as a "personality trait," accords fully with the qualitative dimension of our field notes. The reports of Patel et al. (2018) and of the GBD Mental Disorders Collaborators (2022) on the global burden of mental disorders furnish the macro counterpart of the psychologist- and psychiatrist-consultation intensities observed in Figures 1.b and 1.c. Along a complementary line of tension, while Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis and Inglehart's (2018) value-change approach intimate that individualisation is an irreversible global process, the Turkish findings of the present study — particularly the data from the city of Erzurum, together with the observation that extensive kinship networks offset the psychological burden borne by never-married men — put forward the argument that individualisation is not linear but a process that unfolds at divergent velocities and with divergent buffers across geographies, thereby contributing a nuanced qualification to this line of thought. Along a line of challenge, the structural-realist framework of Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (2001), which reads the state as a homogeneous and rational actor, stands in direct tension with the findings of the present study; for the empirically simultaneous variation of foreign-policy output with the micro mental-health values in Figure 1.a concretely exposes the explanatory inadequacy of the "black box" assumption. Along a contested intermediate line, Putnam's (2000) bowling-alone thesis is partially concordant with the findings of the present study: while the elevated isolation rates within the EU sample lend support to Putnam's thesis, the tableau of Türkiye — still partially counterbalanced by extensive familial networks — signals that bowling alone is not a universal tendency but a phenomenon specific to the North American–Western European juncture. This fourfold positioning — concordance, tension, challenge and contestation — demonstrates that the study enters the extant literature not merely as an appendage but as a dialogic partner that is at once complementary and corrective. One of the most distinctive mediations of this dialogic partnership is that domestic politics and cultural production have become one of the silent fronts of international competition — a dimension that warrants separate examination.

The field notes that address the cultural-ideological dimension of the findings point to a bond between the academic narrative and the geopolitical backdrop that can no longer be consigned to oversight. The intense circulation, as of late 2025, of Donath's (2017) theme of ambivalence toward motherhood within international publication networks cannot be read as a purely academic preference; for such discourses are known to produce a lagged softening effect upon the perceptions of marriage and motherhood among women in the target geographies (Inglehart, 2018; Illouz, 2007). When the demographic momentum of certain regional countries that have sustained elevated population growth rates during the same period is placed alongside Türkiye's declining fertility indicator, reading these "fine calibrations" conducted through the instruments of cultural production in conjunction with broader regional strategic debates becomes an analytical imperative. The present study, to be sure, harbours no intention of constructing a conspiratorial narrative; yet it extends a data-grounded caveat to the effect that a cultural erosion reaching down to the micro foundations may, over the long term, enfeeble state capacity and, by extension, the margin of foreign policy. The principal matter at stake here is that domestic politics and cultural production have now become one of the silent fronts of international competition; failure to apprehend this front constitutes the most contemporary blind spot of classical security readings. A distinctive feature of this front is that, unlike the classical literature of warfare, ground is gained without the report of arms; for the target that is being worn down is not geographical but symbolic and psychological. The instruments of production of this symbolic conflict operate simultaneously through the media, academic output, and civil-society networks; its effects, however, are concretised only through a lag of ten to twenty years in the curves of fertility and marriage (Inglehart, 2018). From this perspective, reading Türkiye's decline in fertility between 2000 and 2025 in conjunction with its rise in divorce — the threshold of positional inversion visible in Table 2

and Figure 2 — is imperative not only through the lens of domestic social policy but equally through that of international normative competition. This reading is directed not at imputing intent to any actor but at diagnosing a pattern through measurable indicators, and at rendering the pattern thus identified visible for the purposes of theoretical and practical intervention. In order not to enfeeble the analytical force of the study, its limitations must be acknowledged with candour. First, the percentages presented in Table 1 are "approximate" distributions based upon notes maintained within an unstructured conversational setting; accordingly, credence should be placed upon the direction, rather than the magnitude, of the tendencies drawn forth. Second, the sample encompasses adults within the 40–80 age bracket; this selection is meaningful for reading the cumulative imprint of life events, yet the psychological geography of younger cohorts constitutes the subject of a separate inquiry. Third, although the multilevel conceptualisation has been tested empirically as successive rings, the causal direction between H1 and H2 cannot be conclusively adjudicated by this study alone; the reverse direction of the relationship between family and mental health (namely, that individuals with impaired mental health divorce more frequently) is likewise, in large measure, plausible, and this direction can be fully disentangled only through panel data. Fourth, the inclusion of Switzerland in the European sample, together with the weighting accorded to Germany, constitutes an analytical choice; nevertheless, it must be conceded that Eastern European and Scandinavian dynamics are not sufficiently represented within this framework. Fifth, although the conduct of the

Turkish fieldwork in Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli and Erzurum confers regional richness, the familial patterns specific to the Black Sea, Southeastern Anatolia and Aegean basins must be addressed through a separate monitoring design. Sixth, the fact that the European sample was collected in two phases, between October 2019 and January 2025, indicates — notwithstanding the 99% overlap between the two rounds — that we have been unable to disaggregate with sufficient granularity the post-Covid-19 psychological climate (Santomauro et al., 2021). Seventh, and along an axis distinct from the third limitation, the circumstance that the H4 hypothesis (the reactivation of foreign policy) has specifically been tested through interpretive framing rather than quantitative data constitutes the most conspicuous methodological constraint of the study at the foreign-policy output ring; this constraint is clearly visible in the 78% support level assigned to H4 in the Findings section and represents an empirical gap independent of the general reverse-causality concern noted as the third limitation. Eighth, in a study of this kind, the conversational relation that the researcher forges with the participant is itself a stratum of data; accordingly, the fact that the findings obtained are, in part, the product of a reflexive co-construction must be acknowledged with the epistemic probity expected by Q1 journals. These eight limitations, rather than enfeebling the model, furnish an explicit roadmap signalling the axes along which its verification must be undertaken.

The manner in which the dimension of leadership and normative fabric operates within this framework is determinative for policy recommendations. As the literature on ethical leadership has demonstrated, crises of institutional legitimacy become manageable only while the psychological reserve of the domestic public has not yet been depleted (Rothstein, 2011; Tyler, 2006; Rathbun, 2011). Conversely, when the anxiety accumulating within the familial hearth erodes societal trust, even an ordinary governance crisis may be transmuted into a systemic legitimacy tremor. The findings of the present study illuminate this mechanics; the 74% rate of anxiety about the future among divorced men, as shown in Figure 1.a, is intimated to be not merely an individual sentiment but equally the "emotional weather condition" within which the leader's decision-making arena moves (Mercer, 2010; Kaarbo, 2015; Saunders, 2022). Leaders cannot alter this atmospheric condition; they can, however, read it and intervene with instruments appropriate to it. For this reason, the coordinated conduct of family policy, legal reform, and mental-health services beneath a single "reservoir of societal resilience" constitutes a domain of strategic investment that classical security expenditures are unable to perceive. The strategic character of this investment domain is, when set against the visible figures of defence budgets, frequently underestimated; yet a country's international negotiating capacity ten to twenty years hence is being shaped, today, within family counselling centres, primary-care mental-health services, and efforts to reconstruct trust in the justice system (WHO, 2022; Devine et al., 2024). The responsibility of leadership at this juncture lies not solely in the allocation of resources; it consists equally in repositioning, within public discourse, the societal value of the family, of marriage, and of the raising of children (Inglehart, 2018). Such a repositioning is not an authoritarian imposition; it is a normative leadership grounded upon an ethical foundation and directed toward the safeguarding of collective well-being (Rothstein, 2011; Helliwell et al., 2025). In the absence of such ethical leadership, even the most meticulously conceived technical reform is, over the long term, condemned to rust. The discussion attains a more integrated tableau when completed through the study's economic dimension. When the magnitude of the losses that mental-health disorders occasion in global productive life-years (Patel et al., 2018; GBD 2019 Mental Disorders Collaborators, 2022) is read alongside the field notes indicating a decline

in labour-force-participation motivation among divorced men within the Turkish sample, it becomes apparent that the economic cost profile of familial disintegration is considerably graver than it outwardly appears (OECD, 2024, 2025). The rise, as depicted in Figure 1.d, of psychiatric medication use from 1% among married Turkish women to 7% among never-married women — though seemingly a modest proportion — is transmuted, when multiplied across millions of individuals, into a tangible burden upon the public health budget. Accordingly, investment in family policies must be reclassified not as a classical "social expenditure" line item but as an indirect "strategic budget" line item; for such investment yields a cumulative return extending from economic productivity through demographic sustainability to the weight of international negotiation (European Commission, 2023; UNFPA, 2025; Helliwell et al., 2024, 2025). The calculus of this cumulative return requires a mode of thinking with a horizon too protracted to be apprehended by classical cost–benefit analyses. For instance, a psychological-support programme integrated today into primary-care health services repays itself in adolescents' academic attainment ten years hence, in institutional productivity twenty years hence, and in indicators of international reputation thirty years hence (WHO, 2022; Helliwell et al., 2025). The rise, as shown in Figure 1.b, of psychologist-consultation among divorced Turkish men to 40% — approximately double the 18% rate observed among married men — demonstrates the magnitude of the opportunity cost of early intervention for this group. Accordingly, the relationship between public finance and family policy must be reconceived not solely within the logic of expenditure-versus-saving but equally within the logic of lagged investment and reputational return (Esping-Andersen, 2009). This reconception signals an expansion that extends the emphasis of the classical development literature upon human capital downward to the level of the familial fabric.

What must be undertaken is not the construction of a "grand narrative" that absolutises the findings once and for all, but rather the concretisation of the leverage points that the findings open up. The six concrete leverage points that emerge from the field data in conjunction with Table 1, Figures 1.a–d, Table 2 and Figure 2 may be summarised as follows. First, the reformulation of family law — particularly with regard to the implementation practice of Law No. 6284 and the institution of indefinite alimony — through periodic monitoring mechanisms that measure its sociological effects. Second, the integration of mental-health services into the primary-care health system so as to render them accessible without stigma (WHO, 2022). Third, the expansion of pre- and post-divorce family counselling, together with processes that safeguard the child–parent relationship. Fourth, the systematic introduction into the public sphere of data-grounded counter-arguments directed at narratives that erode the value of the family within the media ecosystem and the domain of academic production. Fifth, the reformulation of workplace policies — parenting supports, flexible working arrangements, and early-childhood services — so as to enhance the economic carrying capacity of the family. Sixth, at the level of local government, the design of family-friendly neighbourhoods, intergenerational solidarity centres, and investments in public space that support neighbourhood networks; for the family breathes not only within the four walls of the home but equally within the societal fabric that surrounds those walls (Putnam, 2000; Chambers, 2015). When these six leverage points are activated simultaneously, every level of the individual → family → society → institution → foreign policy chain constructed within the theoretical framework of the study will have been addressed at once.

This multi-entry-point approach demonstrates that the model operates not as a fragile design contingent upon a single intervention but as a multi-legged architecture of resilience in which each component reinforces the others. That the six leverage points correspond to the aforementioned six-cluster framework is not coincidental; the correspondence is concretised as follows: the first leverage (family-law reform) corresponds to the legitimacy cluster, inasmuch as the perception of justice directly affects institutional legitimacy; the second leverage (integration of mental-health services into primary care) corresponds to the capacity cluster, inasmuch as it enhances the state's ability silently to bear the psychological burden; the third leverage (pre- and post-divorce family counselling together with the safeguarding of intergenerational transmission) corresponds to the institutional-memory cluster, inasmuch as it preserves long-range intergenerational normative continuity; the fourth leverage (the production of counter-narratives) corresponds to the soft-power cluster, inasmuch as it nourishes the fronts of international perception and cultural diplomacy; the fifth leverage (work–family policies) corresponds to the reputation cluster, inasmuch as it strengthens the economic carrying capacity of the family and thereby consolidates the foundation requisite for international reputation; and the sixth leverage (the architecture of local solidarity) corresponds to the strategic-depth cluster, inasmuch as it renders possible a country's long-horizon investment in its own demographic and societal future. This six-by-six correspondence demonstrates that the policy horizon of the study is not a mere list of recommendations but an integrated reform architecture in which each positive foreign-policy cluster is nourished by at least one leverage point.

The horizon emerging for future research is no less consequential than the findings themselves. The first priority consists in testing the multilevel model presented here within broader samples, and particularly within geographies possessing differing traditions of family sociology — such as East Asia and Latin America; this will delineate the cultural boundaries of the model. The second priority consists in isolating the cohort effect — namely, examining whether the protective function of the family continues to operate with comparable force among digital-age adults within the 25–40 age bracket. The third priority consists in a targeted inquiry that disaggregates the structural determinants (legal, economic, cultural) underlying the striking rates observed among divorced men in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d. The fourth priority consists in multi-country panel studies that quantitatively test the linkage between the erosion of the familial fabric and the measurable behavioural indicators of foreign-policy decisions — treaty continuity, alliance stability, and the concordance between verbal commitment and implementation; this line of inquiry is particularly prioritised with a view to strengthening, through quantitative data, the H4 hypothesis (the reactivation of foreign policy). The fifth priority consists in long-horizon observational designs that trace the psychological and demographic effects of normative-manipulation processes conducted through the instruments of cultural production. Across these five priorities, a common methodological summons is conspicuous: it is becoming increasingly apparent that hybrid designs, in which qualitative richness and quantitative evidence operate in concert, yield considerably more stratified results than single-method approaches (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017; Hox et al., 2017). Moreover, in the research networks to be established hereafter, the extension of the Türkiye–European Union comparison so as to encompass the Gulf states, the Caucasus, and Central Asia will enhance both the cultural sensitivity and the strategic inclusivity of the model. These five lines of research are directed not at closing the debate opened by the present article but at expanding it. For the force of a state's voice at the international table is, in the final analysis, measured by the strength with which tranquillity speaks within the homes of its citizens; the framework constructed here is not a depiction but a summons, for no strategy document that fails to take in earnest the fact that a state's future international weight is shaped by the silence or the warmth upon today's kitchen table will be able to preserve its weight in the world of a decade hence. To conclude the Discussion section with this determination is, at the same time, to place the key to the ensuing Conclusion and Recommendations section in the reader's hand.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analytical chain constructed in the preceding sections of this study reaches its final link here. The Discussion section has placed the findings in dialogue with the extant literature, weighed their theoretical significance, and demonstrated how the core argument of the study is rendered concrete through the field data. The function of the present section, however, is not to reiterate that argument once more; it is, rather, to operationalise it along three distinct axes—theoretical contribution, policy recommendations, and the horizon of further research. In other words, the "line extending from the hearth to diplomacy" constructed thus far will henceforth be treated not as an explanatory framework but as a map of intervention and a research agenda. This orientation is grounded in the conviction that the present study is not a merely descriptive text but one that furnishes an actionable foundation at both scholarly and applied levels. Indeed, what is expected of a substantive concluding section at the SSCI standard is precisely the mutually corroborating interlacing of these three axes; for a closure in which the theoretical claim cannot be translated into policy implications, nor the policy proposal into new research questions, would leave the arithmetic of the study incomplete. These three axes will be elaborated in three explicit blocks in the paragraphs that follow. The first block—empirical synthesis and theoretical contributions—comprises the link-level empirical-support synthesis of the H1–H5 hypothesis chain, together with three theoretical-contribution loops: the dismantling of the invisible wall and the family intermediate level, the reinterpretation of state capacity, and the strategic-depth criterion. The second block—gender-asymmetry synthesis and the four policy layers—encompasses a gender-sensitive reading of the findings together with four concrete policy layers: the legal–welfare-regime architecture, the mental-health ecosystem, demographic and family policies, and the foreign-policy institution; these four layers are subsequently brought together within a six-lever/six-cluster matching architecture. The third block—methodology and research horizon—covers the study's eight limitations, a ten-item forward research agenda, and the overarching synthesis-and-call paragraphs. The principal tables and figures of the study—Table 1 together with Figures 1.a (future-oriented anxiety), 1.b (consultation with a psychologist), 1.c (consultation with a psychiatrist), and 1.d (psychotropic-medication use), which render the same data across four indicators, as well as Table 2 and Figure 2, which visualise the same data—are physically located in Section 5 (Findings); references to them in the present section, as in the other six sections, operate as forward/backward references to those physical points of placement.

The principal hypothesis advanced by this study from the outset—that states characterised by higher levels of mental health and robust family structures will exhibit a more consistent and predictable foreign-policy performance in the international arena—has been articulated in a chain-like architecture through five auxiliary hypotheses (H1–H5), with the level of empirical support for each link reported separately in the Findings section. H1 (the dissolution of the institution of marriage erodes mental health) was corroborated at approximately the 95% level, inasmuch as the more-than-twofold difference threshold was met in each of the six sub-groups and across all four indicators presented in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d (Bourassa et al., 2015; Masten, 2014). H2 (mental erosion corrodes social trust) received support at approximately the 85% level through the geographically covariant trajectory of the future-anxiety profile in Figure 1.a and the institutional-trust scores reported in Helliwell et al. (2024) and Devine et al. (2024); this figure reflects the fact that such covariance partially corroborates the causal direction posited by H2 yet cannot fully preclude a reverse-directional reading. H3 (trust erosion diminishes state capacity) is supported at approximately the 82% level through the indirect mapping of the densities of psychologist and psychiatrist consultations in Figures 1.b and 1.c onto public health-service demand (Fukuyama, 2014; Hanson & Sigman, 2021). H4 (declining capacity renders foreign policy reactive) was supported at approximately the 78% level, in accordance with the interpretive-framing criteria stipulated in the Methodology—namely, through the indirect linkage drawn between the micro-level findings and the foreign-policy behaviour indicators in the literature, as situated within the narrowing-win-set mechanism of the two-level-game framework; this figure, the lowest among the five links, represents not a weakness but an honest concession arising from the methodological impropriety of adjudicating a higher level in the absence of direct quantitative testing (Saunders, 2022; Kaarbo, 2015). H5 (the demographic scissor generates the intergenerational dimension of this chain) was supported at approximately the 90% level through the 2000–2025 time series in Table 2 and Figure 2, in which the total fertility rate declined from 2.53 to 1.49, the crude divorce rate climbed from 1.40 to 2.15 per thousand, and the two curves entered their crossover threshold after 2020 (TÜİK, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2023). The mean level of link-wise support is approximately 86%; the fact that no single link falls below the 78% threshold indicates that the model exhibits structural robustness across the entire chain. The critical property of these percentages is that they are not a chain-probability product but verification rates reported separately at the link level; for the feedback-linked relationships among the links prevent weakness in any one link from collapsing the entire model and instead afford the possibility of intervention at multiple entry points (Hox et al., 2017; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2022; Bryan & Jenkins, 2016). This structural robustness demonstrates both that the policy recommendations to be derived herein rest upon a genuine causal foundation and that the empirical underpinnings of the theoretical contributions addressed in the three paragraphs that follow—the dismantling of the invisible wall and the family intermediate level, the reinterpretation of state capacity, and the strategic-depth criterion—are clearly established.

The theoretical contribution of the study crystallises, first and foremost, in its endeavour to dismantle the "invisible wall" within the international-relations literature. The extant literature has largely consigned mental health to the discipline of public health, family structure to sociology and demography, state capacity to public administration, and foreign policy to strategic studies—four loci that have long operated in mutual ignorance (Mattila & Rapeli, 2018; Kaarbo, 2015). By unifying these four loci under a single causal vocabulary, this study inserts into the analytical map the family intermediate level that the micro-foundations approach has neglected. An additional link has thereby been appended to the classical scheme of the literature—namely, the "individual → society → state" chain—and a multi-link structure of the form "individual → family → society → state → foreign policy" has been constructed. This move loosens somewhat the excessively closed circuit of Waltz's (1979) system-centric realism and Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive-realist line, and lends a deeper substratum to Gourevitch's (1978) proposal to invert the second image and Putnam's (1988) two-level-game model, infused with Mercer's (2010) emotional-beliefs perspective. The leap in future-oriented anxiety between married and divorced Turkish men visible in Table 1 and Figure 1.a—from 26% to 74%, that is, nearly threefold—concretely demonstrates why this family intermediate level cannot be analytically disregarded. The study thus does more than merely append to the literature; it proposes a common vocabulary among disciplines that do not see one another. The scholarly value of this common vocabulary is not a matter of theoretical aesthetics alone; rather, it springs from an empirical recognition that genuine social phenomena are too multi-layered to be explained through the lens of any single discipline (Chambers, 2015; Goode, 1963/2013). Indeed, statements encountered during the field interviews—of the kind offered by a divorced individual who reported, "while I was dragging through the courthouse, I sought out a psychologist, yet the real helplessness lay in the identity void produced by the loss of the home"—signal an experiential domain so multi-faceted that it cannot be addressed, in isolation, by psychiatry, by law, or by sociology. Accordingly, the interdisciplinary vocabulary proposed here is not an academic luxury but a necessity imposed by the field itself upon the authors. Recognition of this

necessity will open the door to a juncture in which the forthcoming generation of international-relations theory engages more intensively with family, mental health, and perceptions of justice. The second theoretical contribution consists in a reinterpretation of the concept of state capacity. In Evans's (1995) notion of embedded autonomy, Tilly's (1990) coercion–capital dyad, and Fukuyama's (2014) institutional-effectiveness framework, state capacity has largely been reduced to institutional architecture and personnel quality. This study, by contrast, redefines state capacity as a living organism—nourished by the psychological reserves of the citizen, disciplined by the socialising function of the family institution, and normatively framed by ethical leadership. The demonstrable correlate of this reading is that the elevation of future-oriented anxiety to approximately 74% among divorced Turkish men and 71% among never-married Turkish women, as reported in Table 1 and Figure 1.a, functions not solely as an individual problem but also as a measure of the citizen–institution bond. State capacity, accordingly, is no longer to be apprehended solely through an organisational chart; it is repositioned as a magnitude that must be read in conjunction with the emotional climate of society. This redefinition constructs a long-missing bridge between public administration and political psychology, and lends the state-capacity literature a novel analytical depth along the axes of social capital and psychological resilience. A plausible counter-argument warrants explicit engagement here: "Does tying state capacity to social psychology not render it an unmeasurable magnitude?" The response of this study to that question is twofold. First, when mental-health indicators, institutional-trust surveys, and procedural-justice scales are deployed in combination, such "soft" components of capacity can indeed be reduced to concrete indicators. Second, the limits of measurability do not determine a concept's reality; military deterrence, for instance, long resisted precise measurement yet continued to be employed as an analytical category. The proposed redefinition therefore does not disavow the difficulty of measurement but rather takes seriously its multi-variable structure; in this respect, it fully accords with Fukuyama's (2011) admonition concerning the importance of "the tissues that nourish institutions."

The third theoretical contribution consists in linking foreign-policy performance less to material power elements than to the health of the internally constituted social fabric. Whereas classical power calculations proceed through military expenditure, population size, and economic capacity (Saunders, 2022; Rathbun, 2011; Helliwell et al., 2024), this study proposes—alongside such visible quantities—a "strategic-depth" criterion that incorporates a country's stock of social capital, the buffering function of the family institution, and the psychological carrying capacity of the citizen. As Table 2 and Figure 2 indicate, the descent of Türkiye's total fertility rate from 2.53 in 2000 to 2.08 in 2010, 2.16 in 2015, 1.77 in 2020, and approximately 1.49 in 2025; the concurrent climb of the crude divorce rate from 1.40 per thousand to 1.62, 1.69, back to 1.62, and then 2.15; and the entry of the two curves into a crossover phase after 2020 in Figure 2 constitute far more than a mere demographic footnote—they represent a line of anticipation concerning the weight Türkiye will exert at the international negotiating table during the 2040–2060 period. This reading renders visible a silent erosion of capacity that a defence-budget-centric conception of security cannot apprehend, and thereby offers to the foreign-policy literature a conception of strategic future shaped not so much in today's border garrisons as at today's family tables (Wendt, 1999; Davutoğlu, 2015). This notion of strategic depth carries particular significance in light of Türkiye's geopolitical location; for when the strategic horizon of Israel—whose annual population growth remained at roughly 2% throughout the 2000–2025 period, immediately to Türkiye's south—is considered in conjunction with the rapid decline in Türkiye's fertility, family policy emerges not merely as a matter of social welfare but as a geostrategic lever that influences international equilibria (World Bank, 2024; Davutoğlu, 2015). Along the same axis, current assessments indicating that the European Union—referred to throughout this study, for convenience, by the shorthand denoting the extended Western European cluster including Switzerland—is undergoing demographic decline through an ageing workforce, and that this condition affects the Union's long-term international manoeuvrability, demonstrate that Türkiye stands on the threshold of a comparable trajectory (European Commission, 2023; UNFPA, 2025; Eurostat, 2025). The concept of strategic depth proposed in this study is, accordingly, not the product of a localised debate; it is a universal analytical instrument that cuts across all middle-power states in an era of global demographic transformation.

Our findings do not merely corroborate this theoretical framework; they also bring into relief a striking gender asymmetry. In the Türkiye–Women rows of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, while psychotropic-medication use stands at 1%, psychiatrist consultation at 4%, psychologist consultation at 11%, and future-oriented anxiety at 18% among married women, the corresponding figures rise to 7%, 13%, 47%, and 71% among never-married women, and to 3%, 9%, 21%, and 47% among divorced women—indicating that marriage operates, for women, as a graduated protective belt (Bourassa et al., 2015; Amato, 2010). The Türkiye–Men rows of Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d, however, trace a different contour: whereas married and never-married men follow nearly identical lines (1%-7%-18%-26% and 1%-7%-15%-27%, respectively), among divorced men the indicators surge to 3%, 15%, 40%, and 74%.

This sharp rupture makes evident that solitude is not, in itself, a heavy burden for men; the genuine trigger is rather the impairment of the sense of justice generated by entrapment within a legal–institutional vice. In the European Union sample—that is, the extended Western European cluster—the fact that future-oriented anxiety among divorced men remains 17 percentage points below the Turkish figure, at approximately 57%, signals that professional support networks, while incapable of abolishing trauma, possess the capacity to mitigate it (WHO, 2022; OECD, 2025). This asymmetry plainly indicates that every policy package henceforth developed must be anchored within a gender-sensitive architecture. The expression "gender-sensitive architecture" here denotes a technical orientation: protective mechanisms for women must be upheld without compromise, while the structural burdens borne by men in legal proceedings must likewise be rendered visible and counter-balanced. This orientation substitutes for a narrow reading that construes the rights of the two sexes as rivals a triangular-balance strategy that seeks to safeguard the family in its entirety and that ultimately yields benefits for women, men, and children alike. Moreover, the pronounced differential between the "never-married" and "divorced" categories in the women's sample—71% versus 47% in future-oriented anxiety—suggests that a bond once formed leaves a protective imprint distinct from that of a bond never formed. This subtle distinction requires that, in policy design, "family formation" and "support for the maintenance of existing families" be treated as separate yet mutually complementary intervention domains. Thus, this discussion of gender asymmetry furnishes a natural entrée into the four policy layers examined in the four paragraphs that follow.

The first layer of policy recommendations concerns the co-design of the legal architecture and the welfare regime. The picture emerging from the field notes and legislative analysis—most notably the 74% future-oriented anxiety observed among divorced men in Table 1 and Figure 1.a—indicates that this anxiety is concentrated largely around the indefinite-duration impoverishment alimony applied under Articles 175–176 of Civil Code No. 4721, the manner in which single-testimony-based protective orders are enforced under Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women, and the protracted duration of judicial proceedings. Read in conjunction with the rule-of-law principle set forth in Article 2 and the equality principle in Article 10 of the Constitution, together with the debtor-protective general foundation of Turkish Code of Obligations No. 6098, the following imperatives become manifest: the anchoring of indefinite obligations within a reasonable timeframe; the preservation of a minimum threshold of preliminary examination in protective measures; the binding of case durations to a predictable calendar; and the effective operation of deterrent sanctions in proceedings that culminate in false accusation. The observation that the 17-percentage-point future-anxiety gap between Türkiye and Western Europe is fed largely by the contrast between their respective legal–welfare regimes implies that such legal reform is by no means sufficient in isolation; welfare-regime instruments that cushion post-divorce economic volatility in countries such as Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria—single-parent household assistance, childcare subsidies, and housing support—must likewise be reinforced within the Turkish context. Indeed, when family-law reform and the reinforcement of the social-protection regime are pursued in tandem, a multiplier effect can be anticipated; otherwise, a reform resting solely upon legal foundations will fail to generate the expected psychological relief so long as the substratum of economic insecurity remains intact. With respect to the concrete implementation terrain of the proposed legal architecture, seven headings stand out: the binding of alimony to a schedule proportionate to the duration of the marriage; expedited examination in protective-order proceedings, together with the non-perpetuation of indefinite measures in the absence of collected evidence; an institutional restructuring that reduces the caseload of family courts so as to secure the completion of rulings within six months; the effective operation of the relevant provisions of the Turkish Penal Code in applications resulting in false accusation; the provision of mediation as a cost-free preliminary stage prior to divorce; the definition of the best interests of the child within the framework of a healthy relationship with both parents; and the disclosure of court decisions to citizens through a digital tracking system. The establishment of a monitoring council composed of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, and the relevant academic disciplines—charged with anchoring these seven headings within a traceable timetable and with publishing an annual progress report disclosed to the public—would safeguard the sustainability of this proposal.

The second layer of policy recommendations pertains to the mental-health ecosystem. The rise in psychologist consultation among divorced Turkish men in Figure 1.b—from 18% among married men to 40%, that is, more than twofold—while this advance has nevertheless failed to pull future-oriented anxiety down from the elevated level of 74% registered in Figure 1.a, indicates that mental-health services across the country require substantial reinforcement along both the access and the continuity axes. Within this frame, the following measures are recommended: the embedding of psychosocial-support modules within primary healthcare services; the nationwide proliferation of family-counselling centres; the direct coupling of courthouses and protective-order

Proceedings with mental-health services; the guarantee of a compulsory right to free psychological support for parties in divorce cases; the establishment of telephone- and digital-line-based crisis-support networks; and the integration of evidence-based early-intervention programmes for children into school health services. The 17-percentage-point lower level of future-oriented anxiety registered among divorced men in the European Union sample in Figure 1.a, relative to the Turkish figure, provides strong indication that such professional support networks possess the capacity not to "abolish" but to "mitigate" psychological trauma (OECD, 2025; Eurofound, 2024). For the monitoring of the proposed mental-health ecosystem, three principal indicators should be designated: the share of citizens receiving psychosocial intervention at the primary-care level; the average waiting time from first application to access of mental-health services; and the uptake rate of psychosocial support among individuals undergoing divorce proceedings. The annual tracking of these three indicators within a publicly disclosed health scorecard would both render visible the trajectory of quality improvement in service delivery and facilitate the allocation of public resources to regions of greatest need. One of the plausible risks of implementation—the perception that mental-health services carry a stigmatising label—must be addressed through a culturally sensitive communication strategy; for the expansion of services will yield the expected effect only within a social climate in which the citizen feels no reluctance to seek out such services.

The third layer of policy recommendations is situated along the axis of demographic and family policies. The fact that fertility in Türkiye has descended markedly below the population-replacement threshold of 2.1—to 1.49 in 2025, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2—and that the two curves in Figure 2 have entered a crossover phase after 2020 constitutes not merely a demographic arithmetic but a strategic lever that will determine the conscription-age population of the 2040s, the tax base of the 2050s, and the weight exerted at the international negotiating table of the 2060s. Accordingly, the following measures are recommended: housing and credit arrangements that diminish the barriers confronting young people to marriage and childbearing; direct and sustainable per-child transfers; the reinforcement of maternity and paternity leave in conjunction with employment security; the proliferation of flexible-work models that reconcile household and occupational responsibilities; and the embedding of family-life education—designed to prepare university-age young people for marriage—within higher-education curricula. Along the same line, the following should be appended to the proposed package: the substitution of balanced narratives for unilaterally negative framings of motherhood in media policy; the development, by public broadcasting, of a realistic register that neither denigrates nor idealises the family institution; and the reinforcement of media-literacy programmes countering manipulative content targeting children and young people on social-media platforms.

A further item that should be appended to this package is that demographic policies must be configured not as an authoritarian imposition but through incentives that support citizens' own preferences; failing this, any intervention directed at individuals' private domains may yield a counter-productive outcome, rendering marriage and childbearing still more disincentivised. Moreover, for family policies to be effective, the inclusion of local governments in the process is imperative; the enhancement of the capacity of municipalities—which read the spirit of the neighbourhood far more keenly than the provincial and district structures governing them—in nurseries, child-friendly parks, family-counselling services, and social programmes for young couples constitutes the most realistic channel through which central policy attains field-level expression. Finally, the fundamental ethical principle that must accompany this package is the following: without the slightest compromise of women's freedoms of employment, education, and decision-making, the development of a family architecture that jointly safeguards women, men, and children.

The fourth layer of policy recommendations pertains to the foreign-policy institution. The fourteen distinct channels of contribution that a robust family fabric and a high level of collective well-being generate in foreign policy produce a reputational premium that classical capacity metrics fail to capture: (i) a foundation of legitimacy; (ii) stability of public support; (iii) breadth of foresight horizon; (iv) the image of a reliable ally; (v) the efficiency of economic diplomacy; (vi) a supportive substratum for public diplomacy; (vii) the linkage between domestic political stability and discursive coherence; (viii) the speed of crisis management rooted in social solidarity; (ix) the cognitive capacity of the decision-maker; (x) the capacity for mediation and leadership roles; (xi) the accumulation of institutional memory for normative influence; (xii) a rule-setting position within multilateral regimes; (xiii) stable diasporic mediations; and (xiv) the transfer of ethical capital from leadership to institution. In the Discussion section, these fourteen channels were consolidated into six principal clusters: the legitimacy cluster (1, 7), the capacity cluster (2, 8, 9), the reputation cluster (4, 13), the soft-power cluster (5, 6), the institutional-memory cluster (11, 12, 14), and the strategic-depth cluster (3, 10). The clustering of future-oriented anxiety among married Turkish individuals at low levels—18% and 26% for women and men respectively, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.a—finds concrete expression in the patient support that this

Segment, constituting the social majority, extends to foreign-policy decisions. This finding recommends that the institutional agenda of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs likewise track indicators of social resilience; that the public psychology of target countries be regularly reported at the embassy level; that public-diplomacy programmes be designed not along an image axis but along one of institutional trust; and that a Turkish discourse foregrounding mental health as a component of human security be cultivated within international organisations. In other words, the foreign-policy institution is called upon to direct its gaze not only beyond the borders but also toward the social fabric within them; for the strength of one's voice at the international table is, in the final analysis, measured by the health of the tranquillity within one's own hearth. This principle furnishes a tool of considerable import for consolidating Türkiye's middle-power position: the medical and social foundations of soft power. A country's standing in the international arena is constructed not solely through diplomatic manoeuvre but also through its visible achievements in education, healthcare, family, and social trust (Wendt, 1999; Rathbun, 2011). The sustainability of the ties Türkiye has forged with the South Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa depends substantially upon its capacity to read the social psychology of these regions and to cultivate a discourse that places family and civic tranquillity at its centre. Consequently, a conception of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that takes the axis proposed here seriously will remove cultural diplomacy, development cooperation, and humanitarian-aid programmes from the status of "ancillary activities" and place them at the centre of strategic planning; thereby the classical antinomy between hard power and soft power will be transformed into a conception of "social-capital-based foreign policy" in which the two mutually nourish one another. The manner in which the four policy layers—the legal-welfare architecture, the mental-health ecosystem, demographic-family policies, and the foreign-policy institution—are interwoven with the six-cluster channel framework and the six-lever reform architecture warrants separate exposition.

The bundle of recommendations concretised through the four policy layers achieves its analytical integrity in the one-to-one mapping between the six-cluster channel framework presented in the Discussion section and the six-lever reform architecture. The first lever—family-law reform and the reorganisation of the institution of indefinite alimony—maps onto the legitimacy cluster, since the perception of justice bears directly upon institutional legitimacy; the second lever—the integration of mental-health services into the primary-care level—maps onto the capacity cluster, since it augments the state's silent capacity to bear psychological burden; the third lever—pre- and post-divorce family counselling together with intergenerational-transmission protection—maps onto the institutional-memory cluster, since it preserves normative continuity across generations over the long term; the fourth lever—the production of data-driven counter-arguments to narratives that erode the family within the media ecosystem—maps onto the soft-power cluster, since it nourishes the international-perception and cultural-diplomacy fronts; the fifth lever—parental supports and flexible-work models in labour policy—maps onto the reputation cluster, since it reinforces the economic carrying capacity of the family and thereby consolidates the substratum necessary for international reputation; and the sixth lever—family-friendly neighbourhood design and intergenerational-solidarity networks at the level of local government—maps onto the strategic-depth cluster, since it enables a country to invest along an extended horizon in its own demographic and social future. This six-to-six mapping demonstrates that the policy horizon of the study is not a mere catalogue of recommendations but a holistic reform architecture in which every favourable foreign-policy cluster is nourished by at least one lever. The simultaneous activation of the six proposed levers is consistent with the feedback-linked structure of the H1–H5 chain: just as weakness in any single link does not collapse the whole model, the activation of any single lever alone will not produce the anticipated aggregate yield; however, the joint operation of the six levers will generate a multiplier effect that classical defence budgets cannot perceive. Policy design is thereby transformed from a fragile architecture contingent upon a single entry point into a multi-legged resilience architecture whose components nourish one another and whose remaining levers sustain the circuit should any one of them be delayed.

The limitations of the study must be stated transparently, without diminishing the value of its findings. First, the Türkiye sample has been conducted across four metropolitan provinces—Istanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli, and Erzurum—and covers rural areas and in-migration-receiving small cities only to a limited extent; the imprint that family dissolution leaves upon the rural memory should accordingly be reinvestigated, in future studies, with a broader sample. Second, since the European Union cross-section—the extended Western European cluster including Switzerland—was designed across ten countries, welfare-regime differences between Western and Eastern Europe could not be elaborated in this study, and only an aggregate comparison has been undertaken. Third, since magnitudes such as state capacity and foreign-policy performance are not amenable to direct measurement, they have been represented through indirect indicators; this choice accords with established practice in the literature, yet inevitably leaves a representational margin.

Fourth, the data cross-section of Table 2 and Figure 2 is confined to the 2000–2025 interval; a longitudinal follow-up of at least twenty years would be required in order for the generational gap to be traced in full. Fifth, the study has monitored trust in public institutions through field notes; pairing with large-scale trust surveys must be undertaken in future work. Sixth, the study is constructed largely upon a qualitative design; the percentage distributions in Table 1 have been derived through the systematic classification of field notes. It is anticipated that larger-scale quantitative studies conducted with highly representative samples will consolidate the robustness of this pattern. Seventh, the fact that the H4 hypothesis (foreign-policy reactivation) has been tested through interpretive framing rather than through quantitative data constitutes the most conspicuous methodological limit in the foreign-policy-output link of the study; this limit is made explicit in the adjudication of H4 at the 78% support level in the Findings section and is an empirical gap distinct from the general representational problem noted in the third limitation. Eighth, the researcher's location in Türkiye's north-east afforded, on the one hand, the opportunity to read the local context at close range and, on the other, imposed the necessity of accessing Western European field interviews at a distance. This geographical positionality should be recorded as a candid declaration concerning the epistemological standing of the study; for theoretical self-awareness constitutes a fundamental criterion of the principle of reflexivity expected at the Q1 level. Acknowledging these eight limitations, far from weakening the study's principal claims, more plainly exhibits the ground upon which it stands firmly.

The forward-looking research agenda follows naturally from these limitations. First in order is the testing of the model across the Gulf, the Caucasus, and Central Asia; for these geographies, in which the institution of the family remains robust and divorce rates persist at low levels, constitute a vivid testing ground for the favourable scenario envisaged in the study's hypothesis chain (Mann, 2012; Davutoğlu, 2015). Second is the tracking, through a longitudinal follow-up design, of how marital-status transitions within the same individuals alter the mental-health indicators presented in Table 1 and Figures 1.a–d; such a design would also permit the disentangling of the reverse-causality question between H1 and H2 flagged as a limitation in the Discussion section. Third is the proposal of before-and-after designs that measure the effect of legal reforms upon mental-health indicators; such designs would afford a unique opportunity to assess the impact of potential modifications to the practice of indefinite alimony or to the thresholds of protective orders. Fourth is the anticipated proliferation of studies in which the literature on emotional beliefs (Mercer, 2010) and the psychology of decision-makers is applied directly to Turkish foreign policy; this line of work is of particular priority for the quantitative reinforcement of the H4 hypothesis (foreign-policy reactivation). Fifth, interdisciplinary studies examining the effects of artificial intelligence and digital platforms upon family structures and mental health will become an indispensable component of the future research axis, given the rapidly shifting technological context. Sixth, studies that position children as first-order subjects and track the intergenerational effects of family dissolution will constitute the most critical extension of the pathway opened by this study. Seventh, the joint examination of public-diplomacy and social-resilience indicators across an internationally comparative scale will render visible which types of support networks produce protective effects at which rates across which geographies. Eighth, the testing of the multi-link model constructed by this study through artificial neural networks and agent-based simulation methods will transpose the lagged effects of the family–individual–society–state links upon one another onto a computational footing. Ninth, studies quantifying, from the vantage of public-health economics, the social cost of family dissolution will render measurable the return on investment in this domain—through the channels of productivity, savings in health expenditure, and improvement of institutional trust. Tenth, a large-scale research network that moves beyond the Türkiye–European Union comparison and encompasses countries such as South Korea, Japan, and Singapore—which are experiencing the transformation of the family institution under distinct legal–cultural conditions—will enable a more robust testing of the model's balance between universality and locality.

When all of this theoretical contribution, policy proposal, and research agenda is brought together, the original contribution of the study may be summarised in three words: rendering the invisible visible. The debates on mental health, family, state, and foreign policy, which for long years have sat at separate tables within the literature, have been brought together by this study under a common causal vocabulary. The future-oriented anxiety that stands at 18% among married Turkish women and rises to 74% among divorced Turkish men in Table 1 and Figure 1.a; the psychologist-consultation rate reaching 78% among never-married European women in Figure 1.b; the fertility rate declining from 2.53 to 1.49 and the divorce rate climbing from 1.40 to 2.15 per thousand in Türkiye in Table 2 and Figure 2—these are not disconnected data points but coherent pieces of evidence narrating the same story through different windows (TÜİK, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026; OECD, 2025; Eurostat, 2025). Read together with the link-wise average corroboration of the H1–H5 hypothesis chain at approximately 86%, these evidences demonstrate how the serenity—or the disquiet—that accumulates at the

Family hearth is, over time, translated into the voice at the international negotiating table. The concluding sentence of the study is accordingly the following: the future international weight of a state is inscribed not in today's budget ledgers but in the silence or the warmth of today's family tables. Every strategy document that takes this reality seriously must transcend a security conception confined to the defence of frontiers and institutionalise the protection of the family, mental health, and social trust as an inseparable component of national security. The practical corollary of taking this reality seriously is the radical augmentation of the share hitherto apportioned within the state budget to the family, mental-health, and social-solidarity line items; for it has been empirically demonstrated that every unit of investment in these items returns, in the medium term, as multiple units through the channels of productivity, public order, institutional trust, and international reputation. In other words, when the hearth fire is extinguished, the light at the diplomatic table inevitably dims; whereas when the hearth fire is kept alive, the foreign-policy discourse, as the bearer of genuine social support, can project its voice far farther afield. Yet this chain of reasoning, which binds the empirical evidence to the theoretical propositions, indicates only where the study has arrived; it does not yet tell whether one may go from there. This study is not a closure but a proposal of a beginning. For to assert that mental health, family structure, and state capacity must be thought together is not merely a scholarly claim; it is at the same time a call for a future in which the citizen, the child, the spouse, and the state may find serenity in common. The map drawn here offers the policymaker a ladder of decisions, the researcher a new agenda, and the reader an opening onto how the deepest strata of society converse with the international stage. Thus the line extending from the micro foundations to the international table ceases to be a mere explanatory framework and stands before us as a domain that is reproducible, measurable, and—most importantly—amenable to improvement. The true value of this map derives not from its being a text that sits motionless upon a bookshelf, but from its bearing the character of a call that may resonate upon a politician's desk, within an academic's lecture, within a judge's ruling, and within a family's kitchen. The Türkiye of the future is writing itself at today's family tables; every effort that keeps that table warm is not merely a matter of domestic policy but, at the same time, an international investment.

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