

WESTERNIZATION, MODERNIZATION AND TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS
DURING DEMOCRAT PARTY ERA

A Master's Thesis

by
SAİT OCAKLI

Department of
Political Science and Public Administration
Bilkent University
Ankara
September 2001

WESTERNIZATION, MODERNIZATION AND TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS
DURING DEMOCRAT PARTY ERA

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

by

SAİT OCAKLI

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2001

To my family

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration.

Associate Professor Jeremy Salt
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration.

Professor Ergun Özbudun
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration.

Professor Stanford J. Shaw
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Professor Kürşat Aydoğan
Director

ABSTRACT
WESTERNIZATION, MODERNIZATION AND TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS
DURING DEMOCRAT PARTY ERA

Ocaklı, Sait

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Jeremy Salt

September 2001

Academic studies on Turkish foreign policy claim that Turkey's foreign policy objectives after the transition to a multiparty democracy indicate cleavages with the mono-party period. According to these studies, while the Republican rule between 1923-1950 refrained from intervening in Middle Eastern matters, the Democrats drew Turkey into adventures in the region. This thesis argues that although Turkish foreign policy objectives during the Democrat era seemed to indicate differences from the preceding era, these differences insofar as the Middle East was concerned were more of style than substance. Turkey's attitudes towards the Middle East were strongly affected by western objectives in the region which themselves were affected by changes in the world balance of power after 1945. Turkey's own foreign policy objectives were very much framed within the context of the overarching goal of adaptation to westernisation laid down by the founders of the republic. The western factor therefore played a determining role in Turkey's foreign policy planning. Given that the Arab world remained under western domination, it was therefore inevitable that relations between Turkey and Arab governments would be adversely affected.

Key words: Westernization, Modernization, Foreign Policy, Turkey, Arabs

ÖZET

BATILILAŞMA, MODERNLEŞME VE DEMOKRAT PARTİ DÖNEMİ TÜRK-ARAP İLİŞKİLERİ

Ocaklı, Sait

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Jeremy Salt

Eylül 2001

Türk Dış Politikası alanındaki akademik çalışmalar çok partili demokrasiye geçiş sonrası Türkiye'nin dış politika hedeflerinin tek parti döneminden farklılıklar gösterdiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu çalışmalara göre, 1923-1950 dönemi Cumhuriyet Partisi yönetimi Ortadoğu meselelerine karışmaktan çekinirken, Demokrat Partililer Türkiye'yi bölgede maceralara sürüklemiştir. Bu tez, Demokrat Parti dönemi Türk dış politikası hedeflerinin önceki dönemden farklılıklar gösteriyor olmasına rağmen, Ortadoğu'yla ilgili bu farklılıkların özde değil biçimde olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu'ya bakışı 1945 sonrası değişen güç dengelerinden etkilenen batının bölgedeki hedeflerinden etkilenmiştir. Türkiye'nin dış politika hedefleri Cumhuriyetin kurucuları tarafından konulmuş batılılaşma amacının içinde şekillenmiştir. Bunun için, batı etkeni Türk dış politikası planlamasında belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır. Dolayısıyla, Arap dünyasının batı egemenliği altında olduğu gerçeğiyle birlikte, Türkiye ve Arap hükümetleri arasındaki ilişkilerin olumsuz bir şekilde etkileneceği kaçınılmazdır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Batılılaşma, Modernleşme, Türkiye, Araplar, Dış Politika

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Jeremy Salt for his comments and suggestions. This thesis would not be completed without his help.

I am also grateful to Nur Bilge Criss for her support in my study. Her valuable comments provided great contribution for my thesis.

I would like to express my special thanks to Ergun Özbudun and Stanford J. Shaw for reading my thesis.

I appreciate moral support of Nuray Oğuz during this study.

I am especially grateful to my family members, Demet, Asım and Münteha Ocaklı for their unlimited support and patience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: KEMALISM AND ARAB WORLD.....	7
2.1. Westernization Versus the East.....	8
2.2. Kemalist Foreign Policy.....	14
2.3. Turkish Attitude Towards The Arabs.....	16
2.4. Arab Attitude Towards the Turks.....	17
CHAPTER III: RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS DURING THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD.....	20
3.1. Kemalism and Relations with Egypt.....	20
3.2. Relations with Iraq in the course of the Saadabad Pact.....	26
3.3. Kemalism During the Presidency of İsmet İnönü.....	29
CHAPTER IV: DEMOCRAT PARTY RULE AND THE ARAB WORLD.....	33
4.1. Popular Support For The Democrat Party.....	34
4.1.1. The Peasantry.....	35
4.1.2. The Newly Emerged Bourgeoisie.....	36

4.2. Changing Values of Westernization.....	38
4.3. The Democrat Attitude Towards The Arabs.....	46
CHAPTER V: TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS DURING THE DEMOCRAT PERIOD.....	49
5.1. The Palestine Question.....	51
5.2. The Suez Canal Crisis.....	53
5.3 Strained Relations with Syria.....	62
5.4. The Military Takeover in Iraq.....	67
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION.....	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	74

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of Turkish attitudes and policy objectives towards the Arab world requires a comprehensive analysis of the parameters that give direction to the formation of these attitude and policies in a historical framework. As Criss and Bilgin (1997) argue, an analysis of Turkey's past policies shows that Turkish foreign policy has always been designed so as to give priority to relations with the western world rather than the Middle East, and that Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East has always been considered an extension of the Western-oriented Turkish foreign policy.

At this point, it is necessary to depict the roots of the alienation between the Turks and Arabs in historical context. The increasing influence of the nationalist tendencies in the Ottoman territory in the nineteenth century led to the awakening of national identity among the Turks and Arabs, despite the fact that Abdülhamit II, the Ottoman sultan, endeavored to impede dissolution by emphasizing these two nations sharing the same religious belief and claiming so called “*ümmet*” nationalism. Both Turkish and Arab intellectuals accelerated the alienation between these two peoples. While the Turkish elite emphasized the idea of belonging to the Turkish nation, the Arabs began to question Turkish administration of the territories populated by the Arabs and the caliphate resting in the hands of the Turkish sultans.(Mansfield, 1985:134-160)

With the adoption of Turkish national ideals by the Ottoman bureaucratic elite, such nationalist tendencies turned into movements against the Ottoman monarchical regime. At this point, the emergence of the Young Turks on the Ottoman political scene became a turning point in Turkish- Arab relations. After struggling against the autocratic policies of Abdülhamit II, the Young Turks, under the organization of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), accomplished the re-institutionalization of a constitutional monarchy with the revolution of 1908. However, the military wing of the CUP organized a takeover movement (the “*Bab-ı Ali Baskını*”) in 1913 that resulted in the completion of CUP authority and the relative ineffectiveness of the sultanate/caliphate in the Ottoman administration.

In the course of these events, the intensification of Turkish and Arabic nationalist feelings and the emphasis on Turkism by the CUP government moved the cultural alienation between two nations to the political arena. In particular, the Arabs, collaborating with the British and launching major uprisings against the Ottoman army in the course of the First World War, brought the strained relations between Turks and Arabs to a new stage. To the Turks, the disastrous and painful casualties in the Yemen and Hijaz fronts played a heavily deterministic role in the formation of a negative attitude towards the Arabs in the postwar era.

In this framework, after an arduous struggle for independence against the victorious wartime powers, the Turkish political and military elite under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk succeeded in establishing another state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Like the last periods of the Ottomans, modernization in accordance with western standards constituted the main dynamics

of the Turkish republic. According to Criss and Bilgin, (1997) there emerged two basic foreign policy goals that became influential during the Atatürk period: to construct a strong, modern state that had the power to defend its territorial integrity and political independence, without external assistance, against external aggression; and to raise the Turkish state to the standards of Western civilization.

To the political elite, the emphasis on the Turkish nature of the new state required a social structure that adopted the cultural values of modern western societies and differed from traditional ones in its region, and in this stance it reflected a different Turkish national identity. However, westernization policies in social and political spheres during the early republican period extended the cleavages between the Turkish and Arab people. Kürkçüoğlu (1972) describes this as the western factor in Turkish-Arab relations.

Following one-party rule between 1923 and 1950, the 1950 elections resulted in the victory of the Democrat Party over the Republican People's Party. One of the fundamental critiques of the RPP governments had been their allegedly repressive secularist measures and indifference to matters related to the Middle Eastern region. At this point, the relaxation of the secular measures in domestic politics such as a return to the original Arabic form of "*ezan*" (call to prayer) and greater emphasis on the Middle East in foreign policy matters raised the prospects of the Democrat Party opening a new era in Turkish - Arab relations. The conceptualization of modernization according to western standards in the understanding of the Democrat Party seemed to indicate significant differences from the early Republican period. The Democrats proposed economic development policies as the prior objective of

modernization in western standards and relaxed cultural and social policies of the one-party ruling power.

Nevertheless, the western factor continued to be important in Turkish policy concerns. In this framework, Turkish governments after the Second World War paid attention to the security problems raised by Soviet policies and accelerated the process of drawing closer to the western world by gaining NATO membership, and indeed this is appropriate for the political elite in Ankara. (Yavuz,1994:246) Leffer (1985: 807) considers such behavior of the Turkish political elite as an attempt to incorporate Turkey into Europe. In relation to this point, Turkey charged itself with the duty of impeding the expansion of the communist threat delivered by the Soviet Union into the Middle East. The main objective of Turkish foreign policy focused on any possibilities that would bring communist ideology into the region. Therefore, the Turkish perception of the communist threat, embedded in the issues of both westernization and protection of the Turkish state, constituted the main dynamic of the Turkish outlook towards the Middle East in the 1950s. In other words, in dealings related to the Middle East, the Turkish government acted by considering its alliance status with the western world against the communist bloc.

However, the western factor in Turkish foreign policy parameters led to a widening of political cleavages between the Turkish and Arabic countries even though the Democrat government expressed its enthusiastic views on developing relations with the Arabs. Since Turkey had tied itself to a western world, which seemed to be the main opponent of Arab national interests and independence, the Arabs were unenthusiastic about Turkish support for the western proposals for an

alliance against the communist threat. They saw Israel, supported by the west, as the main threat to their interests. (Yavuz,1994:247). Besides this, the Turkish approach to problems between the Arab and western worlds aggravated Arab hostility towards Turkey because of Turkey's close relations with the west. In other words, I argue that although the Democrats endeavored to bring new prospects to relations with the Arab world, the existence of westernization as a *sine qua non* of Turkish state policy impeded them from taking a more courageous attitude in the political struggles between the western and Arab worlds during the 1950s. Therefore, the alienation between the Arab world and Turkey could not be stopped. On the contrary, it was widened.

In this framework, this thesis argues that although Turkish foreign policy objectives during the Democrat era seemed to indicate differences from preceding era, these differences were not purely due to intrinsic reasons. That is, changes in Turkish outlook to the Middle East indicate parallelism with changes in western approach to the region.

In order to structure this approach on sound ground, the following chapter aims at the depiction of Kemalist ideology in Turkish domestic and foreign policy concerns in relation to the Arab world. At this point, the discourse focuses on Kemalism from two dimensions: social and political ones. That is, it is aimed at showing how the alienation between the Turkish and Arab world widened because of the western factor and efforts to construct a unique Turkish national identity within the framework of the Kemalist ideology.

The third chapter proposes an analysis of how changes in the parameters of modernization in accordance with western standards produced new prospects in the Turkish attitude towards the Arab world during the Democrat governments. In this framework, it is also important to raise the issue of how the strong existence of the western factor in the Democrat point of view continued to hold an effective place in shaping Turkish policy objectives towards the Middle East (though such westernization parameters seemed to change) and also how the apathy of Turkish society on foreign policy matters gave the Democrats a freer hand in their policies towards the Arabs.

In the fourth chapter, the thesis aims at showing that the continuance of the western factor worsened political relations between Turkey and the Arab world during the Democrat party era. At this point, specific cases --the Palestine question, the Suez Canal crisis, strained relations with Syria and the coup d'état in Iraq -- became auxiliary sources in the analysis of deepening paralyzed relations between Turkey and the Arab world during the 1950s.

CHAPTER II

KEMALISM AND THE ARAB WORLD

Kemalism is a structure of economic, political and social doctrines named after Turkey's founding president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. His thought and policy objectives became the guideline of the Turkish state in its internal and foreign domains during the early Republican period. Under his leadership, the Turkish nation witnessed significant social transformations and a modern state structure was established, nearly all of which seemed to be very different and strange to a country where the majority of the population was Muslim. Indeed, the Kemalist reforms aimed at bringing structural not superficial changes.(Kili, 1998:44) The main motivation behind such social and political transformations was to construct a nation-state that adhered to western standards. Atatürk clearly sets out this in the following words: 'The major challenge facing us is to elevate our national life to the highest level of civilization and prosperity'. (Mayall, 1997:23) In this framework, it can be argued that the western factor and efforts to form a unique Turkish national identity constituted two deterministic factors in the Turkish understanding of modernization.

Since Atatürk started the first attempts at westernization as modernization as a leader of a Muslim country, the relations between the young Turkish republic and Arab world opened a complicated new period in the region. In order to comprehend this, the main objective of this chapter is to examine these two dynamics of reformation efforts during the early Republican times and, in relation to this point,

how political and social transformations in a part of the Middle Eastern region affected the course of Turkish-Arab relations.

2.1. Westernization Versus the East

In reality, reform is not an unfamiliar concept in Turkish political life. In the prelude to the Turkish Republic, the Ottomans went through various reform periods, especially after recognizing the fact that Europeans had altered the balance of power to their advantage and were beginning to penetrate into Ottoman territory. Although there can be resemblances between these and Kemalist reforms, the latter stand far beyond the former in two points. In the first place, the vision of the young Republic was structured on a modern nation-state model that was based on sovereignty of the Turkish nation. Related to this matter, Atatürk (1927:351) said that:

The state should pursue an exclusively national policy... When I speak of national policy, I mean it in this sense: to work within our national boundaries for the real happiness and welfare of our nation and country by, above all, relying on our own strength in order to retain our existence.

On the other hand, the Ottoman reforms were aimed at protecting an existing political order. The main concern became holding the remaining different ethnic identities together under the sovereign rule of the Sublime Porte.

Secondly, while the Ottoman political elite brought modern institutions into the country, they also allowed continuance of the former ones simultaneously, which resulted in a double-headed structure in the empire. However, the Republican reforms penetrated far deeper by challenging backward social institutions and traditions. Kemalist reforms involved the abolition of concepts and institutions, which were not in conformity with the goal and principles of Turkish modernization.

(Kili, 1969:40) In these respects, Turkey became the agent of radical modernization in the region at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It is commonly agreed that positivism constitutes one of the most significant philosophical structural dynamic of Kemalism. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was deeply affected by nineteenth century positivist thinkers and by such trends as independence, nationalism, constitutionalism. (Sander, 1998:168) Most importantly, positivist understanding shows its nature in the Kemalist approach towards social matters, especially religion. To Atatürk, because the western world had adopted positivism and an understanding of science, and had excluded values of Christianity from world affairs, it had become superior. (Giritli,1988:9) In this regard, the modernization parameters of the newly founded republic proposed jettisoning the religious identity that was inherited from the Ottomans and adopting secularism.

In this realm, Atatürk realized one of the most important reforms that totally differentiated not only the social but the political structure of the newly founded Turkish state from the previous: the abolition of the caliphate. Since the caliphate claimed a sovereign rule over the whole Muslim world, its contradiction with the Kemalist nation-state model was an unavoidable fact. In order to structure the vision of state in his mind, Atatürk perceived overthrowing this position as a requirement. He expressed this in the following words, which are also related to conflicts over the role of the caliphate among Turkish intellectuals:

For centuries our nation was guided under the influence of these erroneous ideas. But what has been the result of it? Everywhere they have lost millions of men. "Do you know," I asked, "how many sons of Anatolia have perished in the scorching deserts of Yemen? Do you know the losses we have suffered in holding Syria and Iraq and Egypt and in maintaining our position in

Africa? And do you see what has come out of it? ...New Turkey, the people of New Turkey, have no reason to think of anything else but their own existence and their own welfare. (Atatürk, 1927:592)

Here, Atatürk points out the fact that taking the burden of superscriptions like the caliphate would draw the Turkish nation into adventures and bring heavy costs in foreign affairs, which can be illustrated from the previous era.

The essence of Kemalist nationalism could be explained by its dedication to Turkish modernization. (Kili,1969:57) Therefore, it seems impossible to separate Atatürk's social reforms such as transition from the Arabic to Latin script, and praying in the Turkish language from his positivist nation-state model. The main motivation for his challenge to the Islamic religion lies in the fact that the Turkish political elite saw this religion as a means of expanding Arab social and political influence over other nations. Therefore, they did not perceive Islam as an independent body from the Arab nation. Atatürk expressed this in the following words:

Turks were already a great nation before adopting the Islamic religion. After adopting this religion, formation of a nation based on religion by uniting Arabs, Persians and Turks who believe in same religion, could not be successful. On contrary, it (Islam) weakened national ties, emotions and excitements of Turks. This result was obvious. Because, the religion that Mohammed founded aimed at was creation of a sentiment that claim Arab nationality is superior to other nationalities. This ideal was expressed by the word of *ümmet*.(religious nation) (Atatürk, 1997:14-15)

In this framework, Kemalist reforms that are based on Turkish nationalism, proposed to reveal a Turkish identity, purified from the influence of the Arabic and Persian cultures. That is, the main aim of these reforms was to end the domination of foreign elements, which were believed to be the reasons for the social backwardness

of Turkish national culture. Webster (1939:240) expresses this in the following words:

It (Turkism) is a practical program for democratizing the vernacular by freeing it of its slavery to the Arabic terms and grammatical forms. In general Turkism is an attempt to separate the principal stream of Turkish culture from the waters in which it became diluted and muddied as it flowed from Central Asia and settled in the sea of the Anatolian civilizations.

The purification of the Turkish language constituted another focal point of Kemalist reforms. This reform should also be taken within the framework of efforts for abandoning traditional values that were under heavy Arabic and Persian influence and the enthusiasm for the formation of a separate national identity among the Anatolian people. In this regard, the Kemalist reforms pursued the simplification of the Turkish language in accordance with the tongue of an ordinary Turkish person. The peasants who formed the majority of the Turkish population spoke a much purer and simpler Turkish than did the educated class, who spoke a stylized Turkish containing many Arabic and Persian words. (Kili, 1969:51-52) As a consequence of this motivation, “*Türk Dil Kurumu*” (The Turkish Language Society), which would provide structural study and facilitate adoption of the purification process, was founded in 1926. In the jettisoning of Arabic and Persian words and through the introduction of new words that conformed to the rules of Turkish grammar, this society played a significant role during the Atatürk period.

Moreover, the positivist nationalism of Kemalist ideology furthered reforms in the field of education. As a first step, Atatürk ended the continuance of the double-headed education system by abolishing the *medrese* (traditional religious) education system. In the realm of education, the *medrese* had scholastic characteristics, which

relied on “*ayat*” (parts of the Koran), “*hadith*” (the Prophets’ words and way of life) and the interpretations of outstanding religious scholars. (Zürcher,1993:137) Beside its dogmatic structure, *medrese* education was given in the Arabic and Persian languages. This situation led to the rise of so called scholars who do not understand what they read or wrote. Atatürk (1997:18) described them as “the *hafızs* [the religious title given to people who memorize the Koran] whose brains are diluted because of memorizing the Koran.” From this point of view, it was necessary to make the educational system gain both rationalist approach and national characteristics by saving it from Arabic and Persian dominance.

In addition to modernization in the linguistic realm, Kemalism targeted reforms creating consciousness of a common history among the Turkish nation in order to form the peculiar understanding of the national identity that indicated differences from Arab identity. During the Ottoman periods, the idea of the *ümmet* dominated consideration of history as an item in the curriculums of schools and as a branch of social science. Kili (1969:49) sets this understanding as follows:

Because of the extreme emphasis on the religious character of the state, it was considered that the period, which began with the ninth century, was the most important in the history of the Turks as it was the period, which covered the conversion of the Turks to Islam and the religious leadership of the Ottoman sultans in the Islamic world.

As a result of this understanding, Atatürk started a more comprehensive period in Turkish historiography. The Turkish historians began to examine the pre-Islamic periods of the Turkish history, which dates back to the Central Asian times, and the history of the ancient Anatolian civilizations. In this regard, the mentality of the formation of a unique Turkish national identity affected the core of these studies.

That is, a heavy emphasis upon the Turkish nationalism caused an ideological evaluation of historical findings. The national inferiority complex resulted in the emergence of the idea of the greatness of the Turkish nation in these studies. As an indicator of this fact, Republican historians claimed that the ancient nations of the region such as Sumerians and Akkadians, which contributed to the formation of world civilization, were of Turkish origin.¹

The Kemalist reforms did not propose bringing a haphazard transformation of Turkish society into a westernized one. Instead of adopting all standards of the western societies, the peculiarity of the conditions in Turkey became the focal point in application and understanding of the reforms. From this mentality, it is possible to argue that westernization was not equal to modernization but was one of the essential measures of it in the Kemalist perspective. The problem of social development and adaptation to contemporary civilizations was taken in the context of westernization. From the analysis it can be seen that the primary drive of the Kemalist reform movement was the formation of a unique national identity, possessing its own values and excluding foreign elements -- especially Arabic and Persian. In this framework, Atatürk viewed other issues such as economic development from a different perspective. He followed a different understanding of economic development strategy, and indicated no obligation to purely adopt the western *laissez faire* economic system for economic development.

Therefore, the westernization parameter of the early republican period can be described as the effort to establish new social values that conformed to western

¹ Atatürk (1997:33) mentions Sumerian, Elam and Akadian peoples as “these Turkish communities”

standards. In other words, the Kemalist reforms gathered around the efforts to adopt the standards of western civilization, not Europe as a whole unit.

2.2. Kemalist Foreign Policy

The decision-making mechanisms of Turkish foreign policy during the Atatürk period indicate a transcendentalist approach similar to the internal politics of the country. That is, communal interests were perceived as being more important than the individual or some segments of the society, unlike an instrumentalism that emphasized freedom, diversity, and plurality. (Mayall,1997:23) Indeed this understanding can be evaluated as the reflection of the Kemalist nation-state model in the realm of foreign relations. That is, *halkçılık* (populism), as a principle of Kemalism, proposed the construction of a classless society which would bring its share of responsibilities in relations with other states of the international system. In this framework, the Turkish political elite provided its vision as the highest institution of the foreign policy decision-making process in accordance with the highest communal interests. Its decisions and initiatives were regarded as being binding for the whole Turkish society. Therefore, foreign policy matters stayed under the monopoly of the president and his closest associates and an environment could not be developed in order to discuss the foreign policy matters either in the parliament or in public opinion. (Gök, 58: 1984)

In this framework, the experiences and thoughts of Atatürk and his close friends became influential in the decision-making process of foreign relations. As a leading Ottoman military officer, Ataturk had fought on various fronts during the

First World War and had witnessed the sufferings of the Turkish people for the sake of lands that were not Turkish. For this reason he pursued the goal of the establishment of a state that would be only for the Turkish nation. In his essay **Nutuk** (The Speeches), after discussing the worsening situation of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk (1927:9) expressed this perspective as follows: In these circumstances, one solution alone is possible, namely, to create a New Turkish State, the sovereignty and independence of which would be unreservedly recognized.

Therefore, the Turkish Republic's foreign policy throughout the period between 1923 and 1938 can be characterized as cautious, realistic and generally aimed at the preservation of the status quo and the hard-won victory of 1923. (Zürcher, 1995:209) Atatürk refrained from any commitments that would place burdens on the young republic. Kemalist foreign policy can be evaluated as pacific. Kemalist foreign policy did not leave any room for idealism other than its most cherished goal of becoming an equal member of the Western world of nations. (Criss&Bilgin,1997) With regard to the idealist tendencies that supported the pursuit of an effective role in the Islamic and Turkic worlds Atatürk said:

To unite different nations under one common name, to give these different elements equal rights, subject them to the same conditions and thus to found a mighty state is a brilliant and attractive political ideal; but it is a misleading one. It is an unrealizable aim to attempt to unite in one tribe the various races existing on the earth, thereby abolishing all boundaries. Herein lies a truth, which the centuries that have gone by and the men who have lived during these centuries have clearly shown in dark and sanguinary events.

There is nothing in history to show how the policy of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turanism could have succeeded or how it could have found a basis for its realization on this earth. As regards the result of the ambition to organize a state which should be governed by the idea of world-supremacy and include the whole of humanity without distinction of race, history does not afford examples of this. For us, there is no question of the lust of conquest. (Atatürk, 1927:292)

At this point, the main reason for hesitation to involve any kind of outside movement lay in the fact that the Turkish political elite considered that Turkey was a war-torn country in need of internal reconstruction, which made seeking peace a necessity, as Criss and Bilgin (1997) argue. In other words, creating a peaceful environment in the country constituted a basic requirement in order to realize modernization according to western standards. Therefore, the westernization parameter became a basic actor in the pacifist formulation of Turkish foreign policy.

2.3. Turkish Attitude Towards The Arabs

There emerge two main political reasons for shallow relations between the Turks and Arabs. In the first place, while the Turkish Republic, as an independent state, entered into a period of intensive economic, political and social transformation period under the leadership of Atatürk, the Arab world remained under British and French colonial domination. In the beginning, the Turks could not directly establish diplomatic contacts with the Arabs. The Turkish authorities found foreign colonial officers as an interlocutor over disputed frontier issues. As an outcome of this situation, the Turkish administration confronted not the Arabs but the British in the Mosul issue and the French in the Alexandretta question. Therefore, the course of relations between the Turks and Arabs could not be established directly at state-level during the early 1920s.

Secondly, in relation to the wartime experiences referred to earlier, the Turkish political elite took cautious attitude towards the Arabs. In secret documents of the British Foreign Office, Major Bray described Atatürk as someone who hated

the Arabs and regarded the Pan-Islamist programme with distaste.² Whilst this foreign officer's observation about Atatürk's views are too rigid, it is a fact that Atatürk was not enthusiastic about the Arabs.

2.4. Arab Attitude Towards the Turks

The popularity of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the esteem of Turkey in the Islamic world were great at the beginning of 1923. (Gökalp, 1990:31) The success of the Turkish independence movement under the leadership of Atatürk against the colonialist western powers was a leading factor in the popularity of the Turks. However, far-reaching social and political reforms initiated by the new Republican government deepened alienation between the Turkish and Arab world and sowed confusion among the Arabs. The abolition of the caliphate became a big issue. The leaders of the Arab world organized several meetings among the different Arab communities to study the problem. However, neither at the meeting in Cairo (1925) of the *ulema* (religious authorities) of the Al-Azhar or the Mecca Congress (1926) convened by the Saudi king İbn Saud, or the Jerusalem Panislamist Congress (1931), could delegates agree on the revitalization of the caliphate. (Gökalp, 1990:33)

In this atmosphere, the Arab attitude towards the Turks began to polarise between the opinions of conservative Muslims who wanted the continuation of the old traditional order and progressives who intended to establish new modern social

² Major N.N.E. Bray served as a special intelligence officer to the political department of the Indian Office. His words about Atatürk are at the 4th page of the report, named Preliminary Report on Causes of Unrest.- Mesopotamia-Very Secret- 14th September 1920 26 CP/A India Office memoranda. (B348)

institutions in accordance with western standards. In relation to this point, these two groups harshly challenged each other.

Apart from the religious authorities, the colonial powers also tried to replace the positive view of the Turkish among the Arabs with a negative one. (Gökalp, 1990:35) The suspicion that the success of the Republican movement in Turkey would encourage Arab resistance to colonial domination was the main motivation for their support for the religious authorities and endeavors to show themselves as protector of Islam were the main motivations for the colonial powers' support for reaction against Kemalist reforms. (Gökalp,1990:37) The role of traditional Arab leaders became critical to the position of the colonial powers. The survival of their traditional rule under the tutelage of the colonial powers depended on their devotion to traditional values and reaction against the reform movements that aimed at establishing modern institutions. For these reasons, whilst it is not possible to consider all religious movements as collaborators of the colonial powers (for example, there was a great Islamic resistance against British rule over Palestine), both religious authorities and the local ruling elites were suspicious of secularist measures in Turkey. It is possible to see this negative attitude in *Al-Takaddüm*, a radical religious newspaper published in Syria.

The people who live in Aleppo do not want the return of the Turkish rule for several reasons. The majority of them are Arabs and loyal to their religion. They do the requirements of the Islamic religion. Generally, the Muslims are uncomfortable with the abolition of the veil, annulment of *sharia* (the Islamic law) and the other reforms that are believed to be contrary to the Islamic religion. (Gökalp, 1990:65)

On the other hand, progressive Arabs identified closely with the Republican regime in Turkey. Like the Kemalists, they were ardent nationalists who regarded

Turkey as a source of hope in their struggle against the colonial powers and the traditional ruling elite. Another similarity can be discerned from their view of modernization. Like the Kemalists, the nationalists in the Arab world desired modern social and political institutions in accordance with western standards without adopting all the mechanisms of the western world. In other words, belonging not to Europe but to the standards of western civilization constituted the main dynamics of the reform thoughts of both Arabs and Turks. (Gökalp, 1990:57-69)

The solution of the territorial disputes among Turkey, France, and the Great Britain without considering the Arab demands led to strained relations between the Kemalist regime and the Arab nationalists. (Gökalp, 1990:64) In this respect, whilst the Arab nationalists nurtured a positive attitude towards Kemalist social reforms, they became uncomfortable with the Republican regime because their views were not taken into consideration during negotiations for the determination of international borders between Turkey and the western powers that dominated the Arab world. Therefore, the alienation between Turkey and the Arab world deepened as a result of both international political and the social issues that divided the two.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS DURING THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD

Here, it is necessary to analyze the Turkish - Arab relations at the state-level in order to understand the Turkish attitude towards the Arabs within the framework of the western factor in Kemalism. In this regard, direct bilateral relations between the Turks and Arabs came to the fore after the second half of the 1920s by which time independent Arab states had begun to emerge. For this reason, here the study considers two instances in the Turkish-Arab relations in order to depict the role of the western factor: relations with Egypt and Iraq. Although these Arab states were considered independent, it is necessary to keep in mind that they were still under British domination.³

3.1 Kemalism and Relations with Egypt

The course of the relations with the Egyptian monarchical administration indicates the effect of Atatürk's reforms on Turkish – Arab relations during the early republican period. Official relations at the state level between Egypt and Turkey began after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in

³ It was not just the king but the British who dominated these countries. Therefore, Iraq and Egypt were still under the control of British, but the extend of this control continuously decreased from nominal independence of Egypt in 1925 Iraq in 1932, to their full independence in 1952 and 1958 with the military takeovers. (Mansfield, 195-264:1985)

1925. From then on, the leaders of the two countries, Atatürk and King Fuad, gave several speeches based, which emphasized historical and cultural ties and stated their intentions to maintain progressive relations. In one of these speeches, Atatürk stated his attitude towards Egypt in the following words: "Turks nurture a special feeling of love for Egyptians. I look forward to the improvement of friendship ties between the two nations, who share common feelings and interests, by political relations at the state level. (Şimşir, 1999: 252)

However, this benevolent atmosphere could not last long. Contrary to speeches that accentuated parallel interests, it was a fact that the ruling powers of these countries represented forms of governments that were structured on quite opposite grounds. As underlined above, the Turkish ruling elite sought the establishment of a westernized sovereign nation-state and struggled against rooted traditional values and sympathizers of these values. While Atatürk took revolutionary steps in order to elevate the Turkish nation to the highest level of civilization, King Fuad's conservative policies made Egypt an opponent of secular Turkey. (Şimsir, 1999: 254)

Indeed, disagreement between two countries appeared to be unavoidable, because Egypt represented a monarchical system that had been overthrown by Atatürk in Turkey. In a country where the second article of its constitution includes the provision that Egypt is a kingdom that is inherited from father to son among Mohammed Ali's family, the declaration of a republican regime in Turkey became a sensitive matter. (Gökalp, 1990: 112)

Moreover, after the abolition of the caliphate by the Turkish parliament in 1924, King Fuad desired to hold caliphate ardently. Egypt not only embraced the escaped and expelled opponents of regime in Turkey, but also allowed them to agitate against the Republic of Turkey and Atatürk... Secularization of Turkey was used for propaganda against Turkey in Egypt. (Şimşir, 1999: 254)

Indeed, although progressive segments of Egyptian society supported many of the Turkish reforms, they did not welcome the abolition of the caliphate. (Gökalp,1990:64) They regarded Islam as being an important element of the Arab nation. Hourani emphasizes this reality in the following words:

The modernists wished to proceed up the stream of development to the point at which it had gone wrong, and beyond it to the primitive Islam as they conceived it...To return to the original purity of Islam meant in fact to move the center of gravity back from Turks to Arabs; if there was to be a caliph at all, he could only be an Arab caliph. (Hourani, 1970:267-268)

According to Al-Siyasa newspaper, the question of the caliphate interested all Muslims and not just Arabs. (Gökalp,1990:66) With regard to reactions from the Arab world, Atatürk expressed the attitude of the Turkish elite in a message to the Arabs in the following words: "Give up dreams about unification around the caliphate... run after independence. The real interests of communities are to establish their own independent states." (Şimşir, 1999:192)

In this framework, Egypt and Turkey were drawn into an era of strained relations. The fez or tarbush crisis revealed this fact. An angry quarrel between Atatürk and Hamsa Bey, the Egyptian minister at Ankara over a fez (or tarbush) embittered diplomatic relations between two countries. (Şimşir, 1999: 198) "During the celebration for proclamation of the republic in 1932, Mustafa Kemal wanted Abdülmalik Hamsa, who was sent by the king, to take off his fez for his comfort. However, the minister refused and left the place." (Gökalp, 1990:119)

The event turned into a major diplomatic crisis between two countries.⁴ The Egyptian foreign ministry forwarded a note that demanded an official apology from the Turkish authorities. Within the content of this note, the Egyptians described what had happened as a *regrettable incident* and expressed gratitude for the notification of the Turkish foreign minister's apology but demanded *assurances* in order to be sure that such cases would not be repeated in future.⁵ On the other hand, according to the Turkish foreign ministry, there was nothing that could be called an event, so Tefvik Rüştü Aras' statement could not be called an apology. (Şimşir, 1999:261)

On the other hand, it is certain that the Egyptian and Turkish press played a great role in the increase of tensions. According to the Turkish political authorities

⁴ Şimşir (1999:258,259,260) provides an account of this happening according to contrasting explanations of the Egyptian and Turkish foreign ministers, the British and French ambassadors by following words:

As the British ambassador Sir George Clerk reported, "When Atatürk passed near the Egyptian ambassador, Hamsa Bey, he said tell your king, I, Mustafa Kemal, told you to take off your fez in this evening. Then he called a waiter. After wearing off his fez, the ambassador gave it to the waiter... The Egyptian ambassador sadly left the place."

The French ambassador, Cont de Chambrun tells, "We are at the end of dinner. Among two hundred guests, the fez of the Egyptian ambassador is very showily. The president ironically glanced at his fez without implying. My poor colleague could not aware of this. However, when the ghazi stand up with fascinating rhythm of the music, he passed near to the Egyptian. And during this, he says something to the ambassador and fondled his shoulder. As I supposed that he hugged him, but I saw a waiter taking his fez on a silver tray and so I was confused."

The Turkish foreign minister, Tefvik Rüştü Aras says, "the President is accustomed to give special praising and pleasing speeches to ambassadors according to availability of place and time, and shows compliment and asks after foreign political representatives. Among the political representatives who visited him in their uniforms for celebration of the republic day in the Grand National Assembly during the daytime and also are invited to the evening banquet in their clothes, he spoke kindly to the Egyptian ambassador and expressed his permission for him to relax by wearing off his fez when he passed near to the ambassador after the dinner. After a while of hesitation, the ambassador wore off his fez. After that, the President kissed him."

The Egyptian foreign minister, Yahya Pasha tells, "After the dinner, the Ghazi definitely said the Egyptian ambassador to wear off his fez. The ambassador in uniform did not accept this wish, and after that he commanded a waiter to make the ambassador's fez wear off. Due to the persistence of the President, the ambassador, Hamsa Bey, saw wearing off his fez appropriate. However, the ambassador who faced up this unexpected interference became really upset and leaved the place. This happened in front of diplomatic representatives, members of the government and other prominent guests... The next day, Hamsa Bey met with Tefvik Rüştü Bey. The minister tried to reflect the events as showing kindness and expressed his sorrow for the ambassador's considering this event as tragic."

and press, the Egyptian press and opposition groups directed public opinion against the Turks and as an outcome of this, the Egyptian administration came under heavy pressure to take serious initiatives against the Turkish state. In a newspaper article of *Vakit*, under the heading “Our publication distorted in Egypt,” the following statement was made:

Supposedly, the Turkish press said the Egyptian government demanded an apology because of the fez issue, but we would not give one and broadcasted against the Egyptians. After that the Egyptian newspapers began contra-publication and among them *Al-Ahram* newspaper demanded the Egyptian government break relations with Turkey.⁶

In another Turkish newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, the subject was touched upon in an article headed, “Despite our benevolence.” According to the news from Egypt, Turkish newspaper comments on the issue were perceived as opposition to Egypt and a clamorous reaction began again.⁷ In addition to this, Turkish newspapers emphasized the wrong reflection of the Turkish attitude on the issue. To them, the British media the main news source of the Egyptians did not accurately report Turkish feelings. In the following parts of the article in *Cumhuriyet*, it was said that it was not surprising that the news that aimed at troubling the relations between Turkey and Egypt had come through London as before.⁸

In this strained atmosphere, the Turkish foreign ministry delivered a response to the Egyptian note. The Turkish authorities claimed that distorted reporting had led the Egyptian administration to fall into error. They argued that the governments of both the Turkish and Egyptian nations should not exaggerate this event and continue

⁵ *Italics* do not belong to me.

⁶ *Vakit* newspaper on 12th December 1932. This newspaper was published daily in the city of Istanbul.

⁷ *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on 12th December 1932.

⁸ *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on 12th December 1932.

to live in peace and mutual understanding.⁹ However, the Egyptians seemed dissatisfied with the Turkish note. The Egyptian authorities were buried in silence and secrecy. (Şimşir,1999:306) They found it difficult to give a response to the Turkish decisive attitude and explain the issue to their people.

In this environment, the Egyptian foreign ministry prepared a second note, which emphasized Turkey's eagerness to resume good relations between two countries. According to the note, the Egyptian government was pleased that the Turkish government had declared that each state could adopt the dress it wanted. (Şimşir, 1999:311) This explanation helped closing the deal by both the Turkish and Egyptian sides. The Turkish government followed a progressive strategy in the stabilization of the relations between these two countries, and did not go over the issue again after the Egyptian note.

The fez (or tarbush) crisis indicated that whilst the new republican regime in Turkey aimed at staying outside Middle East complications, its endeavors to establish a modern type of social and political structure were likely to cause problems with traditional regimes. On the other hand, it is necessary to argue that contrary to the Ottoman times that purposed imperial sovereignty over the Arabs, the Arab nationalists who adopted modern secularism appreciated the new Turkish regime's attitude for protection and improvement of its social and political reforms. However, conservative Arabs who supported Islamic traditions and wanted to keep the position of caliphate alive reacted against the Kemalist reforms. Nevertheless, it is a fact that nationalists among the Arabs disregarded the unifying mechanisms of

⁹ Turkish For. Min. The Turkish Note to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on 18th December 1932.

the Islamic religion and amongst them the legitimacy of the caliphate remained in question.

This crisis carries importance from the point of the traditionalist reactions in the region to the existence of the western factor in Kemalism, but it is necessary to underline that the conflicting parties succeeded in concluding this event in peaceful diplomacy unlike the armed clashes between the Turks and Arabs during the very late Ottoman period.

2.3.2. Relations with Iraq in the course of the Saadabad Pact

Iraq became one of the very first countries to attain independence among the Arab countries. Nevertheless, it is necessary to state that its independence was nominal because of the continuing British political, commercial and military presence in Iraq. Since there existed an international boundary between Turkey and Iraq, the course of relations came to the fore in a much more direct way. As an indicator of this situation, these countries soon became involved in a border dispute.¹⁰ Instead of using military power, Turkey preferred to solve its problems related to this conflict by peaceful diplomacy. In this framework, the parties brought the Mosul matter to the arbitration of the League of Nations. Whilst the case was not settled in Turkey's favor, the Turkish side respected the decision of the League of Nations. (Heper,1999:183) After Iraq became an independent country, Turkey

¹⁰ By border conflicts between Iraq and Turkey, it is intended to emphasize on the Mosul and Kerkük questions. Although, Iraq was a British protectorate and the indigenous Iraqi population could not be a party to the negotiations, the local authorities strongly expressed the importance of these provinces for Iraq. In a speech, King Faysal explains this as impossibility of the Iraqi people's existence and well-being without Mosul. (Ayn Tarihi, May 1926, p. 321)

indicated its recognition of Iraq's sovereignty over its territory by concluding several treaties with Iraq.¹¹

The relations between Turkey and Iraq entered into new era with these countries signing a pact. Although the Turkish political elite hesitated to take the country into binding political relations with the countries in the region, changes in the conjuncture of world politics pushed them to engage more directly in the region. Italy's intervention in Ethiopia disquieted the Turkish government. The Italian aggression seemed to be an attempt to overthrow the political geography of the Middle East in a way that would affect the international frontiers of the Turkish Republic. As a result, Turkey signed a pact with Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan in Saadabat Palace, Tehran, on 8th July 1937. (Gönlübol&Sar, 1996:107)

Within the theoretical framework, this turn in Turkish foreign policy may seem to contradict the non-alignment vision of the Kemalist foreign policy objectives. In other words, the Turkish republic that preferred pacifism in order to concentrate on an intensive modernization process should not have undertaken such an involvement. However, if the essence of the treaty is taken into consideration, it can be seen that the provisions of the treaty served a pacifistic Turkish foreign policy. In order to protect the territorial unity of the Turkish state, it was possible to peacefully engage in the protection of the existing borders among the countries against any aggressive military action. However, such an agreement in no way involved a military responsibility binding one of the parties to use military power for

¹¹ Prelude to the Saadabat Pact, Turkey and Iraq signed four international treaties. These are: The Treaty on Extradition in 1932, the Treaty on Residence in 1932, the Treaty on Trade in 1932, the Treaty on Friendship and Neighborhood in 1936.

the sake of the others. The first and second articles of the agreement call for non-interference in the domestic affairs of a party by other parties and recognition of existing borders between the parties. (Canatan,1996:60) In other words, this pact provided a guarantee for non-recognition of any changes in borders and respect for immunity of domestic matters. The Turkish foreign minister, Tevfik Rüşti Aras¹² depicted the essence of the Saadabat pact in the following words:

Was the pact we signed only a simple regional agreement, which is similar to other such agreements and aims to foster peace? This cannot be answered only 'Yes.' In addition, the pact includes a commitment for the contracting parties to consult and organize their actions on matters of common concern. Neither a reciprocal help nor a military commitment was included in the pact. (Gönlübol&Sar, 108:1996)

By these words, the foreign minister expresses that this pact is not directed against any states. (Canatan,1996:60)

For this reason, the Saadabad Pact was a good example of how Kemalist foreign policy distanced itself from the Middle East. (Criss&Bilgin, 1997) That is, the westernization parameter in Kemalism reveals itself as an important factor in the nature of this treaty. In addition to this, Great Britain and France, who were struggling against Germany, welcomed the conclusion of this treaty. Indeed, they also feared that the central powers would try to alter the political geography of this region. For this reason, Great Britain and Turkey signed an agreement, giving ten million sterling credits to Turkey in 1938. (Gönlübol&Sar, 1996:119) The main reason behind the British behavior was obviously to break the German influence on Turkey. Indeed, the British were successful, and Turkey drew closer to the anti-revisionist group.

¹²Tevfik Rüşti Aras (1883-1972) was a doctor by profession. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs

Against the increasing aggression of the revisionists due to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the German troops in 1939, Turkey, France and Great Britain concluded an agreement that considered non-recognition of any frontier changes in the case of spreading war to the Mediterranean region. (Gönlübol&Sar, 1996:119)

This event indicated that Turkey and Great Britain supported the preservation of the status quo. In this framework, the Saadabad Pact can be accepted as the extension of cooperation between Turkey and Great Britain against the revisionist movements. For this reason, it is possible to argue that Turkey engaged in such a treaty with the eastern countries in order to indicate to the western powers its loyalty to the status quo. That is, the western factor became deterministic in the nature of this treaty.

2.4. Kemalism During the Presidency of İsmet İnönü

The presidency of İsmet İnönü, or “*Milli Şef*” (National Chief) covered the outbreak of the Second World War and the formation of a bipolar world. For this reason, the Turkish authorities shaped foreign policy objectives by considering developments in conjuncture. At this point, Turkey followed a neutral policy by staying outside the struggling military blocs. From this perspective, there seemed to be continuance in the discourse of Turkish foreign policy that was structured on the strategy of keeping the country outside any adventures in foreign domains.

On the other hand, the increasing perception of a communist threat in the eyes of Turkish statesmen led to the emergence of two significant tendencies in foreign policy objectives. In the first place, Turkey began to approach the western bloc under the leadership of the United States in order to improve its security against the

from 1923 to 1938. He wrote Ten Years in the Wake of Lausanne (Peace Treaty in 1924) (Lozan’ın

perception of a communist threat coming from the Soviet Union. In this framework, whilst there seemed to occur the beginning of a rupture with Kemalism in the aftermath of the Second World War, because of the increasing demands of the Soviet Union the westernization factor continued to dominate Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, the western factor that was embedded in the factor of communist threat continued to determine the Turkish approach towards issues related to the Middle East.

The Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine constituted a clear indicator of this situation. The Turkish government approached the Arabs during the negotiations about Palestine in the United Nations. During the negotiations of the UN Security Council about the Palestine case, Turkey supported Arab proposals for the independence of Palestine.¹³ The positive attitude of the Turkish attitude towards the Arab proposal brought rapprochement with the Arabs.

However, Turkey was concerned with any new formations that constituted a source of communist threat in the region. At this point, since Turkey (along with elements within the US State Department) considered that Israel might become a Soviet satellite, it hesitated before the establishment of the Jewish state. (Kürkçüoğlu,1972:31) Two major developments changed the Turkish position related to the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine. Firstly, the western countries especially Britain and the United States supported a Jewish state in Palestine and recognised it when it was established. At this point, cleavages between the Arabs

İzlerinde On Yıl, My Views (Görüşlerim) as well as three books on medicine. (Heper, 1999:183)

¹³ Keesing's, 1947: 8671

and Turks became unavoidable. The Palestine Reconciliation Commission that was supposed to bring the parties around to a solution to the problem caused the first serious disagreements between two nations. The UN Security Council chose France, Turkey and the United States for membership of the commission.¹⁴ Although the Arabs objected to this commission on the ground that its members were not neutral, the Turkish government voted for it. As a result, Turkey entered into a parallelism with the west in the Middle East, and thus it began to move away from the Arab position. (Kürkçüoğlu, 30: 1972)

Understanding the fact that the newly founded Jewish state would not become a new Soviet ally constituted the second reason for the split between the Arabs and Turks. As a consequence, the Turkish government recognized the Israeli state in 1949. (Zürcher, 1994:247) From then on, the Turkish attitude towards the existence of Israel in the region changed considerably. The President expressed this rapid change in Turkish foreign policy in the following words: ‘We hope that this new state (Israel) will become an element of peace and stability in the Near East.’ (Öztürk, 1969:415) Hence, relations between Turkey and the Arab countries were strained by Turkey’s stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Zürcher, 1994:246)

Apart from the Palestine issue, the inclusion of the sanjak of Alexandretta within Turkey led to further cleavages. The Turkish government and French colonial authority over Syria agreed on the annexation of Alexandretta to Turkey, ignoring Arab protests. The negotiations showed that the Turkish leadership did not consider the relations with the Arab world important, as Criss and Bilgin (1997) argue. This

¹⁴ Keesing’s, 1947: 9673

event indicates that the Kemalist foreign policy objectives did not consider the Arab world without taking the western factor into account. After Syria gained independence in 1940, the Syrian authorities expressed their non-recognition of this annexation. On the other hand, whilst Turkey and Syria came to an agreement that included Turkey not insisting on the recognition of this annexation by Syria and Syria not keeping the issue on agenda, Syria could not give up its claims over this region. This added another dimension to political tensions between Turkey and the Arab world.

CHAPTER IV

DEMOCRAT PARTY RULE AND THE ARAB WORLD

As Çağlar Keyder (1987:117) states, the 1950 nation-wide elections were a turning point in Turkish history. The Democrat Party won the elections and ended the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party since 1923. Since this event became a turning point in the Turkish political life, it is unavoidable that the policy objectives of the new government would bring about cleavages with the preceding era. More specifically, the Democrat government's conceptualization of westernization and modernization would indicate significant differences from those of the Republicans. In this framework, it was possible to anticipate that the Democrats would bring new approaches towards religion and the eastern world, especially the Arab world. However, if the socio-economic base of the support for the Democrats is carefully examined, it can be seen that neither popular support for the Democrats, nor the Democrat authorities wanted to abandon the process of westernization and return towards the east. (Lewis,1952:56) In addition to this, the powerful existence of the Republicans' policy objectives based on modernization according to western standards restricted the manoeuvrability of the Democrats. Therefore, it seemed difficult if not impossible for the Democrats to take policy initiatives that lay outside the preceding framework.

In order to understand the influence of these two factors in the formulation of the Democrat understanding of westernization, it is necessary to examine how alignments between the political parties and different segments of Turkish society

were formed in the course of the electoral process from the transition to multi-party system and through the 1950 elections. After that, the question is taken up of how the Democrats' attitudes on the Arab world begin to develop.

4.1. Popular Support For The Democrat Party

In order to depict the attitude of the different segments of Turkish society towards the political parties, specifically the Republicans and Democrats, it is required to show how and why the Democrats were perceived as an alternative source of political power. Sunar (1974: 76-77) provides an overall depiction of the formation of the socio-political alignments in Turkey in the aftermath of the Second World:

In a few urban centers Turkey was secular, positivist, and nationalist in outlook and commanded by civil-military bureaucrats and intelligentsia. At the local level, however, the notables continued to preserve religious authority, now reinforced by their officially sanctioned economic and political power. Whereas the urban centers seemed remote both in distance and in life style to the peasants, the notables appeared benevolent: it was the notables, after all, who provided them with jobs and extended them credits and numerous other social services. Their immediate contact with the government, on the other hand, was restricted to the harsh treatment of the conscription officer and the tax collector. Thus while the bureaucrats were cultural revolutionaries at the center, at the local level they appeared as the same old beneficiaries of the peasants' labor.

In this framework, the Democratic Party attracted the main opposition groups in the country regardless of differences of opinion and interests, and regardless of the fact that its program, views and mentality were not known in detail. (Karpat, 1959:166) The newly emerged bourgeoisie and peasantry constituted the main source of votes for the Democrats. Their demands became a focal point in the policy formulations of the Democrats. Therefore, an analysis of the voting motivations of

these segments of Turkish society enlightens the framework of the Democrat governments' conceptualization of westernization and modernization.

4.1.1. The Peasantry

The traditional center-periphery cleavage had been a complicated issue since the last days of the Ottoman Empire by disaffection within the center and a heightened awareness of modernization or westernization. (Tachau,1984:61) In other words, the peasantry as the dominant element of the periphery was wary of the bureaucracy, which ardently aimed at modernizing the country according to western standards. In this rivalry between center and periphery, the peasantry constituted the most influential actor of the periphery against the coalition of bureaucrats and intellectuals at the center. Moreover, the center engaged in alliance with economically powerful local notables on the periphery. (Tachau,1984:64-65) By 1950, the peasantry constituted eighty percent of the Turkish population; that is, approximately twenty million people. (Keyder,1987:164) In this framework, the peasantry, the less educated and poorest segment of the Turkish society, engaged in silent resistance against the social reforms imposed by the ruling elite. Hesitation and antipathy of the peasantry to Republican social reforms based on secularism strained the relations between them and the Republican elites. For this reason, the Turkish agricultural society was well prepared to support any opposition movement against the Republicans though they took beneficial initiatives for the rural segments. For instance, it is ironic that when the Republicans tried to issue the Land Reform Law seeking redistribution of the land to farmers, and hence benefiting the peasantry, the major opposition came from Republicans who would found the Democrat Party.

However, the peasantry, as the most conservative part of the Turkish society, would support the Democrats instead of the Republicans because it had not forgotten the repressive secularization measures of the Republicans. (Keyder, 1987:120-121)

The Democrats, who had fervently criticized the conditions of the electoral procedures in 1946 and had accused the Republicans of rigging the election, did not consider it an inconvenience to engage in a probable alliance with this traditional segment of the Turkish society. In this respect, there emerged a psychological rapprochement between the Democrats and the peasantry, both of whom thought that the Republicans ruled unfairly. Moreover, the Democrats' closer contact with such a large part of the society might attract a large number of votes in future elections and hence place the ruling power in their hands. Lewis (1968,317) emphasizes this reality in the following words:

If the Democrat Party relied only upon the newly emergent businessmen and entrepreneurs, they could not have won the elections, for these groups were hardly numerous enough to constitute a majority by themselves. If, on the other hand, they enjoyed the support of peasant masses in the hinterland, then they should have scored impressive majorities in the ruralized part of the country.

4.1.2. The Newly Emerged Bourgeoisie:

Since the agricultural sector constituted the main living source of the Turkish society and there was no sophisticated commercial and industrial sector, unlike western countries, the main concern of the Republican ruling power was the formation of a national bourgeoisie who would undertake the development of these sectors in the country. This mentality constituted the economic base of Kemalist

nationalism. The Republican government under the leadership of Şükrü Saraçoğlu¹⁵ contributed in particular to the development of the Turkish merchant class during the Second World War. (Boratav, 1988:223)

The merchant capital -both urban and rural- emerged from the war immensely strengthened in economic terms. Merchantile profits had risen dramatically, not only for the middle men of foreign trade based in the big cities, but also for the provincial profiteers staple agricultural commodities, as well as the leading figures of commercial agriculture at the local level. Both the rural and provincial component of merchant capital dealing with the direct producer, and its urban component dealing with especially with foreign trade, had greatly expanded by the end of the war. (Margulies&Yıldızoğlu, 1987:277)

On the other hand, whilst these social groups enjoyed the benefits of economic policies towards the end of the war, and the Republican administration even considered their views important in the ruling power, they held a skeptical attitude towards the Republican administration because of its authoritarian nature.

They did not place much trust in the monoparty regime; it was always possible for it to suddenly institute policies detrimental to their interests such as the Capital Levy (Varlık Vergisi) of 1942 and the Land Reform and nationalization of forested areas undertaken in July and August 1945. (Eroğul, 1987:108)

For this reason, landowners and merchants indicated that continuance of a socio-political alliance with the Republicans depended on the reform efforts, including relaxation of state control on political and economic life of the country. A positive atmosphere for the development of liberalism and democracy combined with the fear of communism, led them to suppress the Republicans to realize economic

¹⁵ Şükrü Saraçoğlu (1887-1953) graduated from the civil service academy in 1909 and served as a teacher in secondary schools. During the First World War, he went to Geneva to study political science. After returning home, he fought the Greek army in western Anatolia. Then, he became representative for İzmir in the second national assembly. He became education minister (1924-1925), then finance minister (1927-1930), justice minister (1933-1939), and finally foreign minister (1939-1942). During the Second World War, he was assigned as the prime minister. (Zürcher,1993:366)

and political liberalization. Meanwhile, the emergence of the Democrat Party by four ex-Republican People's Party members¹⁶ allowed the bourgeoisie to manipulate between two parties to direct the future's administration to realize the policies on behalf of their interests.

Although landowners and merchants did not evidently support any political parties, they constituted an important factor for the transformation of society. In other words, transition from a state-controlled economy and authoritarian political administration to a more liberal economy and transparent rule became the focus of the newly emerging bourgeoisie. In this respect, both the late Republican and Democrat Party administrations followed policies, which would benefit this segment of society in return for their support in Turkish political life.

4.2. Changing Values of Westernization

In this atmosphere, the 1950 elections, which would result in the Democrats' victory, were held in the country.¹⁷ From the point of view of its results, Keyder (1987:175) points out:

By any measure, the Democrat Party's accession to power in 1950 constituted a fundamental break in Turkish history. For the first time a popular electorate expressed its political choice and voted against a statist tradition several

¹⁶These people were Celal Bayar, deputy for Izmir and the former prime minister during the presidency of Atatürk; Adnan Menderes, deputy for Aydın; Fuad Köprülü, deputy for Kars and renowned professor of history and literature; and Refik Koraltan deputy for İçel. (Eroğlu, 1991: 119)

¹⁷ While the Democrat Party won 408 seats in the Grand National Assembly with 53.59 percent of the total votes, the Republican's People Party would have 69 deputies with 39.8 percent. (Cumhuriyet on 26th May 1950.) The disproportion between the number of the seats and percentage of votes held by the parties is due to the Turkish electoral procedures based on the rule of majority.

centuries old. Paternalism, control from the center and reformism from above were decisively rejected.

Indeed, fatigue and hesitation of the rural segments because of the authoritarian rule of the Republicans that favored extensive state control became the main factor for the Democrats' victory. In other words, the opposition, which found its expression in the reaction against the Republican's *étatist* economic policies and secular practices, gathered around the Democrats, who became the leading representatives of a liberal economy and respect for religion. (Sencer, 1974:221) For this reason, it is possible to claim that the initial reactions against the Republicans were caused by their authoritarian past and cleavages between themselves and traditional segments on the question of religion. That is, as explained in the second chapter, the Republicans considered traditional Islamic institutions and values in the Turkish society as the result of Arab influence over the Turks. However, the traditional segments did not see Islam as an expression of Arab superiority over other nations. Based on this understanding, Democrat governments regarded the relaxation of secularist measures as a valuable vote winning tool. Furthermore, Turkish society did not perceive Islam as a means of Arab domination over other nations or an element for further political and social unification with Arabs as Lewis argues (1952:56), and the fact that foreign affairs was a part of governmental policy, which should be considered above the interests of contending political parties and social classes as Gök (1984:58) claims, the Democrats indicated a much more independent approach towards the Arab world in terms of internal politics. In other words, while traditional segments desired relaxation of secularist measures, they were not enthusiastic for rapprochement with the Arabs.

On the other hand, the Democrats' attitude towards Islam and Muslim movements developed under the influence of the domestic conditions of the country. In other words, they became more tolerant of religious demands. In this respect, the Democrats' mentality of westernization and modernization began to indicate serious cleavages with its predecessor. Unlike the periods of Atatürk and İnönü, the government headed by Adnan Menderes gave less emphasis to the westernization reforms. Indeed, by abandoning some significant reforms the Democrat government moved away from the path of modernisation followed by the previous government. It considered secularist measures as being against the freedom of conscience. It adopted the legal and historical approach to religious freedom by considering it a part of the basic liberties. (Karpaz, 1959:278-279)

As an indicator of this situation, just after taking government, the Democrat government presented a proposal for returning to the original Arabic form of *ezan* (call to prayer).¹⁸

In the following days, the Parliament, which was dominated by the Democrat deputies, decided on the abolishment of the prohibition for *ezan* in Arabic and the parliamentary debates on this matter made the people who gathered outside the Assembly building listen to broadcasting.¹⁹

In this way, the Democrats sent their first message to the traditional segments of the society who had voted for them.

Subsequently the Democrat government continued to destroy the institutional structure of secularist policies. Obligatory courses on religious matters were brought

¹⁸ Cumhuriyet on 15th June 1950.

¹⁹ Cumhuriyet on 18th June 1950.

into the curricula of the primary schools.²⁰ In addition to this, the Kemalist reforms on the language issue became a target for the Democrat deputies.

During the discussions about the reforms of the Turkish language in the Assembly, Gazi Yiğitbaşı, one of the prominent deputies of the Democrat Party, blamed the prior Republican administration for destroying the Turkish language, and he insulted the Republicans by saying that one might suspect the people who did such things for their blood and nationality.²¹

On the other hand, the chaotic relations between the Democrats and Republicans entered a new controversial era because of the regressive attitude of the Democrats towards the social reforms that were realized by their predecessors. The Republicans saw that bringing a moderate approach towards the conservative segments of the society would not break the ties between them and the Democrats. It seemed impossible that the Republicans could change the voting preference of the traditional rural segments in time for the next elections. For this reason, the Republicans changed their strategy against the Democrats and began to claim that the Democrats were tolerating reactionary challenges to the Kemalist reforms. One of the most famous instances of opposition to the Kemalist reforms happened in Konya during a regional meeting of the Democrat Party. Some of its supporters demanded a return to the traditional clothes like the fez, *kara çarşaf* (veiled dress) and the Arabic alphabet.²² According to the party authorities such kind of demands came from the villagers who had recently joined the party membership. This situation irritated the Democrats, especially Adnan Menderes, the head of both the government and party. Against the accusations by the Republicans, he remarked:

²⁰ Cumhuriyet on 21st October 1950.

²¹ Cumhuriyet on 16th November 1950.

²² Cumhuriyet on 13th March 1951.

The Republicans misused the issue of religious fundamentalism by proclaiming themselves as the protector of the Kemalist reforms. They want to say that it is possible that religious fundamentalism is spreading over the whole country. That is, a small number of fundamentalist people can be capable of using religion for political aims by making the Turkish nation follow them. The Turkish nation is the only real protector of the Kemalist reforms.²³

During student protests against fundamentalist publications, especially Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's²⁴ *Büyük Doğu* (The Great East), the Ministry of Interior Affairs claimed that there were no religious fundamentalist movements in the country.²⁵ Menderes subsequently stated that the Democrat Party had proclaimed its compliance with the principle of freedom of expression five years previously.²⁶ Under this heading it included statements on the free expression of religious belief.

This did not mean that the Democrats were prepared to tolerate religious fundamentalism when it did emerge. In June 1951, for example, the government launched an all-out effort to round up and detain the *Tijanis*, a religious order that was vandalizing statues of Atatürk and campaigning for a theocratic monarchy. (Ahmad, 1977:367) Necip Fazıl Kısakürek was sentenced to prison because of his anti-secular writings. (Eroğul, 1970:81) In addition, the Assembly issued the Atatürk Bill, which aimed at the protection of the Kemalist reforms and Atatürk's busts from

²³ Cumhuriyet on 18th March 1951

²⁴ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1905-1983) is one of the famous Turkish poets, playwrights and journalists. He was the leading exponent of mysticism and Islamic nationalism in contemporary Turkey. He applied the forms of nineteenth century French poetry to national themes. With a rare mastery of meter, he displayed deep psychological insights. His Islamic writings include *Martyrs for Religion In Recent Times* (Son Devrin Din Mazlumları), *Caliph Ali: The Gate to the Land of Wisdom* (İlim Beldesinin Kapısı: Hazret-i Ali), *From the Pilgrimage* (Haçdan), *1001 Sayings of the Prophet* (Binbir Hadis), and *The Divine Light that Descended on the Desert* (Çöle İnen Nur) (Heper: 1999:234)

²⁵ Cumhuriyet on 23rd March 1951

²⁶ Cumhuriyet on 24th March 1951

the violent attacks of the religious fundamentalists.²⁷ This also granted the government greater powers to deal with those who contested Kemalism. (Ahmad, 1977:367) By this maneuver, the Democrats seized the opportunity to prevent the Republicans from proclaiming themselves as the real and unique protector of the Kemalist reforms in the country.

Although the relations between two parties began to ease after an attack on Ahmet Emin Yalman²⁸ by the religious fundamentalists²⁹, the political rivalry drew the Democrat government to become much more aggressive against the Republicans and their principles. During the peaceful era between two parties, Adnan Menderes had praised conscience, common sense and patriotism of the Republicans and suggested cooperation with them against religious reactionaries who are the enemies of freedom.³⁰

However, in the atmosphere of the 1954 elections the political rivalry between two parties revived. In this context the Democrats demonstrated their willingness to politicize Islam when they accepted the support of the *Nurcus*, one of the most powerful religious groups in the country. (Saribay,124:1991) They began to hold the most prestigious position in the Turkish society in parallel to the toleration

²⁷ Cumhuriyet on 26th July 1951

²⁸ Ahmet Emin Yalman (1888-1973) from a *dönme* (crypto-Jewish) family of Salonica. He is graduated from Columbia University and gave lectures in sociology and statistics in Istanbul (1914-1920). After returning to Turkey from deportation to Malta, he founded the newspaper Vatan (Fatherland) in 1923, introducing a more modern American-inspired style of journalism. When he was arrested in 1925, his newspaper was closed down. After that, he entered business life as an importer of American cars and tractors. In 1940, Yalman reopened Vatan. After the 1946 elections, he supported the Democrat Party. In 1952, he narrowly escaped an attempt on his life by fundamentalists. In the later 1950s, he turned against Menderes and sentenced to fifteen months in 1959. His publishing career ended in 1962. (Zürcher, 370:1993) The religious fundamentalists chose him as a target because of his being Jewish and mason. (Yalman,1970:278)

²⁹ Cumhuriyet on 26th July 1951

of the Democrat government of their religious movement. (Mardin,1969:367) During this period, the Democrats tolerated the development of the *Nurcu* movements because of their exploitation policies of religious matters for electoral reasons. (Kaçmazoğlu, 1998:75) The Democrats' attitude towards Said Nursi³¹, the leader of the Nurcu movement is an example of this attitude. Placed under strict governmental surveillance because of his suspicious religious speeches and movements during the early Republican era, the Democrats did not continue such an attitude against him. On contrary, he became a respected figure in their eyes.

As an indicator of this situation, some of the cabinet members visited Said Nursi in Emirdağ (a district of Ankara province), and when Adnan Menderes came to this town, the followers of the *Nurcu* movement welcomed him with green flags and after that Said Nursi began his free voyages in the country. (Tunaya,124:1991)

The more the Democrats became associated with the Islamists, the more it was regarded as part of the peripheral religious movement opposed to the centralizing and secularizing bureaucracy. (Sarıbay,1991:124)

³⁰ Zafer on 28th December 1952

³¹ Said Nursi (1876-1960) was born as son of a poor cleric of Kurdish extraction in Nurs, province of Bitlis. He had a traditional religious education and became an active member of the Nakşibendi dervish order. During his being in Istanbul, he had on good terms with the Young Turks, but after revolution joined the fundamentalist Muhammadan Union. After the counter-revolution of April 1909 he lived in the east for some years, but in 1911 he returned to Istanbul and seems to have entered the entourage of Sultan Mehmet V. During the First World War, he served with the Special Organization as a propagandist. During the clashes against the Russians on the Caucassian front, he was taken as a prisoner of war by Russians. After the war, he returned and joined the Society for the Elavation of Kurdistan. In the course of the Liberation War, he joined the Turkish nationalists, but broke with them in January 1923 over their secularist course. After the Kurdish insurrection of 1925, he was arrested and deported first to a village near Isparta and then to Eskişehir (1935), Kastamonu (1936), Denizli (1943) and Emirdağ, near Afyon (1944). When the Democrat Party came to power in 1950, he was released, but arrested and tried many times for alleged political use of religion. He expounded his ideas in a number of tracts collectively known as *Risale-i Nur* (Message of Light), which really revolved around a kind of Islamic moral rearmament coupled with the adoption of Western technology and science. His movement known as *Nurculuk* acquired a large following in Turkey, which is still growing today. (Zürcher, 1993:366)

Moreover, personal initiatives of the Democrat deputies also came to the fore in the name of the protection of religious matters:

In 1958, a number of deputies under the leadership of Münip Hayri Ürgüplü, deputy for Nevşehir, wanted to take Islam and prophet Mohammed under the protection of the Punishment Law by proposing a law, which aimed at the punishment for attacks on Islam. It would have been called the Law for the Protection of Sacred Things (*Mukadessatı Koruma Kanunu*). However, after serious debate and criticism, these deputies withdrew the proposal. They intended to table it again again, but ultimately did not reintroduce it into the Assembly. (Tunaya, 210:1991)

These events indicate that pressure from traditional segments of the Turkish society led to the abandonment of the secularist measures by the Democrats. Besides this, the demands of the traditional segments on the religious matters cannot be directly related to pan-Arabism. Indeed, their main motivation in their struggle against the Republican authority was the rivalry between periphery and center. That is, these movements reacted against oppressive policies against their traditional background of which Islam constituted one of the basic elements. Even the *Tijanis* were not specifically pan-Muslim or pro-Arab or pro-Iranian and there is no valid evidence that the *Tijanis* had contacts outside Turkey. (Lewis, 1952: 56) Their conceptualization of political liberalism consisted of the relaxation of state controls on religious matters.

Therefore, it seems impossible to argue that there occurred pressures from the popular support of the Democrats for the establishment of smoother relations between Turkey and the Arab world. Indeed, while the Democrats relaxed many of the social reforms imposed by the previous Republican administration, increasing demands for widening the area of the public discussion of religious matters made

some of the Democrat authorities uncomfortable. For instance, during the Congress of the Democrat Party in Manisa, some delegates demanded a widening of religious education.³² Fevzi Lütü Karaosmanođlu³³, one of top Democrat authorities, expressed the necessity of being conscious of the fact that the people in this country were Muslim as well as Turk.³⁴ The fact that the Democrats gave concessions for the traditional segments on the religious matters meant votes for the next elections. The relaxation of the secularist measures cannot be perceived as being aimed at ending the alienation between Turkey and the Arab world.

However, whilst the Democrats seemed to abandon westernization in the social realm, demands from Turkish society for the relaxation of state control in economic life and introduction of more liberal measures led the Democrats to pursue pro-western policies. In other words, the westernization parameters of the Turkish governments shifted from the social to the economic realm. This situation did not weaken the influence of the western factor in the Turkish policy objectives.

³² Cumhuriyet 18th May 1951

³³ Fevzi Lütü Karaosmanođlu (1900-) was one of the most important personal figures in the Turkish political life. After graduation from Halkalı Agriculture Institute, he began wright career in Dergah magazine. He was tried in Elazıđ İstiklal Courts because of his writings that supported Terakkiperver Party in 1925 but he was released. After the transition to multiparty system, he took place in the Democrat Party organization. In the 1950 election he was elected as the Democrat deputy for Manisa. In the first Menderes cabinet, he became the state minister for the use of the Marshall Aid. Then he was dutied as the interior affairs minister in the following Menderes government. However, he resigned from the Democrat Party because of disagreements on the rights of press. After that, he founded Hürriyet (Freedom) Partyin 1955. However, after the closure of his party in 1958, he joined to the Republican People’s Party. During the aftermath of the 1960 coup, he became a member of the founding assembly and resigned this duty after the completein of the misson of the Founding Assembly. (Meydan Larousse, V-6, 1979:)

³⁴ Cumhuriyet 19th May 1951

4.3. The Democrat Attitude Towards The Arabs

As it is shown above, the Democrats took a positive approach towards Islam in order to illustrate their difference from the preceding mono-party rule of the Republican People's Party. The Democrats indicated a similar approach in the matter of relations with the Arab world. During the opposition years and the first years of the ruling power, they criticized the negative and hesitant attitude of the Republicans towards the Arabs and underlined that this situation would be reversed during their rule. Fuat Köprülü³⁵, the foreign minister of the Democrat government explains the main lines of his government's policy towards the Arab world as follows³⁶:

I felt that Turkey should have smoothened the relations with the Arab world since the establishment of the first Democrat government. The Republicans were not interested in them because of their being weak and disunited, and thought that Turkey would not gain but would lose in the case of any kind of relations with them. In my opinion, İnönü does not like the Arabs because of his experiences during the First World War. Among the duties of a foreign minister, one of the basic matters is to give guarantees of friendship with neighboring countries. Honesty is not sufficient by oneself, it is also necessary to be a friend that would never bring any suspicion. I behaved honestly and sincerely towards the Arabs, and I think that the Arabs appreciated this.

On the other hand, from the perspective of international politics, the attitude of the Democrat governments towards the Arabs cannot be separated from the

³⁵ Fuat Köprülü (1890-1966) descended from the famous family of grand viziers who ruled the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the seventeenth century. He studied law, but left the university without graduating. Then, he studied literature, history and philosophy privately. He struggled to establish European scholarly standards in the study of literature and history, and became one of the founders of Turkology Institute in Turkey in 1924. While emphasizing the continuity between older Central Asian cultures and the Ottoman-Turkish one, he opposed the more extreme nationalist historical thesis. In 1934, he was entered politics when he was elected to the assembly. Apart from being one of the founders of the Democrat Party, he served as the foreign minister of the first Menderes government after 1950. However, he resigned from the Democrat Party in 1957. His efforts to reenter politics after the 1960 coup failed. (Zürcher, 1993:360)

³⁶ State Department Decimal File, Number 782 00/6-151, NARA, Washington DC

Republican times. That is, the Democrats – like the Republicans -- considered matters related to the Middle East within the context of relations with the west. The question of NATO membership, which arose during the Republican rule, continued to be one of the main considerations of the Democrats. From then on, the Turkish policy objectives began to indicate greater parallelism with those of the western world. The foreign minister, Fuat Köprülü, emphasized this in the following way: Our national interests are the same as the political and military objectives of NATO.³⁷ After the realization of the full membership to the NATO by the first Democrat government, the influence of the western factor strengthened in the Turkish policy objectives. Hence, Turkey's relations with Arab countries were shaped according to its obligations to the western world. (McGhee,1990:206)

In this framework, westernization that constituted the main cornerstone of Kemalist policy objectives continued to be the main factor in the Democrats' efforts to establish closer ties with the Arab world. They tried to impose the Turkish foreign policy parameters on the Arabs but their options were limited because of their commitment to westernization as the ultimate goal of the Turkish state.

³⁷ Ayn Tarihi, October 1951, p.18

CHAPTER V

TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS DURING THE DEMOCRAT PERIOD

As explained above, popular support for the Democrats could not constitute a propulsive factor in their policy objectives towards the Arabs. Indeed, political rivalry in this moderate two-party system, formed by the Democrats as the ruling power and the Republicans as the opposition, did not extend to foreign policy matters. (Gök, 1984:58) Moreover, like the Republicans, the Democrats considered the military and political inclusion of Turkey in the western bloc as being necessary for the struggle against the strengthening regional influence of the USSR. It is possible to claim that the Turkish ruling elites used the Soviet threat as a means of approaching to west. (Yavuz,1994:244) Apart from the political dimension, the fact that Turkey wanted to benefit from American aid programs in the aftermath of WWII can constitute a reason for Turkey's insistence on the Soviet threat. Indeed, all of the Turkish governments emphasized that not only Europe but also the Middle East lay under the Soviet threat after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. (Yavuz, 1994:94) Accordingly Turkey welcomed western involvement in the Middle East for the reason that it would benefit from western development aid in return for providing a stronghold for the west in the Middle East.

In this regard, free from any critics in Turkish political arena, the Democrats accelerated the process of westernization in the political realm. Full membership to NATO in 1952 constituted the first major step in this process. As Britain remained the key western player in the region just after the war, Turkey's involvement in

regional affairs took place under the aegis of the British. (Sever, 1990:144) Turkey subsequently became involved in several endeavors to establish regional military organizations in collaboration with its western allies. However, by voluntary leadership of such untimely projects as the Middle East Defense Organization or the Baghdad Pact, it seemed to ease the burden of those western nations bent on continuing their exploitation of the Middle East. (Ataöv,1970:126) It is a fact that the security concerns of the Arabs were not the same as the concerns of the Turks. While Turkey tried to gather the Middle Eastern countries into security alliances directed against the Soviets, the Arabs preferred to remain neutral in the Cold War game. They did not regard the USSR as a threat and were more concerned with driving the imperialist powers from the region. Their concerns reached a peak with the rise of Arab nationalism under the leadership of Nasser. In this context, the Arabs did not welcome Turkish and western plans concerning the region. Therefore, the Turkish ruling circles suffered prestige especially in the eyes of the Arabs as the collaborator of Western imperialism. (Ataöv, 1970:126)

Besides this, by taking side with the western countries in political and military problems Turkey damaged its standing in Arab eyes. In order to point out this, the chapter analyzes four major problems: the Palestine Question; the Suez Canal Crisis; strained relations between Turkey and Syria; and the military takeover in Iraq. Each of these matters indicates that although the Democrats claimed to open a new era in the Turkish-Arab relations, the western factor continued to be the main determinant in Turkish foreign policy objectives.

5.1. The Palestine Question

After the recognition of Israel in 1949, relations between Israel and Turkey became the focal point of Arab criticisms of Turkey. Realizing the fact that the new Israeli state would be pro-western instead of being a satellite state of the Soviet Union, Turkey made its attitude towards this state smoother. On the other hand, the Arabs could not shake of the effect of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for them. In his diary, Mahmut Dikerdem (1990:114), one of the outstanding Turkish diplomats who closely followed developments in the Middle East, emphasizes this reality in the following words:

Salah Salim...who was known as the brilliant man of the Revolutionary Council, gave a lecture on the philosophy of the Egyptian Revolution. After the end of the lecture, he brought the matter of Israel into his speech. He said that the Israeli state was a dagger which was stabbed into the heart of the Arab world, and the Arabs would never consider any other threat as long as Israel exists, and they would not establish any friendship with the states that recognize Israel, and Turkey would not also gain the friendship of Egypt while relations between Israel and Turkey continue.

For this reason, the Democrat government that wanted to develop good relations with the Arab world as well as keeping contacts with Israel, should structure its Middle East politics in a very sensitive way.

During the first half of the 1950s, the Turkish governments established good relations with Israel. Apart from realizing that the young Israeli state would not be a pro-Soviet state, technological and military cooperation between Turkey and Israel were important factors for ameliorating relations. In that period, Turkey looked upon Israel chiefly as a country, which had achieved rapid modernization and progress in a relatively underdeveloped area. (Karpaz,1975:114) According to Nachmani

(1999:39), while trade and military cooperation between two countries had improved in this period, the Turkish and Israeli authorities continued military cooperation in secrecy due to fear of the Arab reaction against Turkey. In this context, while Arab nationalism developed as a reaction to the emergence of the Israeli state, the Turkish government considered the problem of the Arab-Israeli dispute over Palestine from the perspective of its security concerns, which gave priority to the containment of the Soviet Union in collaboration with its western allies in the region. (Kürkçüoğlu, 1972: 1-20)

The most decisive attitude of the Democrat governments against Israel came after the end of the Suez Canal crisis. Turkey withdrew its diplomatic representatives from Israel due to the reactions from the Arab world.³⁸ The foreign ministry touched on the matter of recalling the ambassador to Tel Aviv as follows:

The Turkish government supported the endeavors to solve the Palestine Question within the decisions of the United Nations since the beginning, and put efforts both in and outside of the United Nations.

The Turkish government, worried about the continuance of the unsolved Palestine matter, which constitutes to be an element of uneasiness and danger in the Near East, has decided to withdraw its ambassador in Tel Aviv until an eventual solution with peace and equity can be brought to the Palestine issue.³⁹

As Kürkçüoğlu (1972:99-100) states, the Turkish authorities preferred to emphasize the Arab-Israeli conflict without referring to the Egypt-Israeli conflict during the Suez Canal crisis. Indeed Turkey took this step in order to prevent any uneasiness among Muslim members of the Baghdad Pact. Therefore, this can be regarded as a Turkish policy objective in order to protect the unity of this pact. In this context,

³⁸ Cumhuriyet on November 27th 1956

³⁹ Ayın Tarihi, November 1956, p. 39-40

Turkey did not develop an original attitude on the Palestine question (Kut 1991:5) In fact; it considered the matter was related to other matters in the Middle East, to be handled within the context of its pro-western foreign policy objectives in the Middle East.

5.2. The Suez Canal Crisis:

The United States, Britain, France and Turkey wanted to draw Egypt into a pro-western defense alliance against the so-called international communist threat. However, it was obvious that the Egyptian government under the leadership of Nasser was uneasy with the increasing influence of the Western world in the Middle East after the establishment of the Baghdad Pact. Besides this, Nasser followed balance politics between the west and communist world in order to strengthen his rule in Egypt. Since the Western states would not approve the delivery of the huge amount of sophisticated weaponry to Egypt, Nasser began to found closer ties with the Soviets. (Love,1969:88) In September 1955, Nasser shocked the west and delighted the Arab masses by announcing an agreement to purchase large quantities of Soviet arms via Czechoslovakia. (Mansfield, 1985:253)

In this respect, the relations between the Western world and Egypt began to enter a controversial era. The most important event that contributed to further deterioration in these relations was the issue of Aswan Dam Project and in its conclusion nationalization of the Suez Canal. Britain, the United States and World Bank promised to provide \$ 270 million aid for the Egyptian ruling power to

undertake the project.⁴⁰ However, the United States withdrew its promise for aid because of the Egyptians' reluctant attitude towards the issue of the Middle East defense against any probable communist threat. The main events that drew the United States to give up its proposals were Egypt's establishment of diplomatic relations with communist China in May 1956 and the decision to sell cotton to the Soviet Union. The World Bank and Britain followed the United States on the matter of providing credits to Nasser. As a response to this behavior, Nasser declared the nationalization of the Suez Canal region in order to cover the finances of the Aswan Dam project.⁴¹

The Western powers regarded this decision as an act against the security of the canal and the freedom for passage. (Gönlübol&Ülman,1999:280) The French, British and American authorities, who met in London on 29th July 1956 decided to arrange a conference in London on 16th August 1956 in order to negotiate the dispute over the canal.⁴² It was decided to call the countries who became the parties to the 1888 Istanbul Treaty who frequently used the canal.⁴³

While the Turkish government decided to send a delegate committee under the head of Muharrem Nuri Birgi, Egypt and Greece declared that they would not take part in London Conference.⁴⁴ In this framework, from the point of the nationalist and anti-colonialist Arabs, the Turkish government seemed to side with the western powers against the Egyptian national interests.

⁴⁰ Keessing's, 1955-1956: 14620

⁴¹ Cumhuriyet on 26th July 1956

⁴² Keessing's, 1955-1956: 15000-15005

⁴³ Keessing's, 1955-1956: 15003

⁴⁴ Cumhuriyet on 13th August 1956

During the negotiations in London, the United States Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, presented a proposal in order to determine the status of the Suez Canal. Within the framework of this plan, it was suggested that the Suez Canal continued to be a transnational waterway as in the provisions of the 1888 Istanbul Treaty. It is possible to point out the provisions of this plan that directly related to the interests of the Egyptian government under three main headings⁴⁵

- The Canal would be managed under an international organization, which would be supervised by the United Nations. A treaty would establish the organization that would manage the Canal. In this organization, Egypt would have its own representatives.
- As in the provisions of Istanbul Treaty, all of the countries would use the Canal without any restriction.
- Reasonable and fair revenue would be paid to the Egyptian government.

The Turkish delegate under the head of the ambassador, Mr. Birgi, declared that Turkey would support the plan. In his speech to the conference, Mr. Birgi explained the Turkish view in the following words:

We are a Muslim nation. For this and other reasons, we are the friends of the Arab countries and we like them. We support the struggles of the Arab countries for their own freedom and independence. One of our greatest wishes is that the Arab countries maintain their independence. However, we do not see that the honor and independence of Egypt is damaged because the Suez Canal is placed under a neutral international administration. In our opinion, the plan that was proposed by Dulles is supported by the principle of equity and fairness.⁴⁶

Whilst the Turkish declaration emphasized that Turkey would respect the sovereign rights of the Arabic countries within their territories, it indicated that the Turkish government would support the Dulles Plan, which proposed superficial changes in the status of the Suez Canal. In other words, the plan was structured on behalf of the

⁴⁵ Cumhuriyet on 16th August 1956

protection of the western interests. Nasser could not accept this proposal. In this regard, the Egyptian government accused Turkey, along with other Muslim members of the Baghdad Pact, of collaborating with the imperialist western powers.

On the other hand, Turkey, Pakistan, India and Ethiopia proposed changes in the Dulles Plan. In this proposal, it was stated that Egypt's sovereign rights would not be damaged under the new canal regulation and administration, and the requirement of the payment for the damages to the old company of the Suez Canal would not be expressed as a decision but a wish. Since the majority of the countries that joined this conference accepted this proposal, the Dulles Plan was modified and from then on it was called "*five states' plan*."⁴⁷ (Gönlübol& Ülman: 281, 1999) Moreover, it was decided that a commission under the head of the Australian Prime Minister, Menzies, would suggest negotiations to Egypt in order to discuss the content of the plan.⁴⁸ Such initiatives of the Turkish delegate can be regarded as efforts to find a middle and agreeable point between the Dulles Plan and Egyptian claims.⁴⁹

The negotiations with the Egyptian authorities during the first week of September could not reach a solution and Nasser did not accept the "*five states' plan*." (Gönlübol&Ülman,281:1999) As a result of this, France and the United Kingdom began to take a tougher attitude towards the issue by considering the refusal of the Egyptians for the plan as very serious and stating that the United Kingdom and France concluded an agreement on the matter of measures that would

⁴⁶ Cumhuriyet on 17th August 1956

⁴⁷ These five states are the United States, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Ethiopia.

⁴⁸ Keessing's, 1955-1956: 15055

be taken against Egypt.⁵⁰ Besides this, it was a fact that the United Kingdom and France began to engage in some military activities in the region. France declared that with the permission of the United Kingdom, some French troops had been landed in Cyprus in order to protect the life and property of the French citizens in the Suez Canal region.⁵¹

In this atmosphere, France and the United Kingdom demanded reconsideration of the issue. Therefore, the 17 states that supported the “*five states’ plan*” decided to resume negotiations in London.⁵² The Turkish government decided to send a delegation to London.⁵³ Dulles presented a proposal for the establishment of a union of the countries that use the Suez Canal in order to make the Canal gain an international status. (Gönlübol&Ülman,1995:281) As a result, all of the countries that became parties to the conference except Japan and Ethiopia decided to establish this union. Turkey and Pakistan joined the union.⁵⁴

On the other hand, since the United Kingdom and France could not make Egypt accept the proposals for solution to the Suez Canal crisis within the framework of the London negotiations, they applied to the United Nations Security Council by claiming that Egypt was engaged in actions that endangered international peace and security.⁵⁵ However, the Security Council could not deliver a definite proposal for the restoration of peace in the region. While it decided that passing through the Canal

⁴⁹ Ömer Sami Coşar, Cumhuriyet on 19th August 1956

⁵⁰ Keessing’s, 1955-1956: 15055

⁵¹ Keessing’s, 1955-1956: 15082

⁵² The names of these states are listed as below: Australia, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Federal Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Iran, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States

⁵³ Cumhuriyet on September 20th 1956

⁵⁴ Cumhuriyet on October 2nd 1956

should be free without any political and technical restriction, it also emphasized respect for the sovereign rights of Egypt.⁵⁶

Since all efforts for a peaceful resolution to the conflict either in the structure of the London Conferences or the UN Security Council could not produce a valuable progress the atmosphere in the region became more strained. Eventually, Israel launched an attack against Egypt on 28th October.⁵⁷ The Israeli authorities tried to justify this act by emphasizing the increasing attempts of the commando attacks on the Israeli security forces.⁵⁸ However, it was fact that since the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Egypt had not allowed the passing of the ships to Israel because of the fear of transporting weapons to Israel. (Bağcı,1990:266) Following the Israeli attack, the United Kingdom and France launched their troops in the Suez Canal region. Within a short period of time, the British and French forces destroyed the Egyptian forces. In their calculation, they hoped that Nasser could be toppled. (Gönlübol&Ülman,1995:283) The greatest reaction against the British and French attacks came from the Soviet Union. Nikita Kruchev, the Soviet President, threatened that the Soviet Union would launch missile attacks on London and Paris unless the United Kingdom and France ended their aggressive behavior, but the Americans urged Kruchev to show restraint.⁵⁹

As a result of intensive international pressures, the United Kingdom and France declared that they would withdraw their troops from the region. Israel also

⁵⁵ Keessing's, 1955-1956, 15127

⁵⁶ Keessing's 1955-1956:15254

⁵⁷ Cumhuriyet on October 29th 1956

⁵⁸ Keessing's, 1955-1956: 15173

⁵⁹ Cumhuriyet on November 7th 1956

followed them. After that, the UN Peace Forces were deployed to the regions where the Israel-French-British troops evacuated.⁶⁰ Hence, the British and French authorities could not achieve their policy objectives, which were based on toppling Nasser and restoring their powerful status in the Suez Canal region. Besides this, the Egyptian declaration for the new status of the Suez Canal on 24th April 1957 proved that Egypt had taken the administration of the Canal into its hands. According to this, the Suez Canal Office would carry out the administrative duties and determine the fines for passing through the Canal.⁶¹

With regard to changes in the balance of power in the region, it can be stated that while the United Kingdom and France lost their superior position in the region, the Soviet Union with its severe attitude and threats against them increased its prestigious position in the eyes of the nationalist Arabs. (Strange,1957:96) On the other hand, since the United States and Turkey were allies of Britain and France within the framework of NATO and the Baghdad Pact, they could not take really tough steps against them. As an indicator of this situation, Turkey with other members of the Baghdad Pact condemned Israel for launching a sudden attack and demanded the withdrawal of the British and French troops.⁶² Iraq and Pakistan as the other Muslim countries of the Baghdad Pact demanded the exclusion of the United Kingdom from the Pact. (Bağcı,1990:80) However, Turkey argued strongly that Britain should not be expelled from the Pact, and persuaded other members to accept its view. (Ataöv,1970:134) Although Turkey demanded withdrawal of the British troops from the Canal region because of its fear that the uneasiness among other

⁶⁰ Keessing's 11955-1956: 15447

⁶¹ Keessing's, 1955-195: 615544-155547

Muslim members of the pact might lead to cleavages in the framework of the Pact, it emphasized the unconciliatory attitude of Nasser. The speech of Ethem Menderes, who became the Foreign Minister towards the end of the crisis, reveals this reality as follows:

When today's rulers of Egypt brought the issue of the Suez Canal into agenda with the help of some neutralists and communist propaganda, they found the opportunity to show themselves as heroes of eastern world, and indicate the issue as an independence war that concerned all of the Asian and African countries and as a struggle between west and east. As they created such an atmosphere, they would prevent criticisms against the Egyptian rulers. According to them, if someone expressed that Egyptian attitude and behavior on this issue was not right, this would mean that they react against the honor and independence of the Arabic and Islamic world, and whole east.⁶³

During the London Conference, another matter that affected the attitude of the Turkish government was the comparison of the status of the Turkish Straits with the Canal. Turkey succeeded in taking the Straits under its control by the Montreux Convention and became uncomfortable with the Soviet demands for the alteration of the status of the Straits during the aftermath of the Second World War. On the other hand, at the London Conference, the Turkish government declared its support for the Dulles Plan that stressed the international character of the Canal. This situation led the Turkish authorities into a dilemma. Nasser saw a similarity between the Turkish Straits and the Suez Canal problem and wanted Turkey to mediate in July 1956. (Kürkçüoğlu,1972:93) However, according to the Turkish elite, there could not be established a similarity with regard to status of the Canal and Straits. The statement of Çoşar constitutes a good example for such attitude in the following words:

⁶² Keessing's, 1956-1957: 15230

⁶³ Ayn Tarihi, December 1956, p.162

The Straits question was solved without considering Turkish rights during the Lausanne conference. A Straits commission was set up and territories around the Straits became a non-military zone. Despite all this, Turkey remained faithful to the agreement in Lausanne, and achieved the abolishment of this agreement not by itself but through the participation of all countries that were concerned with the matter. Hence it got a new agreement that preserved its rights. It achieved this by inculcating an atmosphere of confidence to all nations.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the words on the issue of having confidence between parties remain a controversial issue, because there did not exist an environment for confidence between Egypt and the west. If the relations between them leading up to the Canal crisis are considered within the framework of western initiatives to cancel financial aid for the Aswan Dam project in order to force Egypt into a defence pact, it can be seen that not Egypt but the west caused the atmosphere of trust to evaporate.

In addition to this, Turkey refrained from emphasizing the legal side of the matter. It considered the Suez Canal problem as a struggle between powers that would introduce communism into the Middle East and the 'free world'. The speech of Muharrem Nuri Birgi, who headed the Turkish delegate, reveals this matter in the following words: "The statements that the majority of the countries made during London Conference and the result of this conference disproved the claims that try to reflect the London Conference as an attempt to assault the honor and independence of Egypt and also the whole Arab world."⁶⁵

Following the First London Conference, Turkey continued to support western claims and proposals for a solution to the problem during the second one. Therefore,

⁶⁴ Ömer Sami Coşar, Cumhuriyet on 19th August 1956

⁶⁵ Cumhuriyet on August 20th 1956

this kind of attitude caused the Arabs to see Turkey as a country in the Middle East, which collaborated with the western countries. As an indicator of this situation, while Nasser refused the establishment of the Union for the countries that use the Canal, he condemned Turkey for being a guardian of western imperialism not only in the Arabic world but also the non-allied movement.(Bağcı,1990:80) In this framework, the Turkish attitude led to a further deterioration in the relations between Turkey and the Arab world. In other words, the Suez imbroglio posed a serious challenge to Turkey's western alliance. (Karpat, 1975:55)

5.3 Strained Relations with Syria

The political situation during the initial period of the Turkish-Syrian relations did not create a positive atmosphere for the development of these relations. Although Turkey was reluctant to see Syria as an independent state, it recognized Syria's full independent status in 1946. The main reason behind the unfriendly relations between Turkey and Syria was the incorporation of Hatay (Alexandretta) into the Turkish state. Soysal (1999:101) describes the position of both sides as follows:

The Turkish government was willing to recognize Syria on the condition that it accepted the Hatay as a province of Turkey. The Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Hasan Saka mentioned this to his counterpart Jamal Mardam, during his visit to Damascus. But Mr. Saka soon realized that the Syrian government would not accept this condition. As a result, Turkey did not assign an ambassador to Damascus, but only a consul general. In any case, Syrians refused to recognize Hatay as a Turkish province and thus Turkey's insistence on this condition was unnecessary. Turkey, considering its legal point of view, as well as its strong position vis-à-vis Syria, recognized it in 1946.

After the recognition and establishment of diplomatic missions between two countries, the relations could not be structured on healthy and sound ground because

of the Hatay issue. However, while the Syrians were uneasy over the incorporation of Hatay into Turkey, its leaders were willing to improve relations with Turkey without extending any official reservation on the position of Hatay. (Soysal,1999:101) On the other hand, since the new regime in Syria did not have a strong popular base in the country, there occurred several instances of military takeovers in 1949.⁶⁶ Therefore, any Syrian ruling power needed to strengthen its popularity among the Syrian people in order to keep itself in office. For example, in order to increase his popularity, Adib Shishakli⁶⁷ revived the Hatay question and claimed ownership of Hatay and published new maps of Syria including Hatay and Turkish Taurus area in Syrian territory. (Soysal 102, 1999) In this framework, the Hatay issue constituted one of the main propaganda tools for the Syrian rulers. Soysal (1999:78), who also served as a Turkish diplomatic representative in Syria emphasizes this reality in his diary in the following words:

When Shishakli invited me to his office he asked the reason why Turkey had withdrawn its ambassador and said “the Hatay issue is brought up for the sake of maintaining internal consumption,” and added that “if any Syrian leader neglects this matter, he cannot possibly rest on his chair.” He also said “Turkey’s military power is ten fold superior compared to Syria” and added “how can we dare to declare war against Turkey.” The President seemed to be quite sincere in his confession.

⁶⁶ In 1949, Colonel Husni az-Zaim realized the first military takeover against Shukri al-Kuwatli who ruled Syria as president since 1943. Just after five months, another colonel Hinnawi overthrew Zaim. However, in 1949 Hinnawi was also toppled by Adip Shishakli.

⁶⁷ Shishakli, Adib al- (1909-1964), Syrian army officer and president of Syria (1953-1954). Born in Hama and served with the French army during the mandate. Fought against Israeli in the Palestine war 1948. Led military coups in December 1949 and November 1951. Though effectively ruling behind the scenes, he only assumed power officially in June 1953 when he was elected president in a referendum. A new constitution providing for parliamentary government was promulgated in 1950, but it was suspended in late 1951. From then until 1954, al-Shishakli ruled as a virtual dictator. In 1953 he issued a new constitution establishing a presidential form of government and was elected president. He governed the country until 1954. (http://www.damascus-online.com/se/bio/shishakli_adib.htm)

However, whether for internal consumption or not, the Hatay issue remained a big issue for the Syrians. According to them, when France gave Hatay to Turkey in return for support during the Second World War it was acting in breach of the League of Nation mandate.⁶⁸

As a result of the speeches and movements of Syrian leaders on the Hatay issue against Turkey, the Turkish authorities reacted against Syria. President Celal Bayar insisted on withdrawing the Turkish ambassador in 1953. (Soysal,1999:102) The strained relations with Syria continued during the Democrat era. Moreover, strengthening anti-colonialist and national tendencies in Syria made the west and Turkey worry about the future of Syria. Following Egypt's example, the Syrian government established good relations with the Soviets and recognized China. (Gönlübol&Ülman,1995:290) Therefore, apart from the Hatay issue, the Syrian attitude towards the western plans to build an alliance structure with Turkey in the region contributed another dimension to the problematic relations between Syria and Turkey during the Democrat rule.

The Syrian government's pro-Soviet attitude and delivery of Soviet-made weaponry caused an increase in the security concerns of Turkey and the members of the Baghdad Pact. (Bağcı,1990:89) Russia delivered a note, which blamed Turkey for engaging in military maneuvers across the Syrian border and threatened that it would take necessary steps against this.⁶⁹ As a response to this note, Menderes stated that if the Soviet Union desired to establish a sincere friendship with Turkey, it

⁶⁸ <http://www.damascus-online.com/se/SE-main.htm>

⁶⁹ Cumhuriyet on September 15th 1957

should end the policy that it followed in the Middle East, especially in Syria.⁷⁰ Following this, while Syria complained about Turkey to the United Nations by claiming that the Turks were building up military forces along the Syrian border, Kruchev said that in case of war against Syria, ‘we are near to Turkey but the Americans are not. Turkey would not stand even one day if there were war’. He also said that the Soviets were prepared to use military power in order to protect its interests in the region.⁷¹

On the other hand, the United States declared that despite the physical distance between Turkey and the United States, it would help Turkey against any communist attack in the framework of NATO and the Eisenhower doctrine, which promised military and technical aid to countries that were regarded as lying under the communist threat.⁷² This indicated that the American authorities expressed their guarantee for the defense of Turkey and acting with solidarity in case of war.

The Turkish and Syrian authorities did not take any initiative to calm down the crisis along the border. As a response to the Syrian note that condemned Turkey for provocation on the border, the Turkish government refused such Syrian claims and defended itself by saying that the military movements along the border were only defensive steps.⁷³ Moreover, during the meeting of NATO, Menderes called its allies to take measures against Syria because of its emergence as a new communist threat.⁷⁴ Following this incident, both Turkey and Syria caused a deepening of the crisis by

⁷⁰ Cumhuriyet on October 4th 1957

⁷¹ Cumhuriyet on October 9th 1957

⁷² Cumhuriyet on October 11th 1957

⁷³ Cumhuriyet between October 10th & 17th 1957

⁷⁴ Cumhuriyet on December 19th 1957

sending strongly worded notes to each other. While Syria refused Turkish claims, the Turkish authorities insisted that Syria was becoming the center of spreading communist tendencies, which threatened so called community of free nations.⁷⁵

However, the declaration for the establishment of a political union between Syria and Egypt on February 22nd 1958 eased the strained Turkish-Syrian relations. Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, the Turkish foreign minister, expressed the Turkish attitude towards this unification in the following words:

It is said that a federation will be set up between Syria and Egypt. Closer relations among all of the countries in the Middle East do not irritate us. Moreover, if such a federation protects the countries that founded this, and take Syria out of the Soviet orbit, we will be happy. What we do not like is that any of our neighbors, become the means of spreading international communism. (Gönlübol & Ülman, 1996:279)

As a result, Turkey officially recognized the United Arab Republic that was established with the unification of Syria and Egypt in 1958.⁷⁶

The attitude of the Democrat government during the conflict on the Turkish-Syrian border indicates similarities with the Suez Canal crisis. Turkey considered the matter as a struggle between powers that desired to bring communism into the region and the free world. The speech of Adnan Menderes in the Turkish assembly constituted a good indicator of this situation:

The events in the Middle East are composed of not the matters between two countries, such as a problem between Syria and Turkey, but the great fights between two blocks that are concentrated in the Middle East... A state, which is outside of the region is attempting to found military bases that endanger security and stability of the Middle East, and seems to be successful in this, worrying not only the countries of the Middle East but also the other

⁷⁵ Cumhuriyet on January 20th 1958

⁷⁶ Cumhuriyet on March 12th 1958

countries that acted for the protection of the world peace. In this circumstance, Turkey is quite awake. (Öztürk, 1988:456-458)

In this statement, Turkey expressed its uneasiness about strengthening Soviet existence in the Middle East. However, it disregarded the fact that western countries had military bases in the Middle East, including Turkey.⁷⁷ In this framework, while Turkey cooperated with the western countries and supported their initiatives in the region, Turkish complaints about Syria's founding contacts with the USSR were not realistic.

The unstable political life and anti-colonialist and nationalist tendencies in Syria caused Turkey to worry about the formation of a communist regime on its border. During the crisis with Syria, the main claim of the Turkish government was focused on the fear that Turkey would be surrounded by the Soviet Union on its northeastern border, and a new communist Syria on its southern border. As Kürkcüoğlu (1972:122) states, the Turkish authorities considered military maneuvers in the border region as being defensive. He argues however that before engaging in such military moves, the Turkish authorities could have taken other steps by opting for peaceful negotiations within the framework of the United Nations.

5.4. The Military Takeover in Iraq

Following the conflict with Syria, the most important event that led to deterioration in the Turkish political status in the region was the military takeover in Iraq. On July 14th 1958, the Iraqi monarchy and government were overthrown.⁷⁸ Whilst it was a fact that the nationalist and anti-colonial elements dominated the

⁷⁷ Unstructured Interview with Jeremy Salt on 4th August 2001

course of the takeover, the leaders of this movement expressed their willingness to continue good relations with the west. A few days after the coup and the establishment of the new government, the Prime Minister, General Abdulkarim Kassem, stated that the coup was not against the west and Iraq would continue to cooperate with the western world in accordance with bilateral interests. (Gönlübol&Ülman,1996:301)

On the other hand, the Turkish government was not pleased with such statements of the new Iraqi administration and held a negative attitude towards it. The most competent authorities of the Turkish government expressed their unwillingness to recognize the new regime. The statement of Fuat Köprülü (Kürkçüoğlu,1972:133) indicates this reality as follows: “According to us, a new regime in Iraq cannot be a subject. The head of the Iraqi-Jordan Federation is King Hussein and its legitimate government is the one that is under the rule of King Hussein.” After the meeting of the Baghdad Pact members in Ankara, the Turkish government declared that it would approve mobilization for precautionary situations and males between the ages of 22 and 45 might be called up for the military service.⁷⁹ Such initiatives for a probable military movement might lead statesmen to think that Turkey would intervene in Iraq in order to restore the old monarchic regime by overthrowing the existing military one. Indicating its concern, the Soviet Union issued a note that accused Turkey of preparing for an attack on Iraq.⁸⁰ On the other hand, in the counter-note, the Turkish government declared that it would never

⁷⁸ Cumhuriyet on July 15th 1958

⁷⁹ Cumhuriyet on July 22nd 1958

⁸⁰ Cumhuriyet on July 20th 1958

undertake movements that increased tension in the Middle East.⁸¹ This statement of the Turkish government can be evaluated as a guarantee to the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, for the first time in Turkish political history, an opposition party had criticized the ruling power over for its foreign policy objectives. Up till that time both the opposition and party in power had considered foreign policy as a serious matter that should remain above the rivalry between the parties. (Gök, 1984: 58) In a press meeting, İsmet İnönü, as the leader of the opposition, accused the Democrats of endangering the security of Turkey by becoming involved in the domestic affairs of Iraq, and stated that because of these policies, the defense of Turkish territory might be impossible by the Turks in the case of any obligation to protect and defend their motherland.⁸²

However, whilst Turkey stated that it considered the union between Iraq and Jordan as a unique legitimate political structure, the union between Iraq and Jordan seemed to be a marriage that had been realized by the force of the western powers. Consequently, King Hussein said that the Arab Federal Union between Iraq and Jordan had come to an end.⁸³ Eventually, the Turkish government was obliged to accept the reality that emerged in Iraq. Turkey recognized the new regime in Iraq on July 31st 1958.⁸⁴

The military coup in Iraq, as the last chain of the most important happenings in the Middle East in the 1950s, indicated that the active politics towards the Middle

⁸¹ Cumhuriyet on July 26th 1958

⁸² Cumhuriyet on July 28th 1958

⁸³ Keessing's, 1957-1958: 160307

⁸⁴ Zafer on August 1st 1958

East region delivered by the Democrats had collapsed. In this regard, the open support of the Democrat government for the Iraqi monarchical rule, which was founded under the auspices of British imperialism, led Turkey to be a party to the conflict between the anti-colonialist nationalist and monarchical powers in the Arab world. Therefore, in the case of the struggle between the monarchy and nationalist Arabs in Iraq, Turkey intervened in intra-Arab matters on behalf of the western world, which considered the permanence of the traditional regimes in the Middle East as being necessary for their interests. Therefore, such an attitude of the Turkish government during this crisis led to the strengthening of anti-western and anti-Turkish views in the Arab world.(Kürkçüoğlu,1972:136) As a result, the Turkish government continued to lose prestige in the eyes of the nationalist Arabs who were the coming power in the Middle East.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Turkish foreign policy followed a very different path after the end of the Second World War. In this context, Turkey was prepared to play a leading role in order to bring the Arabs in an alliance against the so-called communist threat. The new Turkish government, formed by the Democrats after the multi-party election in 1950, signaled that a new era would begin between the Turks and Arabs. The Democrats hoped that establishing political and military ties with the Arabs under the protection of the western powers would end alienation between the Turks and Arabs. However, contrary to their expectations, the more Turkey dealt with the Middle East affairs on behalf of the western powers, the more relations with the Arabs deteriorated. While anti-western and nationalist tendencies were strengthening in the Arab world, Turkey took an aggressive attitude towards the Arabs in order to make them to join the pact against the so-called strengthening communist threat.

Indeed, because of the western factor in their policy objectives, it is not surprising that the Democrat governments could not achieve rapprochement with the Arab world. In other words, whilst the conceptualization of westernization was changed after the transition to a multi-party democracy, the adherence to westernization continued to be a dominant factor in Democrat policies. In this context, the following conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of Democrat attitudes to westernization and relations with the Arabs:

In the first place, Turkish politicians kept foreign policy matters outside political discussions. During their opposition years, the Republicans were sparing in their criticism of Turkey's policies on the Middle East. The most serious criticism came after the military takeover in Iraq. In addition to this, popular support for the Democrats derived from the relaxation of secular measures and not from the amelioration of relations with the Arab world. In other words, popular support did not play a determinant factor in governmental policies in the Middle East. Economic development and relaxation of secularism constituted two of the most important considerations of this popular support. As a result, contrary to the period between 1923 and 1945, the Democrats ignored the social and cultural measures of westernization. While the Republicans considered these reforms as a means of creating a unique Turkish identity in accordance with western standards of civilisation and excluding the Arab influence in Turkish social life, the Democrats abandoned them on the ground that they were contrary to freedom of belief.

Whether voter support in the next elections or freedom of belief led them to relax secular measures, such relaxation was not influenced by the desire for rapprochement with the Arab world. On the contrary, after inclusion in NATO, the Democrats began to engage in military alliances in the region with support of the United States and Britain. As a result, western factor continued to be dominant factor in Turkish policy objectives.

Secondly, although it is argued that Turkish foreign policy took a very different path after 1950, differences were not in the mentality that saw

westernization as ultimate goal, but in structure. The Western factor influenced the neutrality of Turkish foreign policy objectives in social and political terms before 1950. That is, Turkey wanted to realize social westernization without engaging in political issues of the Arab territories that were under British and French protectorate. From the point of politics, strengthening German influence in the Middle East worried Britain and France. They wanted to preserve the status quo through an agreement with Turkey. The Saadabad Pact, which considered non-recognition of any border change in the Middle East, was the product of their efforts to maintain the status quo. In this context, Turkey's non-interference in the Middle East during the republican era indicates a parallelism with Britain and France's status quo mentality. However, after 1950, the strengthening communist threat and the division of the world into bipolar structure led western powers to be more dominant in the Middle East. In order to keep the Arabs under their control, they emphasized the necessity of alliances in the region. At this point, Turkey played a significant role in western efforts to establish pacts with the Arab countries. Therefore, parallel to transformation in western consideration from status quo mentality to efforts to expand alliance networks, Turkey began to play a more active role in the region. In this framework, changes in Turkish foreign policy objectives were realized in accordance with changes in western considerations in the region. Therefore, the western factor was clearly a major factor during both the Republican and Democrat eras.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Articles

Ahmad, Feroz. 1993. *The making of modern Turkey*. London & New York: Routledge

Ahmad, Feroz. 1977. *The Turkish experiment in democracy, 1950-1975*. London: C. Hurst & comp.

Apatay, Çetin. 1997. *Elyazısıyla yazdığı ve yazdırdığı fikirleri ile Atatürk*. İstanbul: Kazancı Yayınları

Ataöv, Türkkaya. 1970. *N.A.T.O. and Turkey*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi

----- 1963. *A speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1927*. Ankara: Ministry of Education Print Press

Aydın, Mustafa. January 2000. *Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy During the Cold War*. Journal of Middle Eastern Studies

Bağcı, Hüseyin. 1990. *Demokrat Parti Dönemi dış politikası*. Ankara: İmge

Boratav, Korkut. 1988. *Türkiye iktisat tarihi 1908-1985*. İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi

Bray, N.N.E. 14th September 1920. *Preliminary Report on Causes of Unrest - Mesopotamia-Very Secret- 26 CP/A India Office memoranda. (B348)*

Canatan, Yaşar. 1996. *Türk-Irak münasebetleri (1926-1958)*. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı

Dikerdem, Mahmut. 1990. *Ortadoğu'da devrim yılları : bir büyükelçinin anıları*. İstanbul: Cem

Eroğul, Cem. 1970. *Demokrat Parti : tarihi ve ideolojisi*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi

Eroğul, Cem. 1987. *The Establishment of Multiparty Rule: 1945-1971*. In Irvin C. Schick & Ahmet E. Tonak, ed., *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press

Giritli, İsmet. 1988. *Atatürkçülük ideolojisi*. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yayınları

Giritli, İsmet. 1982. *Ulusal modernleşme ideolojisi Atatürkçülük*. İstanbul: Mustafa Kemal Derneği

Gökalp, İskender. *Kemalizm ve İslam Dünyası*. İstanbul: Arba

Gök, Mehmet. 1984. *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Dış Politikasının İç ve Dış Kaynakları*. In Atatürk Türkiyesinde Dış Politika: Seminerler. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Gönlübol Mehmet & Sar Cem. 1996. *1919-1938 Yılları Arasında Türk Dış Politikası*. In Mehmet Gönlübol, ed., *Olaylarla Türk dış politikası 1919-1995*. Ankara: Siyasal kitabevi.

Gönlübol Mehmet & Ülman Haluk . 1996. *1945-1965 Yılları Arasında Türk Dış Politikası: Genel Durum*. In Mehmet Gönlübol, ed., *Olaylarla Türk dış politikası 1919-1995*. Ankara: Siyasal kitabevi.

Heper, Metin. 1994. *Historical dictionary of Turkey*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press

Hourani, Albert H. 1991. *A history of the Arab peoples*. London: Faber and Faber

Hourani, Albert H. 1970. *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798-1939*. London: Oxford University Pr.

Kaçmazoğlu, Bayram H. 1988. *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Toplumsal Tartışmaları*. İstanbul: Birey Yayıncılık

Karpat, Kemal H. 1973. *Social change and politics in Turkey, a structural-historical analysis*. Leiden: E.Brill

Karpat, Kemal H. 1975. *Turkey's foreign policy in transition, 1950-1974*. Leiden: E. J. Brill

Karpat, Kemal H. 1959. *Turkey's politics: the transition to a multi-party system*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University. Pr.

Keyder, Çağlar. 1987. *State and class in Turkey: a study in capitalist development*. London: Verso

Kürkçüoğlu, Ömer E. 1972. *Türkiye'nin Arap Orta Doğusu'na karşı politikası 1945-1970*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları

Kili, Suna. 1995. *Atatürk devrimi: bir çağdaşlaşma modeli*. İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları

- Kili, Suna. 1969. *Kemalism*. Istanbul: Robert College
- Kut, Şule. 1991. *Filistin Sorunu ve Türkiye*. In Haluk Ülman, ed., *Ortadoğu Sorunları ve Türkiye*. Ankara: Türkiye Sosyal Ekonomik Siyasal Araştırmalar Vakfı
- Lewis, Bernard. 1968. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. London: Oxford University Press
- Lewis, Thomas. 1952. *The Religious Changes in Turkish Republic*. In *Middle Eastern Studies*.
- Love, Kennett. 1969. *Suez--the twice-fought war : a history*. New York: McGraw-Hill
- Mansfield, Peter. 1985. *The Arabs*. London & New York: Penguin
- Mansfield, Peter. 1973. *The Ottoman Empire and its successors*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Mardin, Şerif. 1969. *Religion as Ideology*. Ankara: Hacettepe University
- Mayall, Simon V. 1997. *Turkey : thwarted ambition*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategies
- Margulies, Ronnie & Yıldızoğlu, Ergin. 1987. *Agrarian Change: 1923-1970*. In Irvin C. Schick & Ahmet E. Tonak, ed., *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press
- McGhee, George C. 1990. *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East connection: how the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO entry contained the Soviets*. London: Macmillan
- 1979. *Meydan-Larousse Büyük Lugat ve Ansiklopedi-v 6*. Istanbul: Meydan Yayınevi
- Nachmani, Amikam. 1999. *Turkey and the Middle East*. Ramat Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University.
- Öztürk, Kazım. 1968. *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti hükümetleri ve programları*. Istanbul: Ak Yayınları
- Sander, Oral. 1998. *Türkiye'nin dış politikası*. Ankara: İmge
- Sarıbay, Ali Y. 1991. *The Democratic Party: 1946-1960*. In Metin Heper, ed., *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Sencer, Muzaffer. 1974. *Türkiye'de siyasal partiler'in sosyal temelleri*. İstanbul:May yayınları

Sosyal, İsmail. Annual 1998-1999. *Syrian-Turkish Relations: 1945-1999*. In *Turkish Review of Middle Eastern Studies*.

----- State Department Decimal File, Number 782 00/6-151, NARA, Washington DC

Sunar, Ilkay. 1974. *State and society in the politics of Turkey's development*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi

Şimşir, Bilal N. 1999. *Doğunun kahramanı Atatürk*. İstanbul: Bilgi

Tachau, Frank. 1984. *Turkey, the politics of authority, democracy, and development*. New York: Praeger

Tunaya, Tarık Z. 1991. *İslamcılık akımı*. İstanbul: Simavi

----- Turkish Foreign Ministry. *The Turkish Note to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on 18th December 1932*

Webster, Donald E. 1939. *The Turkey of Atatürk: social process in the Turkish reformation*. Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political Studies

Yalman, Ahmed E. 1970. *Yakın tarihte gördüklerim ve geçirdiklerim*. İstanbul: Yenilik Yayınları

Yavuz, Hakan M. 1994. *İkicilik(Duality): Türk-Arap İlişkileri ve Filistin Sorunu*. In Faruk Sönmezoglu, *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*. İstanbul: Der Yayınları

Zurcher, Erik J. 1993. *Turkey: a modern history*. London: I.B.Touris

Newspapers and Periodicals

Al-Ahram

Ayın Tarihi

Cumhuriyet

Keesing's record of world events

Vakit

Zafer

Internet Sources

<http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/meria/journal/1997/issue1/jv1n1a3.html> - *Turkish Foreign Policy Towards The Middle East* By [Bilge Criss and Pinar Bilgin](#)

http://www.damascus-online.com/se/bio/shishakli_adib.htm

<http://www.damascus-online.com/se/SE-main.htm>