

THE QUEST FOR SECURITY: SOVIET UNION'S
DEMANDS FROM TURKEY, 1945-1946

A Master's Thesis

by
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July 2015

To my wife

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DEMANDS FROM TURKEY, 1945-1946

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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JULY 2015

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

THE QUEST FOR SECURITY: SOVIET UNION'S DEMANDS FROM TURKEY,
1945-1946

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July 2015

Starting with March 1945, Soviet Union launched an intense anti-Turkish propaganda and *war of nerves*, confronting Ankara with strategic demands, such as jointly administering Straits' defense, requesting land/naval bases in the Straits and modifying Turkey's eastern border. This study is a historical account of what transpired during the tense months extending from March 1945 until September 1946. It mainly employs a Turkish perspective on the developments. In addition to constructing a historically comprehensive picture of the events, this study also aims to argue that Soviet demands from Turkey and the firm American stance towards them played a key role in the start of the Cold War. It concludes that Turkish foreign policy adopted a completely new orientation as a result of the Soviet demands and the perceived threat in them.

Keywords: Soviet demands, Turkish crisis, U.S. foreign policy, Cold War

ÖZET

GÜVENLİK ARAYIŞINDA: SOVYETLER BİRLİĞİ'NİN TÜRKİYEDEN TALEPLERİ, 1945-1946

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Mart 1945'ten başlayarak, Sovyetler Birliği Türkiye'ye karşı şiddetli bir propaganda ve *sinirler savaşı* başlattı. Bunların doğrultusunda, Sovyetler Boğazlar'ın müşterek savunma idare edilmesi, Boğazlar'da toprak/deniz üsleri ve Türkiye'nin doğusunda sınır düzeltilmesi taleplerinde bulundu. Bu çalışma, Mart 1945'ten Eylül 1946'ya kadar uzanan süreçte Sovyetler Birliği ile Türkiye arasında meydana gelen olayların tarihsel bir açıklamasıdır. Çalışma'da gelişmelere başlıca Türk perspektifinden yaklaşmıştır. Tezin bir başka amacı Türkiye üzerindeki Sovyet talepleri'nin ve bunlara karşı Amerika'nın sert çıkışı'nın Soğuk Savaş'na yol açtığını göstermesidir. Kaldı ki, bu talepler ve onlardan algılanan tehdit sonucunda Türk dış politikası tamamen yeni bir yön aldı.

Anahtar Kelimeler:Sovyet talepleri, Türk krizi, A.B.D. dış politikası, Soğuk Savaş

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: SOVIET DEMANDS AND THE STRAITS	
QUESTION.....	6
2.1. The First Act: Moscow Talks, September-October 1939.....	8
2.2. The Second Act: Secret Nazi-Soviet negotiations over the Straits, 1940-1941.....	12
2.3. Allied pressure on Turkey and the hidden threat to the Straits.....	16
2.4. The Third Act: Soviet <i>war of nerves</i> against Turkey, 1945-1946.....	19
2.5. US stance towards Soviet demands.....	26
2.6. The Final Act: Two Soviet diplomatic on the Straits.....	34
2.7. Concluding Remarks.....	44
CHAPTER III: SOVIET TERRITORIAL DEMANDS IN EASTERN TURKEY.....	46
3.1. 1921 Moscow, Kars Treaties and Soviet territorial claims.....	48

3.2. Turkish refutation of Soviet claims.....	53
3.3. Concluding Remarks.....	62
CHAPTER IV: TURKEY'S PLACE IN THE POST-WAR	
SOVIET SECURITY SYSTEM.....	64
4.1. War-time and post-war Soviet stance towards	
Turkey.....	65
4.2. Turkey and the Soviet security system.....	68
4.3. Soviet Union's defensive and security-oriented	
policy towards Turkey.....	73
4.4. Soviet Union's cautious policy towards Turkey.....	80
4.5. Turkey's cautious policy towards Soviet Union.....	82
4.6. Concluding Remarks.....	89
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	96

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Straits, which have been many times during history object of contradictions and aspirations, are now completely under Turkish sovereignty... Thus it is prohibited for any belligerent state's warships to pass through the Straits. Therefore, I am pleased to note that the friendship between us and our great neighbor in the land and sea Soviet Russia, which has persisted throughout many trials in the past fifteen years will continue to preserve the strength and cordiality of the first day and sustain its natural development.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (TBMM, 1983: 6)¹

On December 20, 1945, Kazım Karabekir, one of Atatürk's closest aides and commander of the Eastern front during Turkish War of Independence, declared in his speech at Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) that "Turkish-Russian animosities are part of the Tsarist and Ottoman periods. We are burying for good this animosity. This being the case, the Moscow and Kars Treaties must be the gravestones of this buried animosity. It is necessary that the deceased never rises up again." (TBMM,

¹ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi [henceforth TBMM] (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 1983), d. 5, c. 13, b. 1, 6.

1983: 257)² Karabekir's speech, which came roughly nine years after Atatürk's statement quoted in the epigraph, is revealing in many regards.

Both statements are representative of the *bona fide* Turkish statesmen had placed on the 1936 Montreux Straits Convention and 1921 Moscow and Kars Treaties in that they would provide the foundation of strong, friendly relations between Turkey and Soviet Union. Yet, there is also a difference between the two. While Atatürk's speech came at a time when Turkey and Soviet Union were friends, Kazım Karabekir's speech was made in a time when bilateral ties were sour. This was because starting with March 1945, Moscow launched an intense anti-Turkish propaganda and *war of nerves*, confronting Ankara with strategic demands, such as jointly administering Straits' defense, requesting land/naval bases in the Straits and modifying Turkey's eastern border. By these demands, Stalinist Russia showed that the Turkish-Russian animosity was not at all a thing of the past and had not been buried yet.

This thesis is a historical account of what transpired during those tense months extending from March 1945 until September 1946. It will mostly be a Turkish perspective on these events given that most of the primary sources and secondary sources I used are in Turkish. The primary sources in Turkish used for research in this thesis include the Turkish Prime Ministerial Archives (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, BCA*) and the minutes of Turkish Grand National Assembly Meetings (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM*). Among the primary sources in English, I have

²d. 7, c. 20, b. 15.

made extensive use of the published collections from the US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (*FRUS*) and the disclosed archives of the German Foreign Office, likewise published by the US Department of State.

This thesis' theme has been frequently subject of scholarly research both in Turkey and in the West. Yet, an analysis of the literature on this subject would reveal that it has mostly been dealt with as part of a larger question. In Turkish leadership, the post-war Soviet demands are analyzed mostly as part of the larger framework of Turkish-Russian relations. This is the case with most of the seminal works in the field.³ On the other hand, in the West, post-war Soviet demands from Turkey are mostly analyzed as part of a larger framework of Soviet-American relations and the early Cold War period.⁴ Until recently, there has been little academic engagement of substance on this subject. I argue that the first academic study in this respect came two years ago from an Azeri scholar, Jamil Hasanlı, who researched extensively in the Russian,

³In this context see A. Suat Bilge, *Güç Komşuluk: Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği İlişkileri, 1920-1964* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1992); Kamuran Gürün, *Dış İlişkiler ve Türk Politikası (1939'dan Günümüze Kadar)*, (Ankara: A.Ü. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1983); Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, cilt. I, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri ve Boğazlar Meselesi* (Ankara: Başnur Matbaası, 1968); Kamuran Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri (1920-1953)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991); Tahir Tamer Kumkale, *Tarihten günümüze Türk-Rus İlişkileri*. (Ankara: İrfan Yayımevi, 1997); Haluk F. Gürsel, *Tarih Boyunca Türk-Rus İlişkileri*. (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1968).

⁴In this respect among others refer to Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*. (New York: Routledge, 2005); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005); Bruce Robellet Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Barry Rubin, *The Great Powers in the Middle East 1941-1947: The Road to the Cold War*. (London: Frank Cass, 1980); George McGhee, *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry contained the Soviets*. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1990); Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani archives and published his work (originally in Russian) entitled *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953*. Hasanlı's main argument in his book was that post-war Soviet demands towards Turkey and the subsequent Soviet-American frictions that sprang out of it, the so-called Turkish crisis, was one of the main causes which led to the start of the Cold War. (Hasanlı, 2013:viii) While this was the conclusion he reached upon archival research, Hasanlı also admitted that he did not consider his research to be exhaustive and his conclusion definitive. Towards the end of his introduction to the book, he wrote that he would very much welcome other research done on the topic to contribute to the conclusion he reached at, either by agreeing or disagreeing with it.(Hasanlı, 2013:xiv) My own research in this thesis leads to the same conclusion, very much reinforcing Hasanlı's argument. I will show how strategic and vital Turkey was for the security of Soviet Union's southern rim on the one side and for US interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East regions, thus leading to a clash of interests over it.

My thesis consists of three main chapters. In the first one, I look at post-war Soviet demands towards the Turkish Straits. I try to place these demands in proper historical context to make clear the uniformity throughout different periods in the Soviet policy towards the Straits. This is why I frequently make reference to World War II years and even to the pre-war period to better understand the post-war developments.

The second chapter will focus on Soviet territorial demands vis-à-vis Turkey's eastern provinces of Kars and Ardahan. By using evidences from primary sources in Turkish, I try to substantiate my main argument that Soviet demands in eastern

Anatolia were historically unfair and cannot be reconciled with the historical developments of the time. Given that these demands did not match with the reality, I aim to show through this that they were only a façade behind which lay the real goal of subordinating Turkey to Soviet interests. As a sub-topic inside this chapter, the Armenian diaspora repatriation issue and how it was manipulated to pursue Soviet interests will also be analyzed.

After outlining the main components of post-war Soviet demands, the third chapter traces the reasons behind these demands. Why did the Soviets press for a revision of the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention governing the Straits regime and for territorial adjustments in the two Turkish eastern provinces of Kars and Ardahan? Why were the relations with Turkey a frequent concern of Stalin even while World War II was still raging? This chapter seeks to answer precisely that.

In conclusion, this thesis has three main goals. Firstly, it attempts to put together the bits and pieces related to the developments in the 1945-1946 Turkish crisis, thus aiming to construct a historically comprehensive picture of this crisis. Secondly, it attempts to make a contribution to the already well-established academic literature on the advent of the Cold War, claiming that Soviet-American clash over Turkey played a key role in the start of Cold War. Last but not least, it attempts to provide the Turkish perspective on the 1945-1946 developments.

CHAPTER II

SOVIET DEMANDS AND THE STRAITS QUESTION

In an October 1922 interview given to Michael Farbman, correspondent of the *Observer* and *Manchester Guardian* newspapers, on October 27, 1922, Soviet leader Lenin explained Soviet position on the solution to the Straits issue. Among others, Lenin (BCA, n.d.: 3)⁵ delineated the Soviet parameters for a successful resolution to the question: “First[comes] the satisfaction of Turkey’s national aspirations,” Lenin said and added (BCA, n.d.: 4),

We consider this essential, and not only in the interests of national independence. Our five years’ experience in settling the national question in a country that contains a tremendous number of nationalities such as [those that] could hardly be found in any other country, gives us the full conviction that under such circumstances the only correct attitude to the interests of nations is to meet those interests in full.

Secondly, Lenin said that the Soviet programme “includes the closing of the Straits to all warships in times of peace and of war.” (BCA, n.d.: 4) And thirdly, “the Soviet programme on the Straits includes keeping the Straits completely open to commercial ships.” (BCA, n.d.: 4)

⁵ Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri [hereafter, BCA] 30.1.0.0/101.624.3, 3-4.

It seems that the Stalinist regime did not quite concur on this programme with Lenin. A little over two decades after his death, starting from June 1945, Stalinist Russia confronted Turkey with a series of demands on the Straits which were the complete opposite of Lenin's programme. The requests for the joint administration of Strait's defense and for land and naval bases in the Straits clearly violated Turkish territorial integrity and sovereign rights, thus failing to satisfy Turkey's national aspirations. The other request for keeping the Straits always closed to the warships of non-Black Sea powers also failed to meet Lenin's second recommendation. The result was, far from what Lenin had expected, a serious crisis with Turkey that relegated the relations between the two countries almost to the breaking point and pushed Turkey towards the Western camp.

Soviet demands towards the Straits is not a phenomenon which can be confined only to the post-war years. The Straits Question has been one of the top concerns of the Soviet leadership since they took power after the October Revolution. Yet, a thorough historical origins of the subject would fall beyond the scope of this thesis. It will suffice to mention that the provisions governing the Straits regime were decided during an international conference held on July 1936 in Montreux where the Montreux Straits Convention was signed. Broadly put, in accordance with this Convention, the Straits came under complete Turkish sovereignty, Turkey gained the right to remilitarize the Straits and close them whenever there was an actual or perceived threat to its security. (Howard, 1974) Soviet Union was a reluctant signatory of the Montreux Convention. It

had always been dissatisfied with the provisions giving Turkey full control over the Straits. The main problem was the vulnerability of Soviet Union's southern rim. In times of war, the Soviets could at any moment get attacked from the Black Sea shores while the Straits, which constituted the entrance into the Black Sea from the Mediterranean, were not under their control. Yet, the Soviet Union was waiting for the appropriate international conjuncture to raise up these demands officially with Turkey. The moment seemed ripe after the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939. Thus, before proceeding to the post-war Soviet demands, it is necessary to touch upon the war time developments concerning the Straits Question.

2.1. The First Act: Moscow Talks, September-October 1939

The first time Soviet leadership officially presented Turkey with demands towards the Straits was during the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu to Moscow in September-October 1939. The purpose of this visit was to discuss the prospects of a Soviet-Turkish security arrangement in face of the new regional environment created after the outbreak of the Second World War. Turkey, during the time in question, had already negotiated with the British and French the terms of a Triple Assistance Agreement which would provide security cooperation between the three powers in case of security threats arising in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean regions. Soviet

Union on the other hand had signed a Non-Aggression Treaty with Nazi Germany on August 23, 1939. Having secured British and French cooperation, the aim of the Turkish leadership was to do the same with the Soviet Union concerning threats coming from the Black Sea. Most importantly, Turkish policymakers aimed to reconcile their obligations under the Triple Alliance with those under a potential security arrangement with Soviet Union. It would be quite a difficult balancing game. The proof to this came during Saraçoğlu's visit to Moscow, also referred to as the *Moscow Talks*. If one looks at the Turkish sources concerning the developments during these talks, it seems that the Soviet Union presented Turkey with a series of demands upon the fulfillment of which depended the successful realization of a security agreement between the two countries. Moscow requested that Straits' defense be organized jointly with Turkey and that Turkish commitments under the Triple Alliance should not oblige it to assist Britain and France if the latter entered war against Russia (Burçak, 1983:80-90). To be more concrete, Stalin demanded that in case of an Anglo-French war against Russia, the Triple Alliance should be rendered invalid because one of the main pillars of the Alliance was that Turkey was to help Britain and France in case the latter enters the war against a third party. What is more, the Soviets presented Saraçoğlu with a project containing amendments that should be made to the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention governing the Straits regime. The basic Soviet proposal was that Turkey and the Soviet Union would decide together on the question of not letting warships of non-Black Sea powers pass through the Black Sea. This would be the case both in peace and war times and regardless of Turkey's belligerence or neutrality. When this proposal is compared to

the terms of the original Montreux Convention, it becomes clear that what the Soviets were demanding amounted to nothing more than a new regime and to equal Russo-Turkish rights over the Straits. (Gürün, 1991: 205)

The logic behind Soviet demands to Turkey during the Moscow meeting was that Stalin never trusted the Western powers, especially the Anglo-French bloc. This distrust was one of the reasons behind signing the pact with Nazi Germany. Likewise, Stalin wanted to make sure that in case of a future potential conflict with Britain and France, Turkey, if not aligning with the Soviets, would at least stay neutral and not help the Western war effort. This help could come through opening the Straits to Western warships and/or letting Turkish eastern territory to be used as ground for attacks on Caucasia where the most important Soviet oil reserves were found. It would be fair to argue that these were Stalin's concerns and that is why he invited Saraçoğlu to Moscow on September 25, 1939. These facts are important to mention because these were the exact same concerns that would hunt Soviet foreign policy towards Turkey in the post-war period.

Needless to say, the Soviet proposal was firmly rejected by Saraçoğlu and the main point of disagreement was over Soviet request to jointly defend the Straits. This was seen as a clear violation of Turkish territorial integrity and sovereign rights. Thus, the failure of the Moscow talks was related to the inadmissibility of Soviet demands towards Turkey. This fact was acknowledged by Prime Minister Refik Saydam in a speech delivered to the Republican Party's parliamentary group on October 17, 1939.

Saydam stated that as a result of the Soviet demands, it was not possible to reconcile between the obligations Turkey had under the Triple Alliance and the ones it would take on in face of a potential Turkish-Soviet Treaty. Likewise, the guarantees given by the Soviets to Turkey were not proportional with what they were expecting from it in terms of security. Last but not least, Saydam asserted that the requests of joint means for the defense of the Straits were clearly unacceptable. Yet, he concluded his speech by pointing out that despite these demands, the relations between the two countries would still carry on the friendly spirit.(BCA, n.d.:2)⁶

It can be asserted that russophobia in Turkish ruling circles started after the failure of the Moscow talks. The Nazis played on precisely this fear to convince Turkish ruling elite sign a Treaty of Neutrality with them on June 18, 1941. This was the explication given by US Ambassador in Turkey MacMurray in a telegram sent to State Department exactly on the day Germany attacked Soviet Union (FRUS, 1965: 870-872)⁷ MacMurray substantiated his claim from the attitude of Turkish authorities towards the Soviet Union. He mentioned discussions he had had with Menemencioğlu, Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Office. The latter put it rather explicitly that the reasons behind the Treaty of Neutrality with Germany was Turkish fear from the Soviet Union and the plan to secure German's Balkan flank in view of the eminent

⁶ 30.1.0.0/42.248.6, 2.

⁷ The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States.1941. Vol. III*, 870-872. (hereinafter referred to as FRUS, with appropriate year and volume numbers).

Nazi-Soviet war. In brief, Germany from such a Treaty would derive the advantage of securing its right flank from potential Soviet incursions from the Balkans. Hitler had adopted the same strategy of playing on Soviet fear to secure Rumanian acquiescence. It is my conviction that when Turkey signed the Treaty with Germany, it might have known that the Soviet Union would be attacked very soon. Turkish leaders might have thought that Nazi invasion would relieve them of the Soviet threat. Otherwise, it is hard to conceive how Turkish leaders, well-known for their cautiousness, might enter into an alliance with the Nazis given the great concern this would create in Moscow. Indeed, four days after the Treaty was signed, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Referring back to MacMurray's telegram, he concluded his remarks by stating that "Conclusion of German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship may well mark termination of friendship which developed between Soviet and Kemalist regimes and recrudescence of historical antagonism between Turkey and Russia over control of Straits." (FRUS, 1965: 872)

2.2. The Second Act: Secret Nazi-Soviet negotiations over the Straits, 1940-1941

The Soviet Union did not fall short of putting forth demands on the Straits whenever it perceived the international situation was suitable to do so. The disclosed archives of German Foreign Office contain evidence of Soviet Union's designs over the Straits while it was secretly negotiating with the Nazi leadership the conditions for

Soviet participation in a Four Power Pact with Italy and Japan. Turkey was not aware of all these negotiations during the period in question.

The aforementioned archives contain among others the memorandum of the discussion Hitler held with Molotov in occasion of the latter's visit to Berlin on November 1940. Turkey and the Straits were a central topic of the discussion. After Molotov expressed clearly Soviet Union's interest in the Straits and in the revision of Montreux Convention, he posited that what the Soviets were really aiming at was preventing the Straits from being used for reasons inimical to Soviet interests. Molotov hinted that this could be achieved by always allowing free passage to Soviet warships through the Straits while denying this to non-Black Sea powers and assuming the responsibility to defend the Straits jointly with Turkey. This might be the guarantee "not only on paper but 'in reality' " (Sontag and Beddie, 1948: 245) Molotov was referring to. To historically substantiate his argument, he referred to the Straits as "England's historical gateway for attack on the Soviet Union." (Sontag and Beddie, 1948: 244) At this point, I have to emphasize the fact that these demands are exactly the same ones the Soviets put forth to Saracoglu when he visited Moscow on October 1939 and the same demands they would put forth to Turkey five years later after the war ended. This shows a uniformity in Soviet policy towards Turkey and at the same time shows Stalin's deep concern about the security of Soviet's southern rim. Regardless of the historical period and circumstances, this deep concern always persisted and constituted an important principle which guided Soviet's war-time and post-war policy towards Turkey.

After returning from Berlin, on Stalin's orders, Molotov informed the German Foreign Office that Soviet decision whether to join or not a Four Power Pact with Germany, Italy and Japan rested on fulfillment of certain Soviet interests. Among these, what concerns our purposes here, Molotov requested to have Bulgaria sign a security agreement with the Soviet Union, allegedly for the sake of ensuring Straits' security given Bulgaria's physical proximity to the Straits. Furthermore, Molotov requested land and naval bases in the Straits and demanded that the southern Caucasian region leading towards the Persian Gulf become Soviet sphere of influence.(Sontag and Beddie, 1948: 258-259) What these measures really aimed to accomplish was to turn Turkey into a Soviet satellite, as it would be surrounded from every side, land and sea, by Soviet military forces. It is striking to point out here that the potential of such a scenario deeply concerned the American Embassy in Turkey after the end of the war. As I am going to make clear later in the thesis during my analysis of the US Embassy's telegrams to the State Department, Soviet Union's military control of Turkey was always seen as the ultimate goal of Soviet policy. What is more, the demand for a security agreement with Bulgaria also concealed Soviet's real aim, that of military domination and control of Bulgaria. Once the Soviets would have their troops in Bulgarian territory, that would mean the end of Bulgarian independence. The post-war events bear clear evidence to this fact. Thus, the *Bulgarian analogy* frequently enlightened American policymakers and Turkish statesmen in trying to understand post-war Soviet foreign policy.

Throughout the period of the *Nazi-Soviet entente*, Moscow was suspicious of a potential attack coming from the Black Sea. This shows in reality how less importance and value Stalin attached to the Pact with Nazi Germany. Thus, the Straits as the only waterway in and of the Black Sea would have to be secure from the Soviet point of view. Geographically, Bulgaria constituted the hinterland to the Turkish Straits and hence it was strategically very important for the Soviet Union. Throughout the pre-Nazi invasion period, there were instances when the Soviets approached Bulgarians with pre-defined plans concerning the Straits. This can be inferred from a conversation Menemencioğlu, the Secretary General of Turkish Foreign Office, had with US Ambassador MacMurray on February 20, 1941. He offered the latter an explication relating to the Turkish-Bulgarian Non-Aggression Treaty signed the previous day. Menemencioğlu asserted the concern created in Turkish policy circles from the visit of the Secretary General of Soviet Foreign Office, Sobolev, in Sofia on November 1940. The Turkish government had received information that the purpose of Sobolev's visit was proposing the Bulgarians an allegedly anti-Turkish mutual assistance agreement. Menemencioğlu further mentioned assertions that Soviet Union had also put forward giving Bulgarians part of Turkish Thrace in return for their collaboration. (FRUS, 1965: 821)⁸ Thus, to prevent even the slightest potential threat coming from the north-east, the Turkish policy-makers decided to secure the Bulgarian border.

⁸ The Ambassador in Turkey (MacMurray) to the Secretary of State. 21.02.1941. *FRUS, 1941. Vol. III.*

2.3. Allied Pressure on Turkey and the hidden threat to the Straits

Before proceeding to the post-war Soviet demands on the Straits, a last war-time episode which deserves attention is the Allies' efforts in the aftermath of Tehran Conference to make Turkey join the war. This is a critical component of this thesis because Turkish sources clearly show that the Allies might have had ulterior motives behind their insistence on Turkish participation in the war. In other words, the pressures applied to Turkey might not have been only for military interests related to the war operations against the Nazis.

To start with, during the Tehran Conference proceedings, in the second plenary meeting on November 29, 1943, while discussing the question of Turkey's entry into the war and the advantage this could afford to Allied military operations in the Balkans, Churchill pointed out that a Turkish decline to accept the three great powers' invitation to join the war could produce grave political and territorial repercussions for Turkey especially concerning the Straits' issue.(FRUS, 1965: 536)⁹

More importantly, after attending the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow (October 19-November 2, 1943), Anthony Eden requested to meet Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Menemencioglu, in Cairo. A series of meetings followed

⁹ FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943.

between the two from November 5-8, 1943. Eden's mission was to try to convince his Turkish counterpart of the utility that Turkey's entry into the war would have on the Allies' war efforts. Eden was supported in his mission by the British Chief of Staff, General Ismay. Menemencioğlu faced the frequently used arguments that if Turkey joined the Allies's war efforts, this would relieve the Soviets of a considerable number of German military divisions which would be obliged to move to the Balkans' war theater; Turkish territory could be used as a base for military operations from where Rumanian oilfields would be bombed and the Straits would be used to help the Soviet war cause.(Gürün, 1983: 103) Yet, Menemencioglu seriously doubted these were the real aims behind Allies' invitation to join the war. He expressed to Eden his government's firm conviction that if Turkey joined the war, the British would face the most damage out of this. Turkey's joining the war would be tantamount to a German assault on Turkey.(Gürün, 1983: 103) Out of this reason and given the fact that the British knew perfectly well the Turkish army was not on the level to confront a German invasion, Menemencioğlu questioned British insistence that Turkey join the war. As far as he was concerned, the British were doing this only to please the Russians because what benefit could the British have if Istanbul, Bosphorus and its hinterland fell in German hands. The last part of their discussion shows the actual reason behind Turkish policymakers' cautiousness in not wanting to join the war. Menemencioğlu concluded by asking Eden two questions in a most ironic manner. He inquired whether in case of an aforementioned scenario, "Will we (the Turks) hope that the Russians will come,

beat the Germans and save Istanbul? If that is the case, is it for my own sake that the Russians will save Istanbul?’’(Gürün, 1983: 104)

The concerns that Menemencioglu voiced to Eden during their Cairo meeting found their parallels also in the post-war foreign press. *Le Droit* newspaper in Ottawa published an article on the Straits Question on October 24, 1946, which was sent to the Turkish Foreign Ministry from the Turkish Embassy in Ottawa. The article, originally in French, dealt with the Allies’ pressures over Turkey to enter the war on their side. It posited that during the Tehran Conference the three great powers had divided among them the zones of influence which they were supposed to cleanse of the Nazi invaders. The articles maintained that Turkey together with the Central-Eastern European countries fell under Soviet influence zone. It refers to Turkey as “key to the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East.” (BCA, n.d.: 2)¹⁰ The article continued by asserting that this delineation of the influence zones was secret and in reality concealed ulterior political goals of the great powers. The main argument of the article was that if Turkey had submitted to Allies’ pressures and joined the war, the Soviet army would have entered its territory under the pretext of “dénazification” campaign and at the end Turkey, similar to its Central-Eastern European counterparts, would have lost its political independence. In other words, “Turkey would have been a second Yugoslavia.”(BCA, n.d.: 2) As far as the Straits Question is concerned, if Turkey had

¹⁰ 30.10.0.0/63.426.20, (La Question des Dardanelles).

joined the war, there would have been no such question at all because the Straits would have been under Soviet authority. In conclusion, the article (BCA, n.d.: 3) remarked that

Ankara's prudence and sagacity saved the Allies from a costly mistake. No one can deny this now. London and Washington must be the first to be pleased that Turkey resisted to their pressures.

2.4. The Third Act: Soviet *war of nerves* against Turkey, 1945-1946

After the end of the Second World War, under a sense of euphoria, the Soviet Union began to establish its hegemony in many countries which it perceived to be inside its security belt. Soviet successes in military control over these countries depended on two main factors. While the Red Army's presence in these countries' territories was a crucial factor, the lack of resistance on the part of the British and Americans was likewise an important factor. In other words, countries which during World War II had experienced red army boots in their territory and which had witnessed Western 'green light' to the Soviets all became Soviet satellites. Yet, the situation with Turkey was not the same. The aforementioned two factors did not hold in the case of Turkey. First of all, the Red Army troops had not invaded Turkish territory during World War II and secondly, perhaps most important of all, the protection of Turkey was of vital importance to the Western powers in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East security framework. This meant that the path would not be clear as was the case with Central-

Eastern European countries. Thus, another strategy was needed for the Soviet Union. What it designed to do was confront Turkey with a series of demands, attempted border troop mobilizations and propaganda warfare. (Bilge, 1992: 265) These attempts are all part of what is called Soviet Union's *war of nerves* against Turkey.

This *war of nerves* began on March 19, 1945 when Molotov handed a note to Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, Selim Sarper, for deliver to the Turkish government. In the note, Molotov put forth Soviet Union's proposal of abrogating the December 1925 Soviet- Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality. The reason behind the request was that the aforementioned Treaty fell short of reflecting the new regional and international setting created after the end of Second World War. (FRUS, 1965: 1219-1220)¹¹

News of the termination of the 1925 Treaty with Russia was not received as a surprise in Ankara. Turkish statesmen were more than aware that Soviet Union was not satisfied at all with the political conditions of the time. They had received an *early warning* since Saraçoğlu's visit to Moscow in September-October 1939 and had learned of secret Russo-German arrangements behind their back during Molotov's visit to Berlin in November 1940. Turkish statesmen were also aware that the Soviets were only waiting for the correct time to raise up the question of their general dissatisfaction towards Turkey. Turkish policymakers reacted peacefully but with firmness in face of

¹¹ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State. 21.03.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol.VIII*, 1219-1220.

the news of the abolishment of 1925 Treaty. For instance, Foreign Minister Hasan Saka while expressing Turkey's desire to have good relations with the Soviets, made also clear that his country would not allow something similar to Bulgaria and Romania happen to it. For the sake of that, Turkey could even resort to arms (Bilge, 1992: 267) A very similar view was put forth by President İnönü who asserted that Turks would fight with all their means in case of a Soviet assault and it would be rather difficult to confront the Turks.(Toker, 1971: 22)

Similar to Turkish policymakers, US Ambassador in Ankara, Lawrence Steinhardt, also did not get surprised from the news of the abolishment of the 1925 Treaty. He sent a telegram to the State Department in which he analyzed the facts surrounding Molotov's note to Turkish Ambassador. He maintained that the note's contents should not be seen as unexpected. The Soviets have always had clear security interests in Turkey. That is why they did not like the October 1939 Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Yet, the war needs and the concern to secure the Straits and the Caucasus from the Nazi threat made the Soviets to temporarily overlook the 1939 Treaty. What is crucial is that Steinhardt viewed that victory in World War II gave Soviet Union the opportunity "to embark on its delayed program of seeking to make it clear to the British that the Soviet Union regards Turkey in much the same light as it does Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria."'(FRUS, 1965: 1225-1226)¹²

¹² The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State. 26.03.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol.VIII.*

Soviet Union's post-war demands towards Turkey concerning the Straits were raised officially for the first time on June 7, 1945 when Molotov met with Turkish Ambassador in Moscow Selim Sarper. This was the first time high officials from both countries directly discussed these demands. The record of their conversation is found in the official publication of Turkish Foreign Ministry. After having unilaterally annulled the 1925 Treaty of Friendship with Turkey on March 1945, Molotov this time presented Sarper with some conditions upon the fulfillment of which depended the successful realization of a new treaty between the two countries. The Turkish sources concur on this fact. On behalf of Soviet government, Molotov requested the revision of the 1936 Montreux Convention governing the Straits regime and demanded land and naval bases in the Straits for the Soviet Union. (Gürün, 1983: 144-146) Ensuring the security of Soviet Union's southern rim was put forward as the reason behind the last request.

In his book on Turkish-Soviet relations, Suat Bilge (1992: 273-274), a former Turkish diplomat and Minister of Justice, points out that the demands on the Straits can be assessed as unrealistic. This is because the Soviets did not trust Turkey, despite the latter's guarantees that the Straits would be properly guarded so that Soviet security would also be properly ensured. Forging an alliance between the two countries did not seem very likely in such an environment of distrust. Turkish government's stance was immediately made clear in a telegraph Turkish Foreign Ministry sent to Sarper after the latter's meeting with Molotov on June 7, 1945. In it, the Turkish government asserted that they would never consider territorial or base concessions to the Soviets and that any

amendment to the 1936 Montreux Convention would have to be done on an international basis.(Gürün, 1983:147) After this, there was not the slightest change in Turkish government's stance on these issues. The same views were to be reiterated again and again until Turkish reply to the second Soviet note on September 1946.

The Soviet Union raised its demands on the Straits from a bilateral basis to a multilateral one during the July 1945 Potsdam Conference. The official decision pertaining to the question of the Turkish Straits that was adopted at Potsdam pointed to the need to amend the Montreux Convention in order to fit to the new post-war setting and each party (Britain, Soviet Union and U.S.) would discuss its own proposals on the issue separately with Turkey.(FRUS, 1965: 1236-1237)¹³

On September 25, 1945, US Secretary of State James Byrnes received an important telegram from Wilson in which the latter tried to reach some conclusion about the real aim behind Soviet claims to the Straits. Wilson asserted that the Soviet claims were not an end in itself. They were only used to conceal the real Soviet aim, that of dominating Turkey and seeing a different regime in power there, which would be "friendly" to Soviet interests. (FRUS, 1965: 1248-1249)¹⁴ US chargé in Moscow,

¹³ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson). 09.08.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol.VIII.*

¹⁴ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 25.09. 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

George Kennan, totally concurred with Wilson's analysis in a telegram he dispatched to Byrnes two days after Wilson's. (FRUS, 1965: 1251)¹⁵

What is striking about Wilson's telegram is the fact that Wilson viewed the termination of Turkish-British alliance as the gravest consequence of a potential regime change in Ankara. This is probably because Wilson perceived the Turkish-British (Turkish-Western) alliance as the main obstacle to Soviet penetration in the Middle East. Wilson's telegram implies that realization of Soviet aims in Turkey would threaten U.S. interests in the Near and Middle East as it was quite clear during that time that British influence in the region was coming to an end and U.S. had to step in if Western interests were to be preserved.

In the meantime, there were rumors that the Soviets were engaging in military maneuvers in the areas bordering Turkey as part of their psychological warfare against the Turkish government. In this respect, US Ambassador in Turkey in a telegram sent on October 1945 informed the Secretary of State Byrnes about the discussion US military attaché in Ankara, Joseph Harriman, had had with the Chief of Turkish Military intelligence. The latter affirmed the information that in a time span of two weeks, there were up to forty Soviet divisions in Rumania and Bulgaria. Given the urgency of the situation, the Turkish General Staff held a meeting with the British military, naval and

¹⁵ The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. 27.09.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

air attachés to discuss British military assistance to Turkey in face of a potential Soviet attack.(FRUS, 1965: 1260-1261)¹⁶ It has to be mentioned here that Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and non-Aggression was signed on December 17, 1925 and was valid until November 7, 1945. As the Soviet troop movements in the Balkans coincided with the approaching of Treaty's expiry date, this gave further cause for concern to Turkey. While mentioning in his telegram how nervous Turkish ruling circles were given the recent Soviet troop movements, Wilson (FRUS, 1965: 1261)¹⁷ gave more credence to the idea that these were more a part of the *war of nerves* Soviet Union was waging towards Turkey rather than actual preparations for an assault. Other sources also make mention of the maneuvers of Soviet military forces. *Image du Monde* newspaper in Paris in an article claimed that Soviet Union had concentrated military forces in the Black Sea coastal city of Odessa, in the Iranian border and also claimed that the red army "occupied a position in Bulgaria which permitted it to exercise military pressure on European part of Turkey."(BCA, n.d.: 6)¹⁸ Yet, these facts need to be taken cautiously and their authenticity needs to be checked.

¹⁶ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 27.10. 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

¹⁷ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 27.10. 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

¹⁸ 30.10.0.0/63.426.19.

2.5. US Stance towards Soviet Demands

As aforementioned, pursuant to the Potsdam decision concerning the revision of Montreux Convention, US submitted their proposal to the Turkish government. U.S. proposal related that the commercial ships of all nations should always be allowed to pass through the Straits; the warships of Black Sea countries should always be allowed to pass through the Straits; warships of non-Black Sea countries should always be denied passing through the Straits, unless all Black Sea countries concur otherwise; UN should take the place of the League of Nations as the international organization providing governance while Japan shall not figure out any more as a signatory of the 1936 Convention. These proposals were sent to Wilson in a telegram from the State Department on October 30, 1945 and subsequently Wilson submitted them to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 2, 1945. (FRUS, 1965: 1243-1245)¹⁹Subsequently, he informed the Department of State of the conversation he had had with his Soviet counterpart, Vinogradov, on the US proposals on the Straits regime submitted to the Turkish government. The latter took issue with the third part of the proposal which recommended that warships of non-Black Sea countries shall always be denied passing through the Straits, unless all Black Sea countries concur otherwise.

¹⁹ Proposals of the United States for Changes in the Montreux Convention of 1936. 3.09.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol.VIII.*

Despite Wilson's assurances that Turkey, upon acceptance of this proposal, would take on the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of such a principle, Vinogradov repeated the Soviet claim that Turkey was a weak power and could not be relied on to fulfill the obligation. Thus, Vinogradov reiterated, the only viable option which ensured Soviet security was being granted bases in the Straits. Wilson described his counterpart's attitude during the discussion as full of "bitterness" and "hostility" and concluded that "his attitude tends to confirm view that Straits question as raised by USSR is façade behind which stands Soviet objective to control Turkey." (FRUS, 1965: 1271-1273)²⁰ Concerning Turkish government's stance on U.S. proposal, Secretary General of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cemal Feridun Erkin affirmed that the proposal was in principle satisfactory to Turkey with the condition that specific details would be discussed when a conference on the Straits might be convened. (FRUS, 1965: 1275)²¹

Nevertheless, the Turkish government's satisfaction with the US proposal lays somewhere else. By submitting a proposal, US left understanding that it was interested on the Straits question and would try to propose solutions to the question that didn't violate Turkish territorial integrity. US proposal fell short of mentioning any scenario of giving Soviets bases on the Turkish Straits. As Wilson made clear in the aforementioned

²⁰ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 03.11.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

²¹ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 12.11.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

discussion with Vinogradov, Turkey would be the country to ensure Straits' security and to ensure that no threat came to the Black Sea countries through the Straits. It is precisely for this reason that Vinogradov showed hostility to the proposal. This is the point that most interested Turkey as it now understood it would not stand alone in face of Soviet demands. In a nutshell, the November 1945 US proposal on the Straits implied that any potential amendment of the 1936 Montreux Convention would have to be done in a way so as to respect Turkish territorial integrity. The Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, Loy Henderson, expressed this point clearly to Wilson in a message to the latter on December 29, 1945. Henderson pointed out that his Department has never considered any proposal which would violate Turkish sovereignty in the Straits. (FRUS, 1965: 1289)²²

It is worth noting that during 1946 the Soviet rhetoric towards the Straits question did not change. Whenever there was any discussion between representatives of Foreign Ministries of Turkey, Britain and US on the one side and Soviet Union on the other, Soviet rhetoric was always the same. The instrument always employed by the Soviets was that Turkey was not a strong enough power to be the guardian of the Straits and ensure Soviet Union's security in its southern rim. Thus, the best means of security

²² The Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson). 29.12.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII*.

was for the Soviets being granted bases in the Straits and/or joint administration for the defense of the Straits. (FRUS, 1965: 815-817)²³

Wilson played a major role in the final hostile attitude the US adopted towards the Soviet demands from Turkey. An analysis of his daily dispatches to the State Department during the period when the Turkish crisis unfolded reveals a careful selection and combination of words to give the image that Soviet's was an expansionist plan aimed to dominate Turkey. In other words, his telegrams were quite heavily worded, leaving no doubt about the aggressive Soviet designs. Wilson's specific style of reporting is most evident in a secret telegram he sent to Byrnes on March 18, 1946, affirming Soviet military preparations in Bulgaria and Rumania. He concluded by asserting that "Soviet objective regarding Turkey as I have reported to Dept is to break present Turkish Government, install "friendly" government, resulting in closing Turkish gap in Soviet security belt from Baltic to Black Sea, giving USSR physical control of Straits and putting end to Western influence in Turkey. In short, domination of Turkey.'" (FRUS, 1965: 818-819)²⁴ Being ambassador in Turkey, Wilson was of the few US officials who most closely followed the developments in the Soviet-Turkish relations and as such his reports were to be accepted as an authoritative source. One can

²³ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 13.02.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

²⁴ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 18.03.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

infer out of this that words like ‘break’, ‘install’, physical control’, ‘domination’ were sure to transmit to the State Department the message that they were facing an expansionist power threatening US vital interests in the Near and Middle East.

Wilson’s authoritative voice in affecting US policy towards the Soviet Union becomes clear in another secret telegram sent to the State Department five days after the aforementioned telegram. In the telegram, Wilson takes issue with a foreign policy and information statement Byrnes wrote on Turkey. Wilson rejected Byrnes’ view that the question of the Straits was the most important question as pertaining to Soviet-Turkish relations. He reiterated his view that the Straits question was used only to conceal Soviet’s real goal towards Turkey, that is domination of Turkey. According to Wilson, the Soviets were not aiming for a revision of the 1936 Montreux Convention. The evidence which substantiates this fact is that they had rejected the US proposal of November 2, 1945 for amending the Straits Convention. The proposal had clearly stated that the Straits shall always be opened to warships of Black Sea riparian powers. If the Soviet were really interested in revising the Convention, they would have accepted the US proposal. Yet, their rejection and the fact that they saw only being granted bases in the Straits as the real guarantee made Wilson press on his view that what really mattered to Soviet Union was to dominate Turkey like it did with the Central and Eastern European countries. (FRUS, 1965: 820-822)²⁵

²⁵ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 23.03.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VII.*

Wilson's view was also supported by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. In a top secret memorandum sent to the US Secretary of War, Robert Patterson, and Secretary of Navy, James Forrestal, they assessed the military significance of Turkey and the Straits. Although not stated explicitly, the memo adopted the view (expressed by Ambassador Wilson many times) that Soviet request for base in the Straits was put forward to conceal the real Soviet aim of military control of Turkey. The memo justified this by asserting that bases in the Straits were no longer sufficient to ensure complete security given the changes in military warfare that had happened during World War II years (the development of airpower is referred at here). If the Soviets were granted a base in the Straits and once they had their troops stationed there, they could later achieve military control of mainland Turkey. That is why the Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained that "the Soviets have a tremendous capability to reinforce in days or hours a bridgehead within the country." (FRUS, 1965: 857)²⁶

Here, it is useful to bear in mind the East-Central European countries. During the war, the Red Army entered into the territories of these countries allegedly as liberators, freedom fighters against Nazi barbarism. Yet, this was only short-term wishful thinking. After the war's end, Stalin's real goals came to the fore. The Red Army did not withdraw, instead it assumed its real duty of turning these countries into Soviet satellites. That is also why the Turkish leadership was so cautious in the question

²⁶ Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of War (Patterson) and the Secretary of the Navy (Forrestal). 23.08.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII*.

of not declaring war to the Axis powers despite strong Allied pressure. It was feared that in case of a German invasion, the Red Army would enter Turkish territory to allegedly drive out the Nazi invaders. Once the Soviets were in, Turkish leaders feared something similar to East-Central European countries could happen. It has to be recalled that this is precisely the concern Turkish Foreign Minister Menemencioglu conveyed to Anthony Eden in Cairo, when the latter tried to persuade Turkey on behalf of the Allies to declare war on Germany. The same logic applied to the memorandum prepared by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. In conclusion, it was recommended that Turkey be allowed to buy from the US different kind of military equipments to reinforce its defense capabilities given that “Strategically Turkey is the most important military factor in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.” (FRUS, 1965:857)

On April 1946, the Americans showed first signs of the firm stance against Soviet policies in the Near East by sending their battleship *USS Missouri* to the Turkish Straits. Even though officially it was claimed that the purpose of the visit was to return the dead body of the former Turkish Ambassador in Washington Munir Ertegün, it was obvious that the *USS Missouri* presence in Turkish waters was sure to deliver a clear signal to Soviet Union. The fact that US administration decided to send a battleship instead of another kind of ship might imply that US wanted the Soviets to know that their hostile policy towards Turkey, if continued, would be met necessarily even by military force.

Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu took advantage of the visit of *USS Missouri* to reiterate once more their profound happiness because of US support to the Turkish cause. In a speech in front of American journalists on board of *USS Missouri*, he praised the Americans by calling them “the youngest and most vigorous sons of the old world on which we live, carrying the proud banners of humanity, justice, freedom and civilization.” (BCA, n.d.: 3)²⁷Saraçoğlu ensured that the Turks would always be on their side to support that great cause.

During this speech, it is striking to witness that Saraçoğlu gave a completely different version of Turkish stance during WW II years in front of American journalists. While in previous cases, he and other top Turkish policymakers had emphasized Turkish neutrality during the war and more than that, took great pride in Turkey’s successfully preserving this neutrality, Saraçoğlu in this case pointed out that Turkey since the start of the war had taken the side of Allied war cause and had done everything to stand firm against the Nazis. Hence, he affirmed Turkish role in the great war fought for humanity, implicitly referring to the Nazis as barbarians. (BCA, n.d.: 3) There is no other explanation to this change of rhetoric apart from Turkish goal of ensuring American support in face of the Soviet threat. Giving the image that Turkey had always been on the Allied side fighting for freedom and democracy, Turkish statesmen wanted once more to ensure their place in the Western coalition fighting for freedom and democracy, this time against the *red threat*. The message thus was clear.

²⁷30.1.0/11.65.2.

2.6. The Final Act: Two Soviet Diplomatic Notes on the Straits

In accordance with the decision adopted at Potsdam Conference, each of the three great powers concurred on separately informing Turkey about their specific proposals for the amendment of the 1936 Montreux Straits Convention. As aforementioned, US submitted their proposal on November 1945, a proposal which satisfied Turkey in general lines but got rejected by the Soviet Union. The British proposal, also submitted on November 1945, with some minor changes was almost identical to the US one. The Soviet Union submitted its proposal nearly one year after the decision adopted at Potsdam, on August 7, 1946, also known as first Soviet diplomatic note to Turkey.(FRUS, 1965: 827-829)²⁸ Before outlining the five points of the proposal, the Soviet note mentioned a series of incidents throughout World War II years in which Nazi and Italian warships and disguised merchant ships had used the Straits to enter and exit the Black Sea in their military operations against the Allied powers. As such, the note implicitly accused the Turkish government of not properly

²⁸ The Soviet Chargé (Orekhov) to the Acting Secretary of State. 07.08.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

fulfilling its responsibility of guarding the Straits. Coming to the changes proposed by the Soviet side, the note's first three proposed amendments were identically the same with the ones in the American note. The fourth and especially the last proposal were quite problematic from the Turkish point of view. That being said, the Soviet government proposed that only Turkey and the other Black Sea littoral states should have the authority to establish the Straits regime. Most importantly, the Soviet side maintained that in order to secure the Straits from being used against the Black Sea states, the Soviet Union and Turkey "shall organize joint means of defense of the Straits." (FRUS, 1965: 829) Put in more simple terms, in the last proposal, the Soviet Union demanded from Turkey what it had been demanding since the start of the *war of nerves* between the two countries on March 1945, joint control and defense of the Straits.

The Soviet note was reviewed in a memorandum prepared by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Jones. He underlined that the last two Soviet proposals were not in line with US policy as the Soviet Union wanted to revise the Straits convention outside the UN framework, including only the Black Sea powers. (FRUS, 1965: 843-844)²⁹ At this point, I have to add that when mentioning Black Sea powers, what is meant is in reality only Turkey and Soviet Union because Bulgaria and Rumania were already Soviet 'satellites' at the time in question. Jones further

²⁹ Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Jones) to the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson). 09.08. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII*, 830-833. See also The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson). 16.08.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII*.

emphasized that Soviet allegations whereby Turkey had fallen short of fulfilling its responsibility in guarding the Straits were groundless. He pointed out that Turkey had observed its neutrality and its duties under the Montreux Convention during World War II years. (FRUS, 1965: 832)³⁰ In brief, US response to the Soviet note was that US still stood by the proposal submitted to Turkey on November 1945. Hence, it implied US would reject any proposal falling outside its policy line.

In a top secret telegram dated August 15, 1946, Dean Acheson, US Acting Secretary of State, informed Byrnes of a memorandum US Navy and War Departments had prepared pertaining to Soviet-Turkish relations, memo which had been approved by president Truman. The assessment found in the memorandum was the same as Wilson's evaluation of Soviet-Turkish relations. Its main point was that the goal that principally drove Soviet policy was "to obtain control of Turkey." (FRUS, 1965: 840)³¹ It was highlighted that should the Soviets bring their armed forces in Turkish territory, that would mean end of Turkish independence and end of the Western influence in Turkey. At that point, the path was clear for Soviet domination in the whole Near and Middle East region. A point worth mentioning about this telegram is that it articulated for the first time the fact that protection of Turkey was in the US' "vital interests." (841) The US policymakers who prepared the memo were convinced that it was very difficult to

³⁰ Memorandum by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Jones) to the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson). 09.08. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII*.

³¹ The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris. 15.08.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII*, 840.

persuade the Soviets to step back on their demands by using “skillful argument or the appeal to reason.” (841) The Soviets would understand only the language of force, in other words, they would step back only if they realized that their demands were going to be met with the force of arms.

That is precisely what happened. It was the firm US position that backed Turkey in the face of Soviet demands which made the latter renounce their claims. This is also the view adopted in this thesis. If Turkey had stood alone in face of these demands, most probably the Soviets would have used force to back up their demands, in the same way as they did in Eastern and Central European countries. In East-Central Europe, US did not object to the Soviet actions there and the result was a communist East-Central Europe. In Turkey, matters stood different. Turkey’s key geostrategic position won it unequivocal US support against the Soviets. The subsequent Truman Doctrine, Turkey’s inclusion in the Marshall Plan and most importantly Turkey’s entry into NATO on February 1952 are clear evidences of Turkey’s importance in US geopolitical designs in the Near and Middle Eastern region.

The US administration replied to the Soviet note on Turkey on August 19, 1946. It informed the Soviet government that the first three principles of its proposal were basically the same as the ones outlined in the November 1945 US note to Turkey. Yet, the fourth and the fifth Soviet principles could not be accepted from the US. The US reply emphasized that the fourth principle in reality meant a completely new regime of the Straits, not the amendment of the present one, as agreed upon in Potsdam. What is

more, the US insisted that the revision of the Montreux Convention should be done under the aegis of the UN, including non-Black Sea states. The Straits question should be dealt with in an international rather than a regional basis. The US government did not also accept that the Straits defense should be organized jointly by the Soviet Union and Turkey. It was made clear to the Soviets US' firmness in its view that "Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits." (FRUS, 1965: 847-848)³² The British reply came two days after the US one and, as expected, had the same content as the US note. (FRUS, 1965: 850-851)³³ Turkish reply in itself was also similar to the US note. (FRUS, 1965: 852-855)³⁴ Here one can notice a convergence of Turkish, US and British policies in their attitudes towards the Soviet Union. This was not only the case in the Turkish question. The Iranian and Polish crises also witnessed polarized views. On the one hand, there were US and British views which, maybe with slight insignificant variations, were the same. On the other hand, the Soviet Union stood alone. It was clear beyond any doubt the uneasiness in Soviet relations with the West. The war-time alliance and collaboration was gradually dissolving.

³² The Acting Secretary of State to the Soviet Chargé (Orekhov). 19.08. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VII.*

³³ For the content of the British note see The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Bevin) to the Soviet chargé in the United Kingdom. 21.08.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VI.*

³⁴ For the Turkish reply on August 22, 1946. See The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 22.09.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VII.*

On September 24, 1946, Soviet Union sent its second note to Turkey pertaining to the Straits question. After acknowledging Turkey's acceptance of the first three principles of the previous Soviet note as a basis for discussion, the Soviet Government maintained that the rejection of the last two points was groundless. Regarding Turkey's stance that the Straits represented a matter of international importance and as such necessitated the new regime to be under the competence of both Black Sea and non-Black Sea powers, the Soviet side gave a rather geographic and historical justification to its claim. It maintained that physically the Straits were a closed waterway, unlike Gibraltar or the Suez Canal. As such, there were only a limited number of riparian powers who reasonably must also have the exclusive authority to establish the regime governing the Straits. (FRUS, 1965: 863)³⁵ What is more, the Soviet Government posited that Turkey itself had previously concurred to this claim. To be more specific, in the Moscow Treaty of March 16, 1921 and Kars Treaty of October 13, 1921, Turkey had agreed at holding a conference of Black Sea riparian states in order to regulate passage through the Straits and define the Black Sea and Straits' international statute. Hence, Turkish rejection of Soviet proposal's fourth point could not be substantiated on historical grounds. (864)

Secondly, the Soviet Government maintained that Turkey had not fully understood its fifth proposal of joint defense of the Straits. According to the Soviet side, this point "should not prejudice the sovereignty of Turkey." (865) Most importantly, a

³⁵ The Chargé in Turkey (Bursley) to the Secretary of State. 26.09. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

joint defense of the Straits would mean more security not only for the Black Sea states but also for Turkey itself. More security is provided by two states' efforts rather than one.

The US stance on the second Soviet note did not change. Views that had been expressed on the previous note (August 1946) were reiterated. Yet, this time the US government ended the note in a most sarcastic manner. Dean Acheson (FRUS, 1965: 875)³⁶, speaking on behalf of US government, stated in the note:

My Govt also feels that it would be lacking in frankness if it should fail to point out again at this time, in the most friendly spirit, that in its opinion the Govt of Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits and that should the Straits become the object of attack or threat of attack by an aggressor, the resulting situation would be a matter for action on the part of the Security Council of the United Nations.

On October 18, 1946 the Turkish government replied with a very long letter to the second Soviet note of September 24, 1946. The original of this letter of twenty eights pages in Turkish is found in the Prime Ministerial Archives. In its reply, Turkey still refuted the fourth point of Soviet proposal. It was made clear that the Soviet Union's geographical justification for the establishment of the Straits regime was not compatible with the principles of public international law. Legally, Montreux was an international convention which conferred certain obligation upon the contracting parties. One of these obligations was the duty whereby, if needed, the contracting parties could amend the Convention's provisions only through an international conference and

³⁶The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith). 08.10.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VII*, 875.

through a specific procedure pointed out in the convention itself. Thus, the fact that the Straits were physically a closed waterway should not prejudice the internationally recognized legal principles of the Convention. (BCA, n.d.: 11-13)³⁷

In refuting the other Soviet claim that Turkey had previously accepted to assign the definition of the Straits' international statute to a conference composed of only Black Sea riparian states, the Turkish government (BCA, n.d.: 17-18) still maintained a strict legal line. While accepting that this had been the case during the March 1921 Moscow Treaty, Turkey asserted that this practice had been superseded by the ones during the Lausanne and Montreux Conferences, which were clearly international in nature. Hence, from a legal point of view, when a practice is replaced by another one, in total conformity with the regulations of international law, the former loses its legal validity. In other words, the Lausanne and Montreux Conferences made void whatever Turkey legally agreed to do under the terms of the 1921 Moscow Treaty.

Coming to the fifth point of Soviet proposal, the Turkish note pointed out that it had been first raised during the October 1939 Saraçoğlu's visit to Moscow to be subsequently taken up in June 1945 during the Molotov-Sarper talks. The issue of the joint defense of the Straits was not even opened to discussion by the Turkish government in its note. It merely sufficed to reiterate its firm belief that such a proposal would undoubtedly constitute a violation of Turkish sovereignty, the most fundamental

³⁷ 30.1.0.0/60.368.8.

right of a nation and that the closure of passage through the Straits to the warships of non-littoral states was in itself a sufficient guarantee for Soviet security. Yet, the note underlined, if the Soviets deemed otherwise, resorting to the United Nations was always there as an international guarantee against aggression. It is striking to highlight at this point that the Turkish government referred to UN as “the most perfect solution which mankind has yet found to repel aggression.” (FRUS, 1965: 890)³⁸ Apart from that, joint defense of the Straits was out of question. (BCA, n.d.: 19-22)³⁹ In conclusion, to put an end to the matter, The Turkish government expressed its view that the procedures pointed out during the Potsdam Conference were already fulfilled. In other words, pursuant to the decisions at Potsdam, all three contacting parties (Britain, Soviet Union and US) had separately informed the Turkish government of their respective views on how to amend the Montreux Convention. Turkey believed the time was ripe enough for starting the procedures of amending the Convention in line with respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. (BCA, n.d.: 26-27) Ambassador Wilson, informing the State Department of the Turkish reply, defined the note as “first class job, non-provocative, well-reasoned and convincing.” (FRUS, 1965: 878)⁴⁰

³⁸ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 19.10. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

³⁹ 30.1.0.0/60.368.8.

⁴⁰ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 15.10. 1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII.*

In a reportage given to the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper on November 30, 1946, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Peker touched upon the Straits question and the two Soviet notes of August and September 1946. He maintained that the views expressed by the Soviets in these notes were in clear contradiction with Turkey's sovereign rights. If there was going to be any amendment to the 1936 Montreux Convention, it had to be done within the framework previously established by the Convention and in line with Turkish territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Among others, Peker acknowledged that every state might have certain aims it wanted to fulfill, yet these aims were disregarded if they fell short of respecting other countries' basic rights. He concluded by reiterating the view expressed in the Turkish replies to the Soviet notes that the UN guarantees should be enough to ensure the Soviets of the security of their Black Sea shores. (BCA, n.d.: 2)⁴¹

The Soviet note on the Straits of September 1946 might be viewed as the last official turn of the *Turkish crisis*. After this date, Soviet demands towards Turkey were not discussed any more on an official level. Yet, this crisis was still going on behind the scenes. The Prime Ministerial Archives contain evidence that the Soviets did not cease anti-Turkish propaganda even in 1947. In a secret telegram sent from the Turkish Embassy in Bern, Switzerland to the Turkish Chief of Staff on March 25, 1947, it was pointed out the fact that the Soviet Republics had become object of Soviet propaganda

⁴¹ 30.1.0.0/11.67.3.

whereby the Straits were a matter of prestige for the Soviets and thus they would never step down on their demands towards Turkey.(BCA, n.d.: 1)⁴²

2.7. Concluding Remarks

This chapter sought to provide a thorough account of Soviet demands and unfolding of the *Turkish crisis* on the Straits. In order to understand the post-war flow of events, it was indispensable to refer back to the war-time developments because, as I made evident throughout the thesis, Soviet policy towards the Straits showed a great degree of uniformity. The demands that Saraçoğlu was confronted with in Moscow on October 1939 would repeat themselves again in the 1940 secret Nazi-Soviet negotiations and during the post-war Soviet *war of nerves* against Turkey. Yet, all these tactics did not pay off. After Stalin's death on March 1953, Soviet leadership withdrew all its demands on the Straits. However, the damage was already done. These demands produced results that were the complete opposite of what Soviets were intending for. This point was clearly acknowledged by Saraçoğlu when he noted the strong bond of national unity that had brought together all the Turks in face of the Soviet demands. Saraçoğlu declared himself to be surprised of the mistakes Soviets did. To be more

⁴² 30.1.0.0/111.700.3.

specific, the *war of nerves* the Soviet Union had been waging towards Turkey since March 1925 had had adverse effects. Instead of creating disunity among Turkish ranks, it had united the Turks. (FRUS, 1965: 806-807)⁴³ Most importantly, they had pushed the Turks towards the Western camp in search of support against the Soviets. This would constitute the roots of the strong bond and alliance that would develop during the Cold War between Turkey and United States of America.

⁴³ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 09.01.1946. *FRUS, 1946, Vol. VII.*

CHAPTER III

SOVIET TERRITORIAL DEMANDS IN EASTERN TURKEY

Atatürk (TBMM, 1983: 2)⁴⁴ in a speech delivered to the National Assembly one year after the signing of the March 1921 Moscow Treaty, deemed it to be the legal framework of the Turkish-Russian cooperation. Likewise, the relations between Turkey and the Caucasian Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia had been legally defined by the October 1921 Kars Treaty. Atatürk (2) considered the border delineations defined by the Kars Treaty to have solved the Armenian question in a most just way. This is why he (2) declared in this respect that “The good relations between two hard-working people, who have been living together in friendship for centuries, have been newly-founded.”

⁴⁴d.1, c.18, b.3.

Atatürk when using the term '*Armenian question*' was not referring to the historical controversy of World War II years during which Armenians maintain that 1.5 million of their brethren were massacred by the Ottoman authorities. He was referring instead to mutual claims for territory in the border between Turkey and Armenia, claims which seemed to have been settled with the signing of 1921 Moscow and Kars Treaties. Pursuant to the decisions taken in these treaties, the port city of Batumi fell under Soviet sovereignty, while the cities of Kars and Ardahan on the Turkish-Armenian border went to Turkey. Yet, starting from June 1945, Soviet authorities after putting forth their demands on the Straits, suddenly came up with a new wave of demands directly asking for the cities of Kars and Ardahan and supporting Georgian claims on a number of Turkish Black Sea coastal cities. In parallel with these requests, on December 1945 Soviet authorities launched a repatriation program for Armenians living in the diaspora. Soviet Union asked for the cities of Kars and Ardahan allegedly in order to accommodate the large number of Armenians assumed to return to their motherland. It might seem that these demands were firstly used only to back the ones on the Straits, yet later it became clear that they turned into a policy in itself affecting Soviet-Turkish relations. (Hasanlı, 2013: 124)

By making use of the archival sources in Turkish, this chapter seeks to show that the Soviet demands in the eastern territories were historically unfair and cannot be reconciled with the historical developments of the time. Given that these demands did

not reflect the historical reality, I argue that they were only a façade behind which lay the real goal of subordinating Turkey to Soviet interests.

3.1. 1921 Moscow, Kars Treaties and Soviet territorial claims

To start with, it is worth spending a few words on the 1921 Moscow and Kars Treaties. Moscow Treaty was signed on March 16, 1921 between Soviet Union's Bolshevik regime and Turkey's republican regime. The Treaty may be said to have legally established the friendly relations and close collaboration between the two regimes after the October revolution in Russia. With this Treaty, Soviet Russia and Turkey concurred on not recognizing any of the agreements done among their predecessor regimes, Tsarist Russia and Ottoman State. Soviet Union recognized Republican regime's national interests and vowed to support its independence struggle. Among other things, some border regulations were done pursuant to the Treaty's articles. (Gürün,1991: 32) Official Soviet sources themselves affirm these border regulations. For instance the Turkish press attaché in Moscow translated an excerpt from the *Small Soviet Encyclopedia* pertaining to the March 1921 Moscow Treaty and sent it to Prime Minister Saraçoğlu. Referring to only those parts which concern our purposes here, according to the *Soviet Encyclopedia* both parties of the Treaty undertook in

accordance with it not to let their territory being used for purposes inimical to the other party. This included networking or sheltering groups holding hostile aims to the other party. The Treaty also included provisions which transferred the port city of Batumi under Georgian sovereignty and returned to Turkey three cities which were part of the Kars province. (BCA, n.d.: 5-6)⁴⁵ In another document found in the Turkish archives, it is stated that Kars and Ardahan had been given by Lenin to Atatürk in return for Batumi which the Russians aimed to make the terminal point of an oil pipeline coming from Baku. (BCA, n.d.: 4)⁴⁶

Coming to the Kars Treaty which was signed on October 13, 1921, it was somehow a repetition of Moscow Treaty. (Gürün, 1991: 70-71) The only difference is that this Treaty legally established Turkey's relations with each of the Caucasian Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and these Republics individually affirmed what had been agreed at between Turkey and Soviet Union during the Moscow Treaty. Given that both these Treaties are well-established historical facts, what evidence did the Soviet authorities use to substantiate their post-war claims on Turkish eastern territories?

The Soviet perspective in the issue of territorial claims is found in the report "On Soviet-Turkish relations" prepared on August 18, 1945 by the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The second section of the report is exclusively on the issue of territorial claims against Turkey. The report underlined Soviet belief that the Moscow and Kars Treaties in

⁴⁵ 30.1.0.0/101.624.3.

⁴⁶ 30.10.0.0/63.426.19.

March and October 1921 respectively were signed in a moment of weakness for the Soviet Union and Turkey took advantage of this fact to annex Kars and Ardahan. These were considered ancestral Georgian and Armenian lands, thus were their legitimate right. What is more, the Transcaucasian people deserved these territories as they heroically fought aside the Soviet Union to rescue European civilization from the fascist barbarism. What is striking is that the report, while discussing the alleged historical injustice done to the Armenians as a result of Turkish annexation of its territories, saw this as a continuation of Turkish policy towards Armenians and linked it directly to the 1915 genocide. This report is found in the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. (Hasanlı, 2013: 126-128)

Georgia added another reason to justify the claims on Kars and Ardahan. Georgian Foreign Minister G. Kiknadze in a letter sent to Lavrentii Beria on September 4, 1945 put forward the claim that the Treaty between Turkey and the Southern Caucasian Republics of October 13, 1921 (i.e. Kars Treaty), should be considered void because Turkey had allegedly acted in violation with the articles of the Treaty by overlooking the activities of pan-turkists and German agents in the Southern Caucasus area during the Great Patriotic war. Thus, the invalidity of the October 1921 Treaty meant that the territories annexed by Turkey should be given back to Georgia and Armenia. (Hasanlı, 2013: 129) Before moving further, it is necessary to touch upon Georgian claims on the Turkish Black Sea coastal cities.

These demands were first officially put forward on December 1945 in an article published in the Georgian newspaper *Kommunisti* by two Georgian history professors S. Janashiya and I. Berdzenishvili. Their article was entitled '*On our lawful demands to Turkey*' and Hasanli claims it was written on direct instructions from Moscow. (Hasanlı, 2013: 156-157) What did Georgian claims consist of? Georgians claimed the Turkish Black Sea coastal cities from Georgia until Giresun harbor together with its hinterland. (BCA, n.d.: 2)⁴⁷ Georgian Foreign Minister Kiknadze made clear what these cities were. In a report sent to Molotov, he stated beyond any doubt that the Georgian territorial claims included the Turkish cities of Parhal, Tortum, Ispir, Bayburt, Rize and Trabzon. The report dwelt also on the ethnic composition of the aforementioned provinces, stressing the ethnic majority of the Georgians while attributing a lack of Turks in the provinces. (Hasanlı, 2013: 130-131) Thus, it has to be made clear that what Georgians were asking for was quite a huge chunk of Turkish territory.

Thus, one reason Soviet authorities gave to substantiate their territorial claims was that Soviet Union was weak during the time Moscow and Kars Treaties were signed and these Treaties were forced upon it by Turkey. Secondly, as aforementioned, there is the repatriation programme of Armenians living in diaspora. This programme was launched with an official decision of the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers on December 2, 1945. (Hasanlı, 2013: 153) Before this date, on July 4, 1945, the President of Armenian Church Assembly sent a message to Stalin emphasizing the great progress Armenian

⁴⁷30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

nation was going through and giving credit for this to the great Soviet Union. The message was a prelude to its real aim expressed at the end of the message whereby Armenia was placing its hopes on the Soviet government on correcting the historical injustices done to the Armenians starting from the First World War. This was a clear reference to Armenian demands in Turkish eastern territories. (FRUS, 1965: 1129-1130)⁴⁸

US Embassy in Ankara also was of the view that the repatriation programme was launched as a means to put pressure on Turkey on the territorial question. Wilson reported to the State Department that the Soviet Consulate General in Istanbul had started receiving applications from Turkish citizens of Armenian origin who wished to resettle to Soviet Armenia. This information was given in relation with the *repatriation* project of diaspora Armenians the Soviets had in mind. Wilson asserted that Soviet aim was to bring large number of Armenians from abroad so as to justify Soviet territorial claims to Turkey's eastern regions. Given that Soviet Armenia lacked sufficient territory to settle all potentially coming diaspora Armenians, the territorial demands towards Turkey were being substantiated not only in historical and political grounds but also in humanitarian one. (FRUS, 1965: 1284)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State. 07. 07. 1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. V.*

⁴⁹ The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State. 19.12.1945. *FRUS, 1945, Vol. VIII.*

3.2. Turkish Refutation of Soviet claims

In his book on Turkish-Soviet relations, Suat Bilge maintains that the Soviet demands towards Turkey can be assessed as unrealistic. This being the case because claiming that the 1921 Treaty was signed in a moment of Soviet weakness while at the same time assisting Turkey militarily and financially are rather hard to reconcile. It is hard to imagine how a weak power can help a stronger one. (Bilge, 1992: 273) Bilge was referring to the support Bolshevik regime gave to the republican forces during Turkish Independence War. He also points to the existence of official documents which prove the fact that Stalin had participated himself when the 1921 Treaty between Turkey and Soviet Union was being negotiated. As this was not enough, the Soviet official who had drawn the border between Turkey and the Caucasian Republics of Armenia and Georgia was again Stalin himself. This makes perfect sense from the historical point of view as Stalin during the time in question served as Commissar for Nationalities in the Soviet Union. Thus, what comes out of all this framework is that Stalin by his demands towards Turkey wanted to amend the border he had personally drawn back in 1921.(Bilge, 1992: 289)

In refuting Soviet and Armenian claims on Turkish eastern territories, one of the most authoritative sources is Kazım Karabekir, military commander of the eastern front during World War I and Turkish War of Independence. He had led the military operations in these territories and been the head of the Turkish delegation when the October 1921 Kars Treaty was signed. After becoming the Istanbul MP of the ruling Republican Party, Karabekir on the December 20, 1945 *TBMM* plenary session gave a long speech where he refuted all Soviet and Armenian claims concerning Turkish eastern territories.

The main aim of his speech was to show that Russian pretensions pertaining to the 1921 Moscow and Kars Treaties were not historically correct and were hard to reconcile with reality. To start with, he strikingly pointed out that the Russians had profited so much from the friendship with Turkey that they would hardly have been able to complete their revolution without Turkey's help. This helped consisted of the fact that Turkey did not attempt any assault against the Bolshevik state during the period in question. Otherwise, Kazım Karabekir stated that the events would have taken a different flow for the Soviets. (TBMM, 1983: 257)⁵⁰ After this, Karabekir responded to Soviet and Armenian claims that the Kars region had been historically inhabited by ethnic Armenians. He (1983: 257-258) asserted that such a fact was not true as Turks had been dwelling in for centuries in Kars. The only exception to this historical reality had been a short period after the 1878 Russo-Ottoman war when the Kars region was

⁵⁰d. 7, c. 20, b. 15.

given to the Russians as part of Ottoman war indemnity, after the latter were defeated in this war, and was therefore administered by the Russians.

Concerning the claim that this region had been taken from the Russians, Karabekir (1983: 258) provided a counter-argument to this by positing that Kars had been taken by the Turks in the end of two military operations, one during the First World War and the other during Turkish Independence War. During the former, Karabekir claimed that the Russians had abandoned the region leaving behind neither any Russian nor their army. What is more, before both Turkish military incursions, almost half of the Turkish population of the region had been exterminated by the Armenians while their property destroyed. After the Turkish army had entered the region, Karabekir mentioned a document signed by a group of Armenian soldiers taken as prisoners of war (POWs) and handed to an American delegation which was in Kars during the time. The document in question which was also handed to the Turkish prime minister by Karabekir himself, contained the confessions of Armenian soldiers that the Turks upon entering the region had not exterminated anyone and had well-treated the prisoners of war. The document also included the undertaking of Armenians not to oppose any more militarily the Turks. (1983: 258) After mentioning all these facts, Karabekir (1983: 258) concluded that the March 1921 Moscow agreement was “a sincere acceptance” of all these developments, while the October 1921 Kars agreement was a confirmation of the Moscow one on the part of the Russians and Caucasian Republics. In other words, whatever was signed between Turkey, Russia and the

Caucasian republics was done under the complete free will of all the signatories and no force or threat of use of force was included in the process. On the contrary, Turkey was the power which was rather militarily weak because as Karabekir (1983: 258) recalled, in the time Kars agreement was signed the Turkish forces and their military equipment were being transferred to the Western front. It has to be pointed out here that during the time in question, Turkey was fighting the Independence War and Anatolian territory was under constant threat of invasion by the Greek forces.

Kazım Karabekir was rather harsh in his critique and refutation of Soviet and Armenian claims. He pointed out that hardly any Armenian would have been left in the eastern regions had some other people and army been instead of the Turks. Armenians were well aware of this fact and had fully acknowledged it when signing the Kars Agreement. What is more, Lenin and Soviet Foreign Commissar of the time, Chicherin, had admitted that the eastern territories were Turkey's right. Karabekir's harsh critique reached its peak when he (1983: 258), referring to the Soviets, declared that "an administration which denies all these facts is as if has denied all history."

After putting forth all these refutations, Karabekir highlighted the militarily strategic value of the Kars plateau. He (1983: 259) stated that taking the Kars plateau would be tantamount to a key spot from where Anatolia could be attacked and from where ways leading to the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf were easily accessible. He referred to the Kars plateau as the Turkish "national backbone." Karabekir's view on the importance of Kars is mirrored in a document found in Turkish archives where it is

stated (BCA, n.d.: 4) that Kars is “strategically indispensable for the defense of Ankara.”⁵¹

Karabekir also spared a few words on the hard economic and material conditions Turkey was experiencing those days and the reasons behind it. He attributed this tough situation to the constant military threat Soviet Union posed to the Turkish political independence and territorial integrity, forcing Turkey to devote most of its budget for defense purposes. Confronted by the observation of an American delegation that Turkey would have experienced a much higher level of progress had a part of the defense expenses been allocated to development purposes, Karabekir (TBMM, 1983: 259) replied “Had we been bordered by civilized neighbors like you, we would have been in the level you mentioned.” To conclude, Karabekir warned that should the Russians persist in their demands, the Turks would fight. Yet, he (283: 259) reiterated once more that Turkish friendship was in the Russian interest and the only way to reach at this friendship was by respecting Turkish people’s will and their state’s values.

After Karabekir’s speech, Foreign Minister Hasan Saka took the floor and expressed his and Turkish government’s full agreement with the views stated by Karabekir. Thereafter he gave a broad outline of the basic pillars Turkish foreign policy was built upon. Saka (1983: 260) gave assurances that Turkey in her foreign policy would still be led by Atatürk’s motto “Peace in the home, Peace in the world.” Saka (1983: 260) required Turkey’s basic sovereign rights to be respected in the same way

⁵¹ 30.10.0.0/63.426.19.

Turkey respected other countries'. Likewise, given that Turkey had not any ambitions towards other countries, it deserved to be treated in the same way. Thus, Saka implicitly claimed that the recent Soviet territorial demands towards Turkey were not just.

Turkish Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu is another authoritative source in refuting Soviet territorial claims. His views stated in a press conference were published in an article *La Bourse Egyptien* newspaper published on April 12, 1946. The article was accessed from the Prime Ministerial Archives. I have to point out that Saraçoğlu's views completely match those of Karabekir. Saraçoğlu (BCA, n.d.: 4)⁵² declared pertaining to Kars and Ardahan that it was a well-known fact that no Armenians lived in these regions. He then mentioned the historical background under which Kars and Ardahan were once given to Czarist Russia after Ottoman defeat in the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War. Saraçoğlu (n.d.: 4) asserted that after the Ottoman defeat in this war, it was impractical for the Czarist regime to ask for Kars and Ardahan given that nearly all of the population of these two regions was Turkish and Muslim. Hence, in accordance with the nineteenth article of Ayastefanos Peace Treaty and taking into consideration the financial difficulties of the Ottoman State during those times, the Ottoman Empire concurred on giving Czarist Russia these two regions in return for not paying most of its war indemnity. In conclusion, Saraçoğlu (n.d.: 4) remarked that a plebiscite had been organized in these regions before they were returned to Turkey under the October 1921 Kars Treaty. Out of 87048 voters, 85124 had voted that these provinces be returned

⁵² 30.1.0.0/101.623.7.

back to Turkey. Thus, what we can state out of this information is that the claims on the ethnically Armenian composition of Kars and Ardahan regions are inconsistent with the historical evidences.

Concerning Georgian demands on the Turkish Black Sea coastal cities, Saraçoğlu(n.d.: 5) posited that in the region claimed by the Georgians there were only 15596 ethnic Georgians, while the number of ethnic Turks stood at 1746328 citizens. These data also represent the complete opposite of what was claimed by the two Georgian professors in their article.

The foreign press likewise refuted Soviet territorial claims towards Turkey. On January 7, 1946, *Times* newspaper in London published an article on Russian-Turkish relations and among other things focused on refuting Armenian claims on Kars and Ardahan and Georgian claims on the Turkish Black Sea coast. To start with, Georgians claimed the Black Sea coastal line from Georgia until Giresun harbor together with its hinterland. Thus, it has to be made clear that what Georgians were asking for was quite a huge chunk of Turkish territory. *Times* maintained that Georgian claims can be substantiated neither on historical nor on ethnic grounds. (BCA, n.d.: 2)⁵³ Historically, the region Georgians claimed had seen only a small minority of Greeks who had remained there after the fall of the Pontic Empire in the fifteenth century. Even this small minority had subsequently left the region in accordance with the 1923 Turkish-

⁵³ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

Greek population exchange agreement under the auspices of Lausanne Convention.
(n.d.: 2)

It might also be claimed that the *laz*, people who live between the Turkish city of Rize and the Caucasian border, are very similar by origin to Georgians. While this may be true, the fact still remains that the *laz* are all Muslim and possess in full “Turkish national consciousness.”(n.d.: 2) These facts clearly separate them from Georgians. *Times* furthermore maintained that the *laz* were famous sailors and indeed they constituted most of Turkish fleet’s crew. (n.d.: 2)

Concerning Armenian claims on the Turkish eastern provinces of Kars and Ardahan, *Times* refuted them by telling exactly the same historical background that Prime Minister Saraçoğlu did in the aforementioned article in *Le Bourse Egyptien* newspaper. Yet, *Times* revealed also other details pertaining to the history of Kars and Ardahan. These two provinces had remained under Russian authority until the October Revolution. After that, in accordance with the provisions of Brest-Litovsk Treaty between Germany and Soviet Union, Turkey took them back. After the Great War ended, the two regions had experienced various invasions, a British one to be mentioned here. At the end, the Republican regime in Turkey signed the Moscow and Kars Treaties with the communist regime in Moscow, on March 16, 1921 and October 13, 1921 respectively. Under the provisions of these Treaties, the city of Batumi went to the Soviets given the importance the communist regime attached to the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline, while Kars and Ardahan came under Turkish territorial borders.(n.d.: 3-4) To

further substantiate its views, *Times* made also reference to Karabekir's arguments in his aforementioned TBMM speech. In brief, one may conclude that there existed some kind of convergence between Turkish and foreign press' views in refuting Soviet territorial demands.

Before concluding, there is another point which deserves emphasis. This concerns the activities of Armenian diaspora organizations in supporting the territorial claims against Turkey. Turkish archives contain an important document refuting the activities of such organizations. On June 16, 1947 Berc Keresteci Türker, Former Republican Party's Afyon MP and former President of Ottoman Bank, sent a letter to the American Ambassador in Ankara, Edwin Wilson. In the letter, Türker harshly denounced the activities of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee (ARC) in America and a recent memorandum they had sent to the State Department and UN Secretary General concerning the state of Armenians living in Turkey. According to the memorandum, the lives of Armenians in Turkey were miserable and they were subject to every kind of assault in the Turkish society. Türker dismissed all these claims as mere lies and fabrications and accused ARC of being a bunch of Soviet revolutionary agents who aimed to spread Soviet propaganda and provoke Turkish public opinion against Armenians, who contrary to all allegations had a life of peace and tranquility in Turkey. (BCA, n.d.: 3-4)⁵⁴ Said that, Türker emphasized also the benevolent policy Turkish government had always followed towards the Armenians, showing respect to their

⁵⁴ 490.1.0.0/607.103.25.

institutions, religion and language. A clear proof of this policy was the fact that there were MPs of Armenian, Jewish and Greek origin in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. (n.d.: 4)

The letter to Wilson stressed the fact that since the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, Russian policy towards Turkey had become “unjust and devilish” (n.d.: 4), that Armenians were being used as mere tools by the Russians not only against Turkey but also against their Armenian brethren in Turkey and against the Armenian race itself.(n.d.: 4) At this point, Türker recalled his years when he was acting as President of Ottoman Bank in Istanbul. When in 1896 the Bank was attacked by a group of twenty two Armenians, Türker had heard the head of the group proclaiming that their main goal was “destroying all Armenian race in Turkey.” (n.d.: 4) In conclusion, he requested Ambassador Wilson to transmit these remarks to the authorities in Washington in order to create awareness of the illegal activities of “Armenian-Russian agents” there.(n.d.: 5)

3.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter sought to give an outline of Soviet territorial demands from Turkey. After specifying what these demands consisted of and after historically contextualizing them, I tried to provide evidences accessed from the Turkish archives to refute these

demands. Judging from these evidences, what comes out is the fact that Soviet demands in the eastern territories were historically unfair and cannot be reconciled with the historical developments of the time. Given that these demands did not match with reality, I aimed to show through this that they were only a façade behind which lay the real goal of taking control of Turkey, militarily and politically. Approaching the events from a Turkish perspective, what becomes clear is that the Soviet Union applied to every possible move to destabilize Turkey in the hope of a more *friendly regime* coming to power in Ankara. The *war of nerves* Soviet Union was waging since June 1945, coupled with making use of Armenian and Georgian SSR to substantiate its territorial claims to Turkey, were topped off by playing the *Kurdish card*. This is substantiated by historical documents. Accordingly, in The Russian Social and Political History State Archive, on December 1946, Soviet Foreign Ministry's Department of Near and Middle prepared a thirty-three page report entitled "The Kurdish question and Iranian Kurds". In the section of the report which dealt specifically with the Kurds in Turkey, it was mentioned how the tsarist Russia back in the nineteenth century used the Kurdish issue in its rivalry with the Ottoman Empire.(Hasanlı, 2013: 211) By using historical analogies, it seems as if the Department officials were trying to draw a policy line for the Soviets to follow in its relations with Turkey.Furthermore, Hasanlı (2013: 125) records in his study a propaganda booklet prepared by the Armenian Dashnak Party entitled "Guide for our Propagandists". What the Dashnak ruling circles were calling for was a violent policy vis-à-vis Turkey. Destroying Turkey's economic life,

instigating a world-wide opposition to Turkey and using the Kurdish card in this anti-Turkish policy was what the booklet called for.

Yet, as happened with the demands on the Straits, these ones too did not pay off. The Soviets on September 1948 officially ended the Armenians' repatriation programme (Hasanlı, 2013: 276) while after Stalin's death on March 1953, Soviet leadership withdrew all its territorial claims towards Turkey. However, it was too late. Soviet Union had already reluctantly pushed Turkey towards the Western alliance.

CHAPTER IV

TURKEY'S PLACE IN THE POST-WAR SOVIET SECURITY SYSTEM

On January 7, 1946 *Times* newspaper in London published an article on Soviet-Turkish relations, the summary of which was translated and sent to Ankara. Following a historical analysis of the Soviet demands from Turkey, it posed an important question: "What is the reason leading to the breakup of 20-years-old Russo-Turkish friendship and to Russia's adopting a strong aggressive stance threatening Turkish independence and territorial integrity?" (BCA, n.d.: 4)⁵⁵ In other words, the Turkish press attaché was curious to find out the reason behind Soviet demands from Turkey. Why did the Soviets pressed for a revision of the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention governing the

⁵⁵ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

Straits regime and for territorial adjustments in the two Turkish eastern provinces of Kars and Ardahan? Why were the relations with Turkey a frequent concern of Stalin even while World War II was still raging? This chapter seeks to answer precisely that. The historical record, the hitherto overlooked Turkish Prime Ministerial Archives (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, BCA*) and the minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*TBMM*) from April 1945 to August 1946 all point to one direction: Turkey's pivotal role in the post-war Soviet security system.

4.1. War-time and post-war Soviet stance towards Turkey

Stalin's war-time and post-war treatment of the Turkish question is particularly intriguing. If one is to analyze the historical record, it becomes self-evident that the Turkish issue has always been on the Soviet war-time and post-war agenda. Stalin has been particularly careful in reminding his war-time Allies of the importance of the Turkish issue for the Soviet Union. He chose a rather unsuitable moment to bring the issue to the attention of the Allies, the November 1943 Tehran Conference. The Conference had been gathered mainly to discuss the military strategy in opening a new European front to be employed against the Nazis and more specifically to discuss the details of Operation Overlord in Northern France. At the same time, Allies' efforts to bring Turkey into the war were continuing in full pace. Yet, Stalin found his occasion to raise with Churchill the issue of the Turkish Straits. Facing the latter's response that it was "an awkward moment for raising the question", Stalin quickly concluded the

argument with some thought-provoking words: “the time would come later.” (Churchill, 1951: 381)

This episode is illustrative of a central feature of Stalin’s mindset, his deep-seated sense of insecurity, a feature which shaped to a great extent the conduct of Soviet foreign policy. Vojtech Mastny points out Stalin’s “insatiable craving” for security and maintains that Soviet Union had reached an unprecedented level of security after the triumph in World War II yet it was not deemed sufficient by Stalin. (Mastny, 1996: 23) Elsewhere in the literature the sense of insecurity is referred to as “Stalin’s insistence upon an extremely ambitious definition of minimal security requirements.” (Nation, 1992: 160) With the war against the Nazis still lingering, Stalin was thinking of post-war security arrangements. And this was not the first time Stalin displayed such an attitude. Roughly one month before the Tehran Conference, in October 1943, when confronted by the British proposal for an opening of a Black Sea front through which Allies warships and forces would help Russia, in addition to the front being planned to be opened in Northern France through the British Channel, Stalin didn’t show much interest. He was clearly concerned about the implications such a strategy might have on the post-war security settlements in the Balkans. That is why Churchill remarked in relation to this occasion “It may be that for political reasons the Russians would not want to develop a large-scale Balkan strategy.” (Churchill, 1951: 286)

Stalin next raised awareness for the issue in October 1944 when he met with Churchill in Moscow where the *percentage deal* was discussed between the two leaders dividing the spheres of influence in Central Europe and the Balkans. Stalin labeled the

Montreux Convention as “an anachronism” (Yergin, 1990: 233) Churchill, in a telegram sent to Roosevelt on October 22, 1944, informed the latter of Stalin’s formal request for a revision of the terms of the Montreux Convention concerning the free passing of Russian warships through the Straits. Churchill had not objected to this request, judging the revision to be requisite given the new realities of the war. (Lowenheim, Langley and Jonas, 1975: 592) Stalin carried on with the same spirit during the February 1945 Yalta Conference and July 1945 Potsdam Conference. He brought the issue to the fore at Yalta and this time stated in relation to the Soviet proposal to revise the Montreux Convention that “it should be done in such a manner as not to harm the legitimate interests of Turkey.” (FRUS, 1965: 903)⁵⁶ During the Potsdam Conference proceedings, in one of the sessions dated July 23, 1945, Stalin, put forward the Soviet Union’s reasons for wanting an amendment to the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention. He stated that under the terms of the Convention Turkey was entitled to block the passage of ships through the Straits not only when it was involved in a war itself but also whenever it perceived the threat of war, leaving it to Turkey’s discretion to determine what constituted a threat. What all this amounted to was that a small state assisted by Great Britain would have the advantage in any situation over a great state and completely block it. To better point out the danger such a situation posed to the Soviet Union, Stalin asserted that it would not be difficult to think of the concern England and United States would have if a Montreux-like regime existed in Gibraltar/

⁵⁶ FRUS, *Conferences at Yalta and Malta 1945*,

the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal respectively. (FRUS, 1965: 303)⁵⁷ Starting from the Potsdam Conference, with the war almost over, Stalin began to delve deeper and elaborate on the Turkish issue and its importance for his country. Indeed, his aforementioned remark is one of the first instances when he openly expressed his defensive and security-oriented mindset. At the same time, he implicitly pointed out to the fact that one of his main concerns was also Turkey being dominated by another power, hostile to the Soviet Union.

It is important to emphasize the point that in Potsdam, after the U.S. and British made explicit that their proposal for the revision of the Convention was the internationalization of the Straits regime, Stalin tried continuously to put off the further discussion of the matter, to take it up in a more appropriate moment.(FRUS, 1965: 365-367)⁵⁸ The reason is clear. Stalin wanted joint administration with Turkey of the Straits regime. He feared that the American and British proposal would put in serious jeopardy Soviet Union's security in its southern rim. That is why Truman (1965: 367) "drew attention to the word "control." If the Straits were free there would be no control."

4.2. Turkey and the Soviet security system

⁵⁷FRUS: *The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, Vol. 2. Former U.S. Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, who was present during the Yalta Conference proceedings, records in his memoirs that Stalin said similar words also during the Yalta Conference. See Edward R. Jr. Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1949), 267.

⁵⁸FRUS: *The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, Vol. 2.

At this point, it would be fair to directly ask the question as to why Turkey was a main pillar of Soviet security system. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the southern rim of the Soviet Union was key to the economy and military planning of the country. The southern rim contained the crucial Baku and Ploesti oilfields in Azerbaijan and Rumania respectively. These oilfields directly impacted the Soviet economy and its ability to sustain the war efforts in case of a future conflict. The same is the case with the industrial areas of Kharkov and Donetsk in Ukraine. The security threat to these areas lies in the fact that they can all become easy targets if Turkish territory is used as a base for attacks. Clark Clifford, Special Counsel to President Truman, in a special report sent to the latter in September 24, 1946 pointed out to this reality when noting that “The Near East is an area of great strategic interest to the Soviet Union because of the shift of Soviet industry to southeastern Russia, within range of air attack from much of the Near East.”(Clifford, 1946: 12) Additionally, a report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in March 1946 highlighted the fact that Soviet influence attempts in the Middle East were mainly driven by the aim of securing the key regions of Ploesti, Kharkov and Baku. Similarly, the Joint War Plans Committee in August 1946 drew attention to Turkey’s pivotal role as an operational base in face of a potential military conflict with Soviet Union.(Leffler, 1985: 813; Leffler, 1993: 124-125)Turkey’s great importance for the security of Soviet Union’s southern rim is also affirmed in an article published in *Image du Monde* newspaper in Paris on August 27, 1946. It deemed Soviet Union’s southern rim to be its

“Achilles heel” and claimed that the industrial region of Donetsk was not far away from the Turkish air bases.(BCA, n.d.: 3)⁵⁹

These conclusions were quite logical bearing in mind the WW II scenarios. Among the reasons which pushed the Allies to press so hard on Turkey’s entry into the war was the military advantage associated with such a course of action. Turkey’s territory would be used for air bases to launch attacks against Nazi targets in the Balkans, predominantly the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania. The oilfields in this region were quite important to the Axis war effort since the Nazis in 1940 had extracted 58 % of their imports from this region and they were defined by Hitler as “the life” of the Axis powers. (Yergin, 1991: 334-335) That is why Churchill deemed so important the efforts to bring Turkey into the war and defined it as “the great prize of bringing Turkey into the war.” (Churchill, 1951: 392-393) For Stalin it was quite clear that in the post-war environment it would be equally a great prize to try to make Turkey friendly towards the Soviet Union or at least prevent it from coming under Western influence and domination.

Another Soviet security consideration was the Caucasian territory which constitutes a gate leading straight to the heartland of Soviet Union. Caucasia can be easily ‘accessed’ from Turkey in case the latter does not become an obstacle. Indeed, the hitherto overlooked files from Turkey’s Prime Ministerial Archives (*BCA*) in Ankara contain clues as to the grounds on which Turkey denied Soviet accusations, which blamed Turkey for helping the German war cause by staying neutral. Turkish

⁵⁹ 30.10.0.0/63.426.19.

President Ismet Inonu asserted that Turkey had in fact served the Soviet cause by preventing German armies to pass to Caucasus by using Turkish territory. (BCA, n.d.: 4)⁶⁰ Here it becomes clear the importance of Turkey for the security of Caucasus. Finally, the Straits were key to the security of the Black Sea and therefore the security of the Soviet southern rim, keeping in mind the aforementioned points. When discussing the issue with the Turkish Acting Foreign Minister Sümer, the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara, Vinogradov told him that the Straits question was a question of “vital” importance to the Soviet Union. He pointed out that “it is question of security for USSR which must have “adequate guarantee.” (FRUS, 1965: 816)⁶¹

These security considerations of the Soviet Union were well-recognized by Ankara officials who were aware of the strategic place their country had. We can assert that Soviet security was a concern to Ankara policymakers even before the war ended. Indeed, as historical record shows, during the meeting Churchill had with Turkish President İnönü on January 30, 1943 in Adana, south of Turkey, even though the war was still raging and the two leaders had met to specifically discuss Turkey’s entry in the war, Inonu tried to turn the discussion to two main points: “(1) the structure of the post-war world and the arrangements for an international organization; and (2) the future relations of Turkey and Russia.”(Churchill, 1951: 709-710) Like Stalin, Inonu was very concerned about the post-war security arrangements and expected troubles on the Soviet ‘front’.

⁶⁰ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

⁶¹ FRUS, 1946, Vol. 7.

These concerns were voiced from other officials as well. In June 1945 Molotov put forward to the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, Selim Sarper, the requisite conditions for a successful renewal of the December 1925 Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality. According to a telegram sent on June 25, 1945 by the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow William Averell Harriman to Undersecretary of State Acheson, the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow Sarper is reported to have said concerning Molotov's proposal that "Russians are not bluffing." Harriman then emphasized in his telegram Sarper's conviction that "Turkey was obviously in Soviet security zone." (FRUS, 1965: 1029-1030)⁶²

Similar views were shared also by the U.S. Ambassador in Turkey, Edwin Wilson. Assessing the Soviet demands, Wilson notes in a telegram sent to the Secretary of State, James Byrnes, dated March 18, 1946: "Soviet objective regarding Turkey as I have reported to Dept is to break present Turkish Government, install "friendly" government, resulting in closing Turkish gap in Soviet security belt from Baltic to Black Sea, giving USSR physical control of Straits and putting end to Western influence in Turkey. In short, domination of Turkey." (FRUS, 1965: 819)⁶³ Furthermore, according to a memorandum prepared in the Department of State in December 19, 1945, Soviet Union "is probably more interested in closing off the last beach-head of the Western World in this region through the conclusion of a treaty with

⁶² Harriman to Acheson, 25 June 1945, in *FRUS: The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference) 1945*, Vol. 1.

⁶³ Wilson to Byrnes, 18 March 1946, in *FRUS, 1946*, Vol. 7.

Turkey which would bring that country into line with other states in the “Soviet security zone”.” (1965: 804) What is common between the aforementioned evidences is the fact that in all of them the Soviet demands from Turkey were associated with the concept of ‘Soviet security’.

4.3. Soviet Union’s defensive and security-oriented policy towards Turkey

Referring back to the archival source mentioned in the introduction, the Turkish press attaché in London explains that if one has to go by the perspective offered only by the Soviet press and radios, then two main reasons stand behind the Soviets’ aggressive stance towards Turkey. On the one hand, it is claimed that Turkey in fact helped the German war cause by preserving its neutrality during WW II. On the other hand, Turkey allegedly ignored the Nazi invasion of Soviet Union by making an agreement with Germany several days before the invasion took place.(BCA, n.d.: 4)⁶⁴ As this chapter will subsequently show, both reasons are unsubstantiated and lack historical evidence. To start with, Turkey had a Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Russia dating back to December 1925 and was committed to stay neutral in case of a hostile action against the Soviet Union; a commitment which Turkey fulfilled. Moreover, Turkey had made a

⁶⁴ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

joint declaration with Soviet Union in March 25, 1941 committing itself once more to neutrality in the face of aggression against the Soviet Union.

Turkish Parliamentary minutes also support this view. For instance, during the session of February 23, 1945, in the course of a discussion to declare war on Germany and Japan, the ruling Republican People Party's Ankara MP Mumtaz Okmen asserted that Turkey, since its foundation, had considered the friendship with Soviet Union as one of the principal tenets of its foreign policy. The commitment to this tenet had remained constant also in the five years of the war during which Turkey's great neighbor had been through its most difficult moments. Inonu himself had made sure to advise his fellow statesmen on the strict observance of this commitment. Okmen then strongly claimed that all the states neighboring the Soviet Union, with the exception of Turkey, had helped somehow the Nazi war cause during the invasion. Thus Turkey, Okmen concluded, must be given a share of the honor of the great Soviet victory in Stalingrad since it had not given passage to the Nazis through the Straits and Caucasian borders. (TBMM, 1983: 128-129)⁶⁵

American policymakers were also of the same opinion. According to a memorandum prepared by the State Department before the Malta Conference, "Non-use of the Straits as an avenue of supply to Russia during this war was due to Axis command of Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, and the Aegean, not to the Montreux Convention... By and large Turkey has been a good custodian of the Straits." (FRUS,

⁶⁵d. 7, c. 15, b. 0.

1965: 328)⁶⁶ In brief, the first reason that Turkey had in fact assisted Nazi war effort by staying neutral is unfounded.

Secondly, Turkey had allegedly overlooked the Nazi invasion of Soviet Union by signing a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany in June 18, 1941, four days before the Nazi invasion of Soviet Union. This version also lacks historical evidence. Indeed, the Turkish archival sources show that on August 13, 1941 there was a joint declaration by Britain and the Soviet Union regarding Turkey. According to this declaration, both states guaranteed the Turkish government that they were content with the Montreux Convention, they did not have any hostile aim towards the Straits and that they would fully observe Turkish territorial integrity. (BCA, n.d.: 5)⁶⁷ It is worth highlighting at this point that there is no mention of this declaration in the postwar memoirs of the two principal British policymakers, Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.⁶⁸ A reference to this declaration can be found in the aforementioned memorandum prepared by the U.S. State Department before the Malta Conference where it is maintained that the Montreux Convention had perfectly functioned and on August 10, 1941 both the Soviet Union with Great Britain had stated likewise to Turkey.(FRUS, 1965: 328)⁶⁹

⁶⁶FRUS: *Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 1945.

⁶⁷ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

⁶⁸ Respectively, Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, (Boston, 1950, 1951, 1953), 6 vols. and Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning*, (London: Cassell, 1965).

Thus, the fact that this declaration had been signed in almost two months after the Turkish-German Non-Aggression Pact implies that the relations between Turkey and Germany did not prevent the Soviets from making a friendly move towards Turkey. (BCA, n.d.: 5)⁷⁰ While the Soviets declared in August 1941 that they were pleased with the Montreux Convention and didn't have any claims over the Straits, what pushed them exactly five years later, on August 1946, to send an official note to the Turkish government asking for an amendment to the terms of the Convention?

The Turkish press attaché in London affirmed that the hostile Soviet stance towards Turkey, when analyzed impartially and thoroughly, can be explained only as a direct result of Turkey's close alliance with Great Britain. He pointed out to the fact that the friendly Russo-Turkish relations that existed after WW I declined after an improvement of Anglo-Turkish relations. The author considered as self-evident the reality that Russia viewed Turkey as an integral part of its security system and would oppose any Turkish effort to forge a close alliance with another country. Indeed, Turkey's friendship with Great Britain and its reluctance to be part of Soviet security system would constitute a serious menace to Soviet Union. The author (n.d.: 5-6) reveals "an open and manifest secret" when he declares that "on October 1939, when that time Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Saraçoğlu visited Moscow in the aftermath of signing Turkey- Britain-France Alliance Agreement, Soviet statesmen told

⁶⁹*FRUS: Conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945.*

⁷⁰ 30.1.0.0/101.623.3.

him that Turkey had acted imprudently by signing that alliance and that one day would be remorseful if it didn't pay heed to this advice. It seems that the events happening nowadays are a result of the warnings of that time.''

The words of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Peker while propounding the program of his new founded government on August 14, 1946 gave Soviets more sources of concern. Referring back to the minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Peker stated that "As is known, our relations with England rely on the 1939 Alliance Agreement... Turkish-English alliance, similar to the past, will continue to remain the essential pillar of our foreign policy.'" (TBMM, 1983: 29)⁷¹ It is interesting to note that Peker was fully aware that such a fact will not be received well by the Soviets. This is probably why in his next words he (1983: 29) firmly maintained that Turkey completely rejects the view that its relations with other countries in the international arena will be detrimental to Soviet interests. Turkey did not ask for anything but friendly relations with all countries, principally neighboring countries, and observance of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It seems as if Peker wanted to assuage Soviet fears.

Therefore, taken as a whole, the revelations in this archival note, specifically that of the attitude of Soviet statesmen towards Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Saraçoğlu, are crucial in showing the basic tenets of post-war Soviet foreign policy towards Turkey. Stalin wanted either being granted his demands, a 'friendly' government in Ankara or at least he wanted a neutral Turkey, not allied to the Western powers. Even though the archival source mentions the threat of the Anglo-Turkish

⁷¹d. 8, c. 1, b. 3.

alliance to Soviet Union, the same logic applies also to the U.S.-Turkish alliance, bearing in mind that in the post-war environment, U.S. would replace Britain as the predominant Western power in the Near and Middle East.

Thus, being deeply suspicious of post-war Anglo-American aims, Stalin thought that would be in the Soviet's security interests to at least keep Turkey out of Western influence and dominance. Basically, his post-war policy towards Turkey was a defensive, security-oriented policy, albeit a cautious one.⁷² Stalin did not want confrontation with the Western powers. Bruce Kuniholm does not seem to agree with this stance. Indeed, in the literature he is a strong proponent of the view that post-war Soviet security interests in its southern rim were unjustified, maintaining that "even if the Soviets had legitimate security interests in Eurasia, their policies toward the countries on their southern flank were unacceptable." (Gorodetsky, 1994: 141) He rather tends to analyze Soviet drive towards the Near East as a continuation of the expansionist tendencies of Czarist Russia.⁷³

Another archival evidence comes from the article "Turkish-Russian Relations" published in *La Bourse Egyptien* newspaper and sent to Ankara on April 12, 1946 from a Turkey's correspondent named Charles Archache. The article attracts one's attention

⁷² Zubok and Pleshakov in their study define Stalin's postwar foreign policy as "more defensive, reactive, and prudent than it was fulfillment of a master plan." See Vladimir Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 277.

⁷³ He fully develops this argument and the idea of the continuation of Great Power rivalry in the Near East in his major study. See Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 4. For another proponent of this view, see also Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 244.

with the title devoted to it: “A Question of Global Importance: Turkish-Russian relations” (BCA, n.d.: 1)⁷⁴ Equally worth mentioning is timing of the articles. The time when this article, like the aforementioned one, was sent to Ankara was roughly four months before the Soviets sent the first official note asking for a revision of the Montreux Convention. Thus, although Soviet demands for territorial concessions and bases in the Straits had been made only through unofficial ways up to that time, one could still sense the tense atmosphere existing between the two countries. Officials from both countries knew that many things were at stake in Turkish-Russian relations. Foreign press of the period to a good extent reflected the ‘spirit of the time’ and conveyed the international perceptions of the then-occurring developments. That being sad, according to the article in *La Bourse Egyptien*(n.d.: 4), Turkish-Russian relations were intriguing to the entire globe since they concerned a key region. The outcome of this issue would determine to a great extent the prospects for peace in the future.

The article then lays down the reason behind Soviet demands from Turkey. They are the very same reasons outlined in the previous article in the *Times*. This gives more credence to the main argument of this thesis that Soviet demands had a defensive and security-oriented character. The article pointed out that Kremlin wanted to be surrounded by friendly countries in its neighborhood, countries which shared Soviet Union’s social and political goals. Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia and even Hungary, willingly or reluctantly, were led towards Kremlin’s direction. The only

⁷⁴ 30.1.0.0/101.623.7.

exceptions were Turkey and Greece which were pursuing a separate and independent policy from Soviet Union, thereby causing concern in Moscow. Kremlin wanted to see new leaders or a new regime in Ankara but was confronted by the Turkish government's firm resolve not to give in concerning both the territorial issue and the question of authority. (n.d.: 4)

4.4. Soviet Union's Cautious policy towards Turkey

In conclusion, it is worth exploring the second defining feature of post-war Soviet policy towards Turkey. So far, in this chapter I tried to establish the central place of Turkey in Soviet security system and show that post-war Soviet policy was essentially defensive and security-oriented. Yet, I also claim that it was a cautious policy. Stalin, while being aware of Turkey's importance for his country's security, was also aware of the Soviet Union's limitations in the economic and military sphere after the end of the war. He could not risk a military confrontation with the Western powers immediately after the war.⁷⁵ Indeed, as Zubok and Pleshakov maintain "Stalin, notwithstanding his reputation as a ruthless tyrant, was not prepared to take a course of unbridled unilateral expansionism after World War II. He wanted to avoid confrontation with the West." (Zubok and Pleshakov, 1996: 276) President Truman didn't fully

⁷⁵ Gaddis attributes Russia's stepping back on the Turkish issue to the military maneuvers of the American fleet in the eastern Mediterranean starting from April 1946. See John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 336-337.

recognize this side of Stalin's mindset. Although Stalin would not fail to use force when opportunity was presented to him, he was prudent and "as statesman was a thoroughgoing realist." (Craig and Logevall, 2009: 46) That's why I contend that Soviet demands towards Turkey were serious yet aggressiveness can't be attributed to them. The primary sources substantiate this view.

First of all, I take issue with the information contained in a telegram sent by the U.S. Ambassador in Ankara, Wilson, to the U.S. Secretary of State, James Byrnes, on March 18, 1946. According to this telegram, two weeks before, the Soviet troops had been concentrated in large numbers in Dobruja and northeast Bulgaria.(FRUS, 1965: 818)⁷⁶ Ambassador Wilson apparently wanted his government to pay attention to the fact that the Soviets were ready to back up their demands towards Turkey with military force. Yet, Turkish sources challenge the authenticity of the information presented in Wilson's telegram. The minutes of TBMM meetings in the same time period do not give any hint that Turkish leaders were concerned about the security of their northwestern border with Bulgaria. Indeed, during the seven TBMM meetings in February 1946, the minutes of these meetings do not contain any mention of neither Turkish-Soviet relations nor of any potential danger to the country's security. (TBMM, 1983)⁷⁷ What is more, the Turkish MPs themselves asked for a one-month break in their

⁷⁶ FRUS, 1946, Vol. 7. See also Randall B. Woods and Howard Jones, *Dawning of the Cold War: The United States' Quest for Order*, (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 110. Kuniholm in his study makes frequent reference to the correspondence between Ambassador Wilson and the State Department to give credence to his claim that Soviet policy towards Turkey was aggressive and as such warranted US' firm response. See Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 356-357.

work, during March 1946, since the important issues in TGNA agenda had been concluded. (TBMM, 1983: 171)⁷⁸ If there had been such a critical situation to the country's security, as outlined in Wilson's telegram, it would have certainly been reflected in the attitude of Turkey's policymakers. Indeed, the requested one-month break was granted, there were no TBMM meetings during March 1946, the critical month specified in Wilson's telegram. Moreover, less than one month after Wilson's telegram to the State Department, on April 16, 1946, the Turkish archives record that the Turkish Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu gave an interview to a foreign correspondent named Douglas Edwards. When asked if he expected any pressure put by Russia whether on Turkish eastern provinces or in relation with something else, he responded negatively, "I don't expect a serious pressure from any direction; because while it is known that we are a pleasant country, we absolutely don't like such potential jokes." (BCA, n.d.: 2)⁷⁹

The same view is shared by the aforementioned article which appeared in *La Bourse Egyptien*. While the article acknowledged the importance of Turkey to Soviet security system, in conclusion it remarked that there existed a strong conviction that the Soviet Union would not attack Turkey. Likewise, Turkey would firmly try to manage

⁷⁷d. 7, c. 22, b. 31-36.

⁷⁸d. 7, c. 22, b. 37.

⁷⁹ 30.1.0.0/101.623.8..

the situation and would not act imprudently, since each act of imprudence could have dangerous repercussions for both Turkey and the entire Near East. (BCA, n.d.: 5)⁸⁰

4.5. Turkey's cautious policy towards the Soviet Union

Ankara had in fact been cautious throughout the whole period confronted with the Soviet demands. If we pay close attention to İnönü's opening speeches in each session of *TBMM* meetings, we would notice that, regardless of the state of Turkish-Russian relations, İnönü always emphasized the value of Russia as a great neighbor and he always pointed to the importance of cooperation and friendly relations between the two countries. This was the case in the pre-war period when the relations between the two countries were relatively good, during the war years when the tensions between them began to escalate and more so during the post-war years when the relations between Russia and Turkey almost came to a breaking point as a result of the Soviet demands. For instance, after the failure of Saraçoğlu's mission in Moscow in September-October 1939, İnönü declared in his *TBMM* opening speech on November 1, 1939 that they had placed great hopes and had done everything in their means for the successful conclusion of an agreement with the Soviets, which would carry further the present cooperative and good relations with them. While acknowledging that concurring to an agreement would have been of great advantage to both sides, İnönü posited that

⁸⁰ 30.1.0.0/101.623.7.

the new international situation created out of the war in Europe should not harm Russian-Turkish friendship. Likewise, he implicitly replied to the frequent concern that Soviet statesmen had expressed to Saraçoğlu during the Moscow talks, Turkish alliance with Great Britain. He asserted that this alliance should in no way prejudice or damage Turkish relations with other countries. (TBMM, 1983: 3)⁸¹

In the *TBMM* opening speech of November 1, 1940, İnönü praised very much Turkish friendship with the Soviets and deemed it to have an existence in itself, unaffected by what happened in the international surroundings. If both countries continued to view their relations through such a perspective, their friendship would persist. (TBMM, 1983: 5)⁸² Likewise, in the November 1, 1944 opening speech, Turkish president once more reiterated the great hopes they had that the relations with the Soviet Union would continue to carry the spirit of friendship. (TBMM, 1983: 8)⁸³

Coming to the first post-war opening speech on November 1, 1945, İnönü gave a detailed explanation of Turkish neutrality during the war and stressed the point that Turkey had meticulously observed this policy and thus had not harmed any of the interests of the belligerent powers in any way. This had been clearly evident when Turkey frequently refused Axis powers' demands to use its territory for aims inimical to

⁸¹d. 6, c. 6, b. 1.

⁸²d. 6, c. 14, b. 1.

⁸³d. 7, c. 14, b. 1.

the Allied war cause. (TBMM, 1983: 4)⁸⁴ İnönü's main aim in explicating these developments was to show that Turkey in the post-war world needed to be treated in a just manner in return for its just attitude during the war. This is why he (1983: 4) declared that no one by any "justification" could demand anything from Turkey compromising its rights and territory. This was an indirect accusation of the Soviets for the demands they had put forth towards Turkey. İnönü in his speech implicitly deemed these demands to be unjust and the reasons behind them to be mere justifications. In other words, Soviet claims that it could not trust Turkey for the security of the Straits, that Turkey had violated the Montreux Convention by helping the Axis war efforts, that the 1921 Treaties delineating Turkish eastern border needed to be annulled because of Soviet weakness during the time when they were signed, all these claims were called by İnönü mere excuses. It might be inferred from here that the Turkish president was well aware that Soviet aim towards Turkey was a completely different one. Yet, even in this speech İnönü (1983, 4) did not fail to mention the usual hope Turks had that the relations with the Soviets would improve and once more become friendly.

One year later in the opening speech of November 1, 1946, İnönü openly called as unjust the claims that Turkey had not properly guarded the Straits during the war years and that they had been used to the benefit of Axis powers. (TBMM, 1983: 4)⁸⁵ As a response to both Soviet notes on the Straits on August and September 1946, he once

⁸⁴d. 7, c. 20, b. 1.

⁸⁵d. 8, c. 2, b. 1.

more expressed Turkish government's readiness to participate in an international conference for the amendment of Montreux Convention provided it was done within a framework of respect for Turkish territorial integrity and sovereign rights. As far as relations with Soviet Union per se were concerned, İnönü (1983:3) was of the opinion that the path towards improved and friendly relations was clear on condition that both sides observed UN principles.

The first time when the Turkish president spoke openly about Soviet demands towards Turkey and fully denounced them was on the opening speech of November 1, 1947. İnönü maintained that despite their wish to have cordial relations with the Soviet Union, the Turks were facing an unfair assault from the Soviets. He referred to the Soviet demands in three different ways. He termed them as "unjust", "unfair" and "unlawful". (TBMM, 1983: 4)⁸⁶ The *TBMM* session of that day reached such a point that the Republican Party's Eskisehir MP Emin Sazak (1983: 4) cursed the Soviet demands.

At this point one is faced with the question as to why such an open and harsh stance came only at the end of 1947. First of all, this should not come to mean that Turkish statesmen previously neglected or ignored these demands in their *TBMM* meetings. This is furthest from reality as the relations with the Soviet Union always were at the top of Turkish agenda. Yet, what can be inferred out of these moves is that Turkish statesmen previously tried to behave rather cautiously towards the Soviet

⁸⁶d. 8, c. 7, b. 1.

demands. Even though there were frequent implicit accusations and criticisms, the general stance of Turkish policymakers was soft, in the hope of not making the situation worse. Yet, the most important factor in my opinion is that prior to 1947, the US stance towards the *Turkish crisis* was ambiguous. Despite the frequent warnings from the embassies in Moscow and Ankara, the US policymaking circles were not united over the course of policy to be adopted towards Soviet Union. This being the case, Turkey was not sure about the degree of US support, thus assuming itself to be alone in face of Soviet demands, Turkish statesmen generally tried to appease the Soviets through not engaging in harsh declarations. All this changed with the announcement of Truman Doctrine on March 1947 when Turkish integration into the Western camp officially started. Hence, on November 1947 when İnönü made the aforementioned speech, Turkey was well-assured of US support.

Turkish president's cautious and peace-loving characteristics were also highly acknowledged in the foreign press, even somehow exaggerated. This is the case with an article French newspaper *Image du Monde* published on August 27, 1946, commenting on the new elected Turkish government of Prime Minister Recep Peker. The title of the article is itself quite striking "*Inonu is the last hope of the peace and of the Turks.*" It is claimed that the reason why Saraçoğlu was not reelected as Prime Minister in the general elections of July 21, 1946 was because of the need to appease the Russians. Saraçoğlu was well-known for its firm and uncompromising anti-Russian stance, thus, İnönü calculated that his presence as head of the government during already tense

relations with the Russians would only make the situation worse. In brief, *Image du Monde* claimed that the election of Peker's government came as a result of İnönü's direct intervention and deemed this to be a "gesture of goodwill" from the part of the Turkish President. (BCA, n.d.: 4)⁸⁷ It was as if İnönü had done a great favor to the Soviets and consequently had advanced the cause of world peace. Indeed it is also claimed (n.d.: 6), obviously in a more sarcastic than exaggerating manner, that the world peace was dependent upon two factors, the UN and "a deaf statesman: İnönü".

Other instances which prove Turkish cautious policy towards Soviet Union include the speech of Turkish Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in May 11, 1945 in occasion of winning the European war against the Nazis. Roughly two months after Molotov had denounced the 1925 Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality, Saraçoğlu (TBMM, 1983: 45)⁸⁸ said;

If we have a look back at the past, there we can see our friend and neighbor the Soviet state being burned and destroyed mercilessly from every side by the Nazi barbarians and we can see many innocents being killed. The Soviets have been exposed to the heavy devastation of this war and again they have carried the heavy burden. In face of this frightening scenery, the children of the people with unbroken courage by gathering around a child of the people like Stalin, have taken all their revenges one by one with Stalin's brilliant urging and administration...Many brilliant pages of this world war have been written by the Soviets and on every written page Stalin's living face can be seen.

⁸⁷ 30.10.0.0/63.426.19.

⁸⁸d. 7, c. 17, b. 53.

One would expect these words to be uttered more from a member of the *Politburo* than from the Prime Minister of a country with whom the Soviets had just denounced a treaty of friendship. Yet, it shows the cautious attitude Turkish policymakers were trying to pursue in relation with Soviet Union. One can sense such an attitude even after the Soviet demands became official with the note of August 8, 1946. The Turkish archives record that the owner of *İleri Demokrasi* newspaper published in İzmir, its main columnist and the publishing director were detained and sent to the court of grave crimes because of a piece written on September 5-6, 1946 on grounds that it could cause damage to the relations with Soviet Union. Following is a rough translation of the column's content (BCA, n.d.: 2)⁸⁹:

The degenerate Stalin, Molotov and company who can't put up with the world civilization, who are deprived of human feelings, know that the Turkish nation with the strength taken from its noble faith will not give a hand span of territory from its homeland and by joining with all the nations, with Anglo-Saxons at the top, to preserve the international prosperity and stability, will settle the account of the degenerate ones. The Turkish soldier says: The one who is a man does not speak from on top of the radio, he comes to the front. If he has to come, he has also something to see.

4.6. Concluding remarks

This chapter sought to demonstrate that Soviet Union pressed for a revision of the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention governing the Straits regime (to secure bases in the Straits) and for territorial adjustments in the two Turkish eastern provinces

⁸⁹ 30.1.0.0/128.832.3.

of Kars and Ardahan because it considered Turkey to be an important pillar of Soviet security system in its southern rim. One could trace evidence for this argument in Stalin's war-time and post-war deep-seated sense of insecurity. Apart from that, primary sources from U.S. State Department, from the Turkish Prime Ministerial Archive and from the minutes of the Turkish Grand National Meetings were used to substantiate this argument. Using the same primary sources, it becomes clear that post-war Soviet policy towards Turkey, apart from being defensive and security-oriented, was also quite cautious- a policy, which was also reciprocated by its Turkish counterparts.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed Soviet Union's demands from Turkey in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. It tried to provide a historically comprehensive framework of the crisis that ensued out of these demands and it did this mainly through applying a Turkish perspective on the developments. There were two basic components of Soviet demands.

Demands for being granted bases in the Straits and for joint administration of Straits' defense constitute one of these components. They were analyzed in a historically detailed way in Chapter I. The conclusion derived out of the research concerning this issue demonstrated that Soviet Union did not consider fulfillment of its goals in the Straits an end in itself. Rather they were a means to an end. This is why Chapter I dealt extensively with the US ambassadorial dispatches to the State Department and with the declarations of the main Turkish policymakers which were accessed from the Prime Ministerial Archives. Research in this thesis shows that there is a perfect match between the views contained in the US diplomatic telegrams and the ones expressed by Turkish statesmen. Both concurred on the fact that the main aim behind Soviet demands on the Straits was to take military and political control of Turkey, to make Turkey a *client state* in the same way as Central-Eastern Europe and Baltic countries. Yet, this aim of the Soviets clashed with US security interests in the broader Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern regions and thus faced US firm stance and firm support towards Turkey.

Territorial demands in Turkey's eastern territories and Black Sea coastal cities were the the second constitutive elements of post-war Soviet demands. Chapter II dealt with the various issues pertaining to this question. Research in this respect focused on primary sources from the Prime Ministerial Archives and the minutes of Turkish Grand National Assembly plenary sessions. The conclusion showed that, similar to the Straits question, these demands too were not a goal *per se*. Not only this, Soviet territorial

demands cannot be substantiated on historical grounds either. Research shows that they are based on a huge distortion of the historical reality and mostly rely on fabricated historical arguments. This explains better than anything else then why the territorial demands were not an aim in itself. To reiterate, they were means to facilitate Soviet designs of subjecting Turkey to its complete authority.

Chapter III clearly showed Turkey's key role in the post-war Soviet security system and made explicit the reasons why Soviet Union was so persistent in its demands towards Turkey. At the same time, it also showed the level of cautiousness in Soviet foreign policy given that in the Turkish case, the path leading to military and political domination was not as smooth as it was in Central-Eastern Europe and the Baltics.

Last but not least, it is indispensable to consider the importance and significance of the research in this thesis. What does it show in relation with Turkish foreign policy and with the broader framework of Turkish-Soviet relations? This research is revealing in many regards. It strikingly shows that Turkish foreign policy adopted a completely new orientation as a result of the Soviet demands and the perceived threat in them. Starting with the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, Turkey gradually entered a phase of full integration into the Western economic and security structures. This process reached its peak in the 1950s under the three successive administrations of Adnan Menderes. Ankara took the unprecedented step of sending its own soldiers overseas to fight in the Korean War with the only aim of showing uncompromising loyalty to the Western

alliance. On February 18, 1952, following Turkey's entry into NATO, the process of economic and security integration into the Western alliance was completed. Turkey's foreign policy had adopted a completely new orientation, what may be called *unconditional Westernism*, and the roots of all this change point to the post-war Soviet demands from Turkey.

The pro-Western re-alignment of Turkish foreign policy is in itself striking because up until the Second World War, Turkish statesmen had been very cautious of not undertaking any step that would put their country under Western influence. Treating World War II Turkey's Alliance with Britain and France as merely a need imposed by the war exigencies, Turkey since its foundation in 1923 had followed an extremely cautious policy towards the West. This was not the case with its policy towards Soviet Union. Since October revolution, Ankara had approached Moscow as being a natural ally. Atatürk himself, the architect of Turkish foreign policy, when it came to the post-war economic reconstruction had turned to the Soviets instead of the West. He was apprehensive of the penetration of Western capital in Turkey and the impact this might have on Turkey's subordination to Western interests. This policy of Atatürk remained constant until the end of the Second World War. Indeed, the first economic aid Turkey received from the West was under the Truman Doctrine on March 1947. Ankara accepted this aid precisely because it felt threatened from Soviet demands and needed Western support. Even within these circumstances, Hasanli shows in his research that there were still elements within Turkish society who were cautious towards Western

economic aid and feared this might subject their country to Western interests. What is more, Hasanli points out that Turkish press during the time in question even put forward the view of rejecting this economic aid. (Hasanlı, 2013: 298-299) Soviet Embassy in Ankara directly accused Peker's government of rendering Turkey economically a Western satellite. (Hasanlı, 2013: 300) All these facts reveal that from an economic and political perspective, *Westernism* was a new phenomenon and trend in Turkish foreign policy. Although culturally Turkey since its foundation had followed a strictly Western path of development, its foreign policy was quite the opposite. 1945-1946 Soviet demands produced a paradigmatic shift in Turkey's foreign policy. The process of realignment and integration into the Western alliance started under İnönü's presidency in 1947 and found its full expression with the Democratic Party administration of Adnan Menderes that came to power following May 14, 1950 general elections.

Concerning the broader framework of Turkish-Soviet relations, the findings of this research are important in that they show the great value Turkey attached to Soviet friendship. This is quite comprehensible given Soviet Union's status as a great power neighbor. Cooperation and friendly relations with Soviet Union was a central pillar and a major determinant factor of Turkish foreign policy. This fact was fully acknowledged by all Turkish policymakers starting from Atatürk. This remained constant even during the tense post-war years when Turkey was confronted with the Soviet demands. This thesis clearly showed Turkish statesmen cautious attitude and efforts in trying to preserve Soviet friendship even during the *heat* of the 1945-1946 crisis. It was only the

persistence of Soviet demands and Stalin's inflexibility in this regard that left no choice to Ankara but to turn to the West for assistance. Yet, attempts to forge cordial relations with the Soviets did not cease, with the particular exception of Menderes administrations. For a decade in the 1950s, Adnan Menderes exerted all his efforts to make Turkey a full Western ally and neglected Soviet element in Turkish foreign policy. This is why this thesis refers to Menderes' policy as *unconditional Westernism*. Yet, in the 1960s the picture completely changed and Soviet friendship returned to occupy a central position in Turkish foreign policy agenda. For a decade (1950-1960), Soviet Union's value as the main component in Turkey's security framework was overlooked. Yet, this *strategic blunder* was later corrected.

To conclude, research in this thesis showed the real aims of Soviet demands from Turkey and in this respect showed that Turkey was a clear case where Soviet and US interests clashed with one another. Then, was Turkey a major factor in the outbreak of the Cold War? Although after this research it is tempting to answer in the affirmative, the question still needs to undergo serious academic investigation.

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