

THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST:  
THE TURKISH CASE

A Master's Thesis

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September 2006



To My Wife, Zeliş

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
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by

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR: THE TURKISH CASE

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This thesis aims to analyze the “contribution” of Turkey to the origins of the Cold War in the Middle East. The main argument of this thesis, in this context, is that the immediate post war environment in the middle east did not resemble something different from the years-old strategic environment in the middle east, main characteristic of which is continuous great power rivalry for hegemony over the region. At this juncture Turkey’s contribution happened to be a catalyst in the deterioration of the pragmatist wartime partnership between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. Turkish policy makers stressed the power and inevitability of Russian attack in the event of lack of British and American opposition. During the period concerned, in the Middle East, the danger to the security of the free world did arise not so much from the threat of direct Soviet military aggression. It mainly aroused from continuation of the unfavorable historical trends. Therefore, imperial rivalries and dynastic ambitions suffice to explain most part of the postwar situation in the Middle East and thereby gave enough clue for the origins of the Cold War in that part of the world.

Keywords: Turkey, the Middle East, Origins, Cold War, Rivalry.

## ÖZET

### SOĞUK SAVAŞIN ORTADOĞU'DAKİ ÇIKIŞ KAYNAKLARI: TÜRKİYE OLAYI

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Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler

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Bu tez Soğuk Savaşın Ortadoğu'da çıkış kökenlerine Türkiye'nin katkısını analiz etmektedir. Tezin temel savı, savaş sonrası Ortadoğu'daki uluslararası ortamın tarihsel büyük güç çekişmesinin devamı niteliğinde olduğu ve Türkiye'nin bu bağlamda katkısının büyük güçlerin savaş sırasında kurdukları pragmatist ilişkinin bozulmasında katalizör görevini yerine getirdiğidir. Türk politikacıları devamlı olarak savaş sonrası Sovyet gücünü ve Amerika ve İngiltere'nin bu güce karşı durmaması halinde Sovyet saldırısının kaçınılmaz olduğunu her ortamda vurgulamaya çalışmışlardır. Ancak, belirtilen dönemde Ortadoğu'da güvenlik tehdidi Sovyet askeri saldırısından çok tarihsel çıkar çatışmalarının devamından ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu yüzden emperyalist çıkar çatışmaları ve bu çıkar çatışmalarından dolayı ortaya çıkan tehlikeli rekabet savaş sonrası Ortadoğu'da ortaya çıkan durumu açıklamak için yeterli olabilmekte ve bu bölgede Soğuk Savaşın kökenleri konusunda yeterli ipucu sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Ortadoğu, Köken, Soğuk Savaş, Rekabet.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	: Central Intelligence Agency
FRUS	: Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SWNCC	: State-War-Navy-Coordinating Committee (US)
UN	: United Nations
US	: United States
USA	: United States of America
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWI	: World War One
WWII	: World War Two

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"The term -Middle East- is a geopolitical invention - void of any scientific basis."<sup>1</sup>

Before launching into the main current of the thesis, a question exists in relation to terminology, which is inescapable for a project involving the arbitrary term, "Middle East." Although the scope of this thesis does not necessarily deal with as vast a topic as the postwar developments of the Middle East in great detail, it is, however, highly relevant to define clearly what the term "Middle East" means, given the centrality of this terminology to the subject discussed. Naturally this is not a simple question to investigate because of historical as well as contemporary complications and deepest issues it raises in itself. The question of terminology is a hard task since there has been no single, agreed definition of the geographic and political boundaries of the Middle East. There have been only sign posts for inquiry which have in turn opened up horizons for further inquiries. On the other side, involving a corollary question of whether the boundaries of this political rather than geographical area deemed to extend and include Turkey at least at the time span of this study leads this investigation into another terminological impasse.

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<sup>1</sup> Kaveh Farrokh, "What does the term "Middle East" Mean?;" available from <http://www.rozanehmagazine.com/MarchApril06/AmiddleEast.html>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2006.

Throughout history the descriptive term of “Middle East” has been adopted by its inventors and employers for an amorphous geographical area of the world, embracing the original coastlands of the Persian Gulf to a broad region stretching from the Black Sea to equatorial Africa and from India to the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> This confusing term, therefore, had elastic political and geographic applications in international relations studies. Firuz Kazemzadeh put this case, in a sense criticizing the American Captain Alfred Mahan Thayer’s Middle East: “When used carelessly, it tends to create an imaginary unity where none exists in fact.”<sup>3</sup> Due to this ambiguity, in each time period its definition has been changed- enlarged or shrunken- depending on the very interest of the employers of this term.

Any venture in defining the Middle East region and delimiting its boundaries, whether geographical or political has been a difficult task for every geographer, historian, journalist, and bureaucrat for several reasons. As a main reason there has been no official document that contained a definite definition of the Middle East as a geographical or political region. Rather every individual, institution or even the governments have employed their own practical criteria to define whatever they believed to be the Middle East region.<sup>4</sup> The second reason of difficulties with delimitation of the boundaries of the Middle East might well be that there has been nothing in common in the region that keeps its constituent parts together.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, it has been characterized by national, linguistic, religious, ethnic and ideological lines that kept “the countries in the general area of the Middle East” away from building a regional union along these lines. As a natural result, it has never been a region in its own right, but rather a concept devised to serve the policies of

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2 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (New York: Harper, 1966), 9.

3 Firuz Kazemzadeh, “The West and the Middle East,” *World Politics* 11 ( April 1959):468.

4 Roderic H. Davison, “Where is the Middle East?,” *Foreign Affairs* 38 (July 1960):665.

5 C.G. Smith, “Emergence of the Middle East”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (July 1968):4; Peter Beaumont, Gerald Henry Blake, and J. Malcolm Wagstaff, eds. *The Middle East: A Geographical Study* (London: David Fulton, 1988), 4-6.

outsiders, and the concept changed its meaning in accordance with the security conceptions and practices of its employers.<sup>6</sup>

Tracing back the origin of discussions about the term Middle East as a geographical, if not political, unit one ultimately has to go back to one of the architects of this popular term, not only in western countries but throughout the world, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan.<sup>7</sup> Its origin was generally assumed, in academic circles, to be rooted in his article entitled “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” published in the September 1902 issue of *National Review*. Yet over the years, different perspectives have emerged on the worth of his definition, but the usage of the term for this part of the world has gradually become widespread. Later on March 1, 1921, the first official endorsement of the term against the slightly older term “Near East” came by the establishment of the Middle Eastern Department in the Colonial Office by Winston Churchill.<sup>8</sup> But it was not until the Second World War that the “term's practical as well as intellectual foothold”<sup>9</sup> was given by “a series of accidents in military organization.”<sup>10</sup> This wartime usage of the term gave rise to the popularity of the term both among official and academic circles and ordinary citizens.

Meanwhile mainly as a consequence of the British military formations and their wartime area of responsibility during WWII, the slight distinction in the use of

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6 Don Peretz, *The Middle East Today*, 6th ed. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 3; Pinar Bilgin, “Whose Middle East? Geopolitical Inventions and Practices of Security,” *International Relations* 18 (January 2004): 26; Davison, “Where is the Middle East?,” 669-70.

7 In some writings General Sir Thomas Gordon, a British intelligence officer and director of the Imperial Bank of Persia from 1893 to 1914, was credited with coining the term “Middle East.” For detailed discussions, see C. R. Koppes, “Captain Mahan, General Gordon and the Origin of the Term ‘Middle East’,” *Middle East Studies* 12 (1976): 95-8.

8 Winston Churchill was then the Secretary of State for colonies, the United Kingdom. Davison, “Where is the Middle East?,” 668.

9 Pinar Bilgin. “Inventing Middle East? The Making of Regions through Security Discourses,” in *The Middle East in a Globalized World*, eds. Bjørn Ulav Utvik and Knut S. Vikør (Bergen: Nordic Society for the Middle Eastern Studies, 2000), 13.

10 Smith, “Emergence of the Middle East,” 6-8; Beaumont, Blake, and Wagstaff, *Geographical Study*, 1. By establishment of a British Command-in-Chief in Cairo and subsequent expanding of its interest area, “a very natural but regrettable misuse of the term Middle East that it may be difficult to avoid in the official histories of the war,” emerged, see George Clerk, “Address at the Annual General Meeting of the Society, Held on June 1944,” *The Geographical Journal* 104 (July - August 1944): 5. Also Winston Churchill in one of his books wrote that “I had always felt that the name ‘Middle East’ for Egypt, the Levant, Syria, and Turkey was ill-chosen. This was the Near East...,” quoted in Davison, “Where is the Middle East?,” 670.

the terms "Near" and "Middle" became much more blurred. Historically, the Near East referred to the territory east of Greece, including the Levant and Asia Minor, up to the eastern borders of Persia an Indus Valley, and from the Black Sea in the north to Egypt in the South.<sup>11</sup> For a certain period it largely overlapped with territory of the Ottoman Empire before the First World War. But after a short “process of unnecessary assimilation”<sup>12</sup> which was initiated around the second half of the nineteenth century especially by Mahan’s article, the term “Middle East” came to refer to different geographical and political areas during the war. The Near East comprised “the Balkans, Turkey, Rhodes and Dodecanese, Cyprus, Syria and the Lebanon, Palestine, and sometimes Egypt, whereas the Middle East comprised Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, and the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, some of these countries which had been previously known and appreciated under the term “Near East” came within the scope of these wartime British military formations during the war. These countries (including Turkey), after all, continued to be referred to especially by British statesmen as “Middle East” countries.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the American government continued unconsciously its tradition to use the “Near East” to refer to “the countries in the general area of the Middle East” without offering any major distinction between the two terms.<sup>15</sup>

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11 Clerk, “Address,” 5.

12 Percy Loraine, “Perspectives of the Near East,” *The Geographical Journal* 102 (July 1943): 6.

13 This classification was made by Colonel Lawrence Martin, then Chief of the Division of Maps in the Library of Congress of the US. His demarcation was also agreed upon by the Geographical Society at its annual meeting in 1944 and decided to be used contrary to “official nomenclature.” Clerk, “Address,” 4-5.

14 Peretz, 3.

15 Aside from usage of these terms by public media in the US, there appeared an inconsistency in official usage of these terms. In an official report of American Department of State, it was mentioned that the term “Middle East” employed in this document “denote the general area comprising Greece, Turkey, Iran, the Arab states, and Israel.” On the other hand the traditional term “Near East” applied only to the Arab states and Israel.” See Department of State Report, “Conference of Middle East Chiefs of Mission (Istanbul, February 14-21,1951):Agreed Conclusions and Recommendations,” available from <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/docs.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 May 2006.

## II

Turkey has been no exception to this terminological chaos. Various terms were attributed especially by outsiders to designate the geographical and political niche of Turkey. While the term “Near East” or “Middle East” was generally used to designate the geographical area occupied by Turkey for a long time, these terms were recently supplanted, whenever appropriate by the term “Europe” especially after it started to take part in key Western institutions or in a recent usage by the Great(er) Middle East. This situation becomes more explicit when one deals with some special agencies of the United Nations or in regional offices of the Great powers principally involved in this region. In these institutions, the place of Turkey was referred to either in the relatively older terms of “Near East,” and “Middle East” or in “Europe.” Indicative of this attitude might well be the position of Turkey in the eyes of the US Department of State. While Turkish affairs had been under the jurisdiction of the Division of the Near Eastern Affairs of the US Department of State, it switched to the European Affairs Bureau in the 1970s.

Eventually these terminological ambiguities emanated mainly from the geographical as well as geopolitical location of Turkey as a borderline case for all these terminological discussions. Although the content of this thesis is not strictly geographical in its context, strategic and political matters in the immediate post-Second World War years were tremendously dependent on geostrategic circumstances. In this thesis, Turkey is assumed to be in the abstract boundaries of the Middle East. However, under the shadow of above mentioned terminological chaos, to place Turkey in the Middle East, at least at the transitional period the world was going through after the war, is bound to be arbitrary, and, therefore, needs justification. Looking at the international relations literature, governmental reports or



diplomatic correspondence between states about this region, Turkey has been included or excluded from this region depending on determinants such as historical background, culture, religion, ethnicity, or political alignment.

This thesis is primarily interested in the perceived importance of the strategic geography occupied by Turkey in the immediate postwar years. The effects of these perceptions, along with other variables such as political and military aspirations of the Turkish governments which contributed to the origins of the Cold War in this part of the world, will be discussed. Determinants used for the Turkish Cold War assumptions here are necessarily different from those who would wish to use other levels of analysis. Given the case this study's determinants would firstly be the political and economic policies of the Great Powers in that part of the world, where Turkey was at first, out of necessity, considered in the Middle East and secondly, the place of Turkey for military planning purposes of Washington and London.

However, it should be noted here that Turkey, regardless of its geographical location as a borderline case, though the bulk of its landmass is geographically located in Asia, has always denied belonging to the Middle East. Since its inception in 1923, Turkey, under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, took the West as a model for its development and initiated an extensive program of cultural Westernization. The new Republic also put itself in a radical cultural and political transformation in order to break its historical links with the Ottoman Empire and for the family of nations along with westernized principles.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Turkey took a great leap on the way of westernization and it presented a transition from the Near (Middle) East realm to the European realm because of its proximity in ideological terms, and its political affiliation with the West.

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<sup>16</sup> For more detailed information about this subject, see Çiğdem Nas, "Turkish Identity and the Perception of Europe," *Marmara Journal of European Studies* 9 (January 2001): 177-90; Halil İnalcık, "Turkey between Europe and the Middle East," *Foreign Policy* (Ankara) (July 1980): 7-16.

On the other hand, apart from the problem of political and cultural identity, Turkey continued to be construed in the Middle East realm due to its representations by the leading powers of the western world in postwar security arrangements. In other words, in the immediate postwar years strategic and regional security considerations were of such importance as to override other considerations which linked Turkey with the West. From the perspective of most Western countries, “Turkey was the only European country in this part of the world” and a security actor in the Middle East rather than in Europe.<sup>17</sup> When Turkey first applied for membership in NATO, it was rejected by the United States and Great Britain on the premises that “Turkey did not belong either to Western Europe or the Atlantic and consequently it could not join the Atlantic regional group.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed it was mainly Great Britain who was enthusiastic about dragging Turkey into its schemes for some kind of regional defense pact in the Middle East separate from a defense pact in Western Europe and after NATO was established, it was anxious to block Turkey's entry into it.<sup>19</sup>

The ambiguity regarding where Turkey belonged, brings with it the question of on what basis the countries are “located” in specific regions. Pınar Bilgin argues that “which states are covered in one spatial conception and omitted from another is indicative of one's conception of security, perception of threat, and the political project s/he upholds.”<sup>20</sup> The security agenda of both American and British

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17 Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Dışışlerinde 34 Yıl: Anılar-Yorumlar*, vol.1, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1987), 159; Bernard Lewis, “Discussion on Turkey between Middle East and Europe,” *Foreign Policy* (Ankara) (July 1980): 17. He quoted a conversation that took place in the early days of NATO between the Chief of the British General Staff, Field Marshal Slim and Turkish Generals in which the Field Marshal frequently referred several times to “Here in the Middle East” which rather annoyed the Turkish Generals and eventually one of them said, “But Field Marshal, you must remember that Turkey is a European country.” To which Marshal Slim said, “Yes, of course we all know that. The problem is that Turkey is the only European country in this part of the world.”

18 E. Athanassopoulou, “Western Defense Developments and Turkey's Search for Security in 1948,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32 (April 1996): 101; Knox Helm, “Turkey and Her Defence Problems,” *International Affairs* 40 (October 1954): 437-8.

19 For a comprehensive account for this subject, see Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, “Turkey's Participation in the Middle East Command and its Admission to NATO, 1950-52,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35 (October 1999): 70-102.

20 For detailed elaboration, see Bilgin, “Making of Regions,” 10-37.

administrations required to involve Turkey in a settlement comprising Middle Eastern countries rather than NATO. Great Britain's concerns about military arrangements in the Middle East and placing Turkey in the middle of these arrangements appeared as the main reason for identification of Turkey as a Middle East country. By this way, Great Britain tried to justify its insistence in the postwar era to drag Turkey into their Middle East security arrangements. Therefore, Turkey, in the years following the Second World War, found itself described as one of the Middle East rather than as a Western region. Western powers including the US characterized Turkey by its geostrategic position as a "buffer zone" against Soviet expansionism to the Middle East area. Moreover, Turkey, itself, used its strategic conjuncture in order to seek protection from the West and argued that its geographical position made it the key to the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> In sum, Turkey's perceived importance was related to the Middle East rather than Europe at least till the mid-1950s when Turkey's place for the security of Europe was gradually accepted as a fact.

Given the above mentioned fact, the question of the "contribution" of Turkey to the origins of the Cold War in the Middle East has been a source of scholarly debate among historians and international relations experts. On the one side of the debate, there are those, who emphasize how Turkey was "victimized" in the immediate post-war period vis-à-vis Soviet threats and demands and how the "guardian angel" of the free world, the United States of America came to Turkey's aid in order to protect this freedom-loving country, which was brave enough to stand on its own feet vis-à-vis the "evil" Soviets.<sup>22</sup> On the other side, there are those, who

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21 Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures during the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies* (January 2000): 108.

22 There is no shortage of literature on the cold war's origins. Turkey, however, does not seem to have received a similar degree of attention in this growing literature. Its position has been covered briefly in most of the standard accounts of the origins of the Cold War and has not been

refuse to be naïve as to intentions of United States and assert that the state of relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey provided a good pretext for those American decision makers, who believed in the necessity of enhancing US interest towards the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> The ideas of the first camp can easily be referred to as the orthodox view whereas the ideas of the second camp have a lot in common with the revisionist view. This thesis aims to display that Turkish perceptions as to Soviet intentions on Turkey and the consequent foreign policy pursued by it provided the United States and its western allies with a good opportunity to enhance the strategic interests of the West vis-à-vis the East. This main argument is based on the understanding that the post War regional and international context was, in principle, not new to Turkey.

Firstly, the western interest in the Middle East and the policies pursued by the West to gain control of the region vis-à-vis the strategic rival, i.e. the Tsarist Russia, was not new. What was new was the primary actor promoting such policies. The end of the Second World War caused the replacement of Great Britain with the United

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subject to systematic and scholarly research. See for example, Altemur Kılıç, *Turkey and the World* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1959); Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 4-7; Ferenc Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); George Kirk, *The Middle East, 1945-1950* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 21-56; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, vol.1: Years of Decisions, 1945* (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955-1956), 303-5, 312-4, 338; and *Memoirs, vol.2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1953* (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955-1956), 98-115; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 336-52; John C. Campbell, *Defense of the Middle East: Problems of American Policy* (New York: Harper, 1958), 154-82. Only exception to this can be Bruce Kuniholm's book, *Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). In his book, Kuniholm, relying almost entirely on American archival sources and documents, placed his emphasis on regional developments in the Near East and evolution of American foreign policy toward Turkey along with Greece and Iran. Exploring the developments in Greece, Turkey and Iran in the immediate post-war era, he tried to put the origins of the Cold War in that part of the world within "Great Power" rivalry. While he made it clear the influence of great power interests on the origins of the Cold War, he focused traditional Soviet patterns of pursuing national interests in that region and assumed the American response as the result of Soviet intimidation.

23 Interesting examples of one form or another of the "revisionist" argument can be found in Barton J. Bernstein, "American Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cold War," in *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 56-57; David J. Alvarez, *Bureaucracy and Cold War Diplomacy: The United States and Turkey, 1943-1946* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1980); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 218-45; George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: An Atlantic Monthly Press Book, 1967), 317; Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," *The Journal of American History* 71 (March 1985): 807-17; Melvyn P. Leffler, *Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 142-6.

States. On the other hand, the strategic rival was also not new: Tsarist Russia was replaced by the Soviet Union owing to a regime change in this country. Nevertheless, this regime change could not alter the long-standing strategic objectives of Russian foreign policy towards this region. All in all, Western-Russian rivalry in the Middle East was not new.

Secondly, Russian foreign policy rhetoric toward Turkey was also not new. What was new was the way Turkey perceived the possible outcome of such rhetoric. Despite the provisional interwar “peace” between the Soviet Union and Turkey owing to conjunctural international circumstances, the commence of the Second World War brought traditional Russian foreign policy rhetoric vis-à-vis Turkey back to the international scene. Nevertheless, Turkish perceptions regarding this rhetoric were quite different in 1945 than it had been in 1939. In a nutshell, except the interwar period, Turkey had always been “victimized” by Russian/Soviet strategic intentions and threats. However, because the United States was a newcomer to the Middle East, the state of Turco-Soviet affairs was a new pretext for it to get involved in regional affairs.

Given the above mentioned reasons, it is not easy to say that the US came to aid Turkey because it was bound to defend a freedom-loving nation. Thus, it is easier to argue that the US had already intended to get involved in Middle Eastern affairs in order to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of Great Britain from the region. Secondly, the US intended to prevent a possible Soviet penetration into the Middle East, which had already gained a favorable position on the world scene by establishing effective control on central and eastern European countries. In this context it was natural to support a country which stood just in between the Soviet sphere of influence and the Middle East, such as Turkey. If Turkey was not that

eager to place itself in the Western camp, the US would probably have to sustain much more political and economic effort to gain Turkish support. Besides, US containment strategy would become much harder to sustain in the case of a possible Turkish opposition against American demands. Thus, Turkish plea for help against the “new Soviet threat” rendered American penetration into Turkey rational, easier and cost-effective.

As indicated above in this chapter, this thesis aims to analyze the “contribution” of Turkey to the origins of the Cold War in the Middle East. The main argument of this thesis, in this context, is that Turkey’s contribution to the origins of the Cold War in the Middle East was not of primary significance, in the sense that it only facilitated American penetration into the region. This argument is based on the fact that the immediate post war environment in the middle east did not resemble something different from the years-old strategic environment in the middle east, main characteristic of which is continuous great power rivalry for hegemony over the region. Thus, Turkey’s role as regional power was limited to maintain its survival amidst this great power rivalry. Turkey preferred to be in the Western camp in this rivalry for reasons to be explained later in the following chapters and thus, contributed to easier American penetration in the region.

In the light of these above mentioned arguments, this thesis focuses on the questions of the origins of the Cold War in general, the role of Middle Eastern affairs was in the onset of the Cold War, the strategic environment in the Middle East in the immediate post war era and the contribution of Turkey to the onset of the Cold War. This research depends mainly on detailed analysis of relevant primary sources. The writings of prominent authors on the Cold War were also analyzed and used in this study. The first chapter analyses the sources of great power rivalry in Middle East,

whereas the second chapter focuses on Turkey's position in the Middle East in the immediate post war era.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **SOURCES OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

#### **2.1 Interpretations of Great Power Rivalry in the Middle East**

“The successful termination of war against our [U.S.A.] enemies will find a world profoundly changed in respect of relative national military strengths, a change more comparable indeed with that occasioned by the fall of Rome than with any other change occurring during the succeeding fifteen hundred years.”<sup>24</sup>

At the conclusion of the Second World War, the elimination of Germany as well as Japan - economic and military powers of the pre-war world from the international arena, and the displacement of the old Great powers of Europe to less significant positions altogether altered the international arena to the advantage of the two formerly isolationist and isolated powers, the United States and Soviet Union respectively, and thereby, paved the way for them to step into the international scene as major world powers with overwhelming military preponderance. In addition to the novelty of that new systemic factor in the international order, there was also a complex situation, completely different from the pre-war multi-centric era in which either power could defeat one of these powers due to their relative strength and

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24 US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1944, vol.1, Memorandum by the Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State: Fundamental Military Factors in Relation to Discussions Concerning Territorial Trusteeships and Settlements, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966), 701-2 (hereafter cited as FRUS followed by appropriate year, volume, and page).



geographic positions.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, a continuing danger of war existed at any time and geography in the “world island.” The new world order, politically and militarily polarized around these two superpowers, therefore, can easily be described with the concocted a former slogan of an original Soviet leader, Leon Trotsky, “No war and no peace.”<sup>26</sup>

The Cold War was the longest and one of the most frustrating experiences for the history of humanity and it virtually dominated the entire second half of the twentieth century. Historians paid little attention to understand the key elements of this period, especially of its early stages. Consequently, no comprehensive work emerged among a large amount of literature about the origins that leave us with a sufficiently clear and unambiguous view of that historical epoch. In that sense a great deal of confusion about that phenomenon arises from a certain sense of uncertainty about its key questions. That is partly due to a lack of a multi-archival research, which was impossible to do for the Cold War historians. Since the archives of Warsaw Pact countries<sup>27</sup> and many other countries which played a key role at the onset of the Cold War such as Turkey were kept closed to scholarly inspection, a great deal of Cold War debate remains inconclusive. The cold war historians, therefore, still know very little about the motivations behind the Soviet foreign policy during the postwar years that had direct policy impacts when compared with available information from the U.S.A. Only reports of speeches and interviews granted by the Soviet leaders bestowed the historians the chance of drawing some conclusions about Soviet motives.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, “The Cold War: A Balance Sheet,” *Russian Review* 9 (April 1950): 85-6.

<sup>27</sup> Despite the selective opening of archives in Moscow and former Warsaw Pact countries, there are still classification restrictions on important Soviet primary sources.

Many Cold War historians (indeed many of them of American origin), who dealt with that phenomenon in this situation of uncertainty, offered a number of interpretations in order to provide definitive answers to significant questions regarding the origins and evolution of the Cold War. These interpretations were generally categorized into three essential schools of Cold War historiography; namely, the “traditionalist” or “orthodox,” “revisionist” and “post-revisionist.” The focal issue of former schools of interpretations in Cold War literature had mostly been about the effort to establish culpability on either side while seeking to explain the motives and intentions behind their foreign policies and the interactions between them. In the 1970s a new dimension of interpretation was pioneered by John Lewis Gaddis.

In the traditional or orthodox school of Cold War historiography that dominated the international literature in Western countries at the height of the Cold War, there was the stark tendency to place responsibility in some way for everything that took place in the immediate post war years upon the ideologically driven expansionist Soviet Union. The traditionalists, as natural allies in furthering official history written by contemporary American policymakers,<sup>28</sup> put the very premise that the US along with Great Britain<sup>29</sup> in the immediate years following the Second World War had to implement a firm policy towards the Soviet Union after “realizing” the hard fact that Moscow would not cooperate in the postwar effort to

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28 The spadework of this Cold War historiography had already been done by “those who were waging it” and “felt obliged to defend their views.” Therefore the question of the Cold War, for a considerable time, became as an issue more than academics with few exceptions but for policymakers at that time. Brian Thomas, “Cold War Origins II,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (January 1968): 183. The books and articles written by those who assumed several positions in the administration during these crucial years for beginning of the Cold War still dominates the orthodox interpretation.

29 In most cases, the US and the Soviet Union were assumed as the main actors in the Cold War while the role of the Great Britain at least behind the curtain was mostly neglected. Therefore a British contribution to the emergence of the Cold War should be taken into account. Terry H. Anderson, *The United States, Great Britain, and the Cold War, 1944-1947* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1981); Henry Butterfield Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-American: The US-UK Alliance and the Emerging Cold War, 1943-1946* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ray Merrick, “The Russia Committee of the British Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1946-7,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (July 1985): 453-68

construct a peaceful world order as supposed during the war. All that was done by the anti-communist camp, under the natural leadership of the US, therefore, was a mere reaction to a number of Soviet acts posing a threat to the “free world.” According to their contentions, Soviet Russia alone, under the leadership of “power-hungry” dictator Stalin, was inherently expansionist and operated on the basis of the belief in this historically destined conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States and other Western countries.<sup>30</sup> Stalin, most of them argued, aimed to impose communism around the globe by employing military aggression as well as fifth-column penetration and subversion. Thus, most of the blame for the responsibility for the outbreak and evolution of that historical epoch that bedeviled the world for half a century, was attributed solely to the Soviet Union.

Later in the 1960s, after historians of the orthodox school had made serious intellectual headway with their interpretation, a new epoch in cold war historiography was opened by the so-called revisionist historians. They challenged the uncritically accepted orthodox accounts of “official history” and the “myths” of that official historiography. Different from their traditionalist counterparts, revisionist historians added the more sophisticated and formerly unquestioned issues of economic and atomic bomb into the scope of inquiry, and reversed the blame for the responsibility for igniting the post war conflict, though not all, principally on the United States. Some radical revisionist historians, following the contentions of Williams and Kolko,<sup>31</sup> stressed that instead of democratic principles and ideals, “provocative” and “imperialistic” policies of Washington caused the Cold War. Such policies were shaped by economic motives, especially in search for markets, raw

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30 Raymond L. Garthoff. “Estimating Soviet Military Intentions and Capabilities,” in *Watching the Bear: Essays on CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union*, eds. Gerald K. Haines and Robert E. Leggett (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2003); available from <http://www.cia.gov/csi/books/watchingthebear/article05.html>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2006.

31 William Appleman Williams, *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

materials, and investment opportunities described as “open door” diplomacy. Its unilateral actions in order to shape the postwar world order, in which liberal capitalism could flourish, had been the determining force behind the American diplomacy in postwar era. Thus, accepting as the traditionalists did, though at minimized and to a limited level, some provocative conducts of Stalin in postwar years, which were contrary to the spirit of the Yalta Declaration, they rejected the illusion of the traditionalists that the nature of the Soviet dictatorship had changed.<sup>32</sup> They argued that the Soviet Union did not have a “master plan” in the postwar era such as “world revolution,” but instead a search for security in its alleged *cordon sanitaire*, what in other terms was called by some revisionist scholars, “the legitimate interests of the USSR.”<sup>33</sup> The Cold War was, therefore, caused not due to Russia’s expansionist or imperialistic policies after the war, as argued hitherto by traditionalists, but conversely the Cold War was the cause of Russia’s expansionist or imperialistic policies.<sup>34</sup> In other words, unjustifiable Soviet acts in the postwar era were indeed a reaction to external challenge, notably earlier aggressive moves on the part of Washington and London, and, therefore, simply defensive in nature. Should the legitimate interests of Moscow were recognized and should American politicians had not been mesmerized by the monopoly of Atomic bomb, most of them argued, a kind of compromise could have been anticipated.

While a continuing debate between traditionalist and revisionist historians had been taking place in the historiography of the Cold War, a new school of interpretation emerged in the 1970s, labeled “post-revisionism,” and was pioneered

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32 James P. Warburg, “Cold War Tragedy,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 7 (September 1954): 326.

33 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Plesbakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), passim; John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), passim; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

34 Thomas, “Cold War,” 184-5.

by John Lewis Gaddis.<sup>35</sup> The historians in this school supported traditionalists or revisionists in some issues or refuted some of their contentions and thereby tried, to some extent, to draw a synthesis. Nonetheless, post-revisionist historians put much more emphasis not only on the evolution of the “Grand Alliance” during wartime, but also on the determinants of foreign policy addendum regarding economic considerations in the postwar era or ideological motives for the post war world order of the US. The major representative of this school, John Lewis Gaddis, counted these forces- “domestic politics, bureaucratic inertia, quirks of personality, perceptions, accurate or inaccurate, of Soviet intentions”- in addition to the economic forces to analyze the evolution of the American policy toward the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> More emphasis on war time diplomacy, and many other foreign policy forces gave the opportunity to comprehend the intentions and motives of each members of the “Grand Alliance,” which, in turn, paved the way for post war conflict. Deviating slightly from culpability, post-revisionists, however, positioned themselves nearer the orthodox view than the revisionists.<sup>37</sup>

Cold War historiography of Turkey, whether written by indigenous or American scholars reflect the orthodox view.<sup>38</sup> Given the timeframe when these works were published- at the height of the Cold War- and limited access on the which part of the Turkish scholars to documents have since become available this is understandable.

However, it is more than timely to take a fresh look, under new evidence, at the origins of the Cold War in the Near/Middle East, to place the issue in a larger,

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35 John Lewis Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Thesis on the Origin of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* (Summer 1983): 171-90.

36 Gaddis, *Origins of the Cold War*, viii.

37 Ibid.

38 Bruce Kuniholm, Paul Henze, John Lewis Gaddis, Harry Howard, Ritchie Ovendale, Altemur Kılıç, Alvin Z. Rubinstein.

rather than regional context. The following sections will look at the dynamics of British, American and Soviet politics toward the Near/Middle East.

## **2.2 The Position of the Great Britain**

The Middle East was not a constituent part of the Commonwealth of the British Empire. Whereas that part of the world has been assumed, since the beginning of the twentieth century, in the British strategic perimeter. The areas especially in close proximity to the Suez Canal carried a second-to-none position with the exception of British Isles and India for the United Kingdom.<sup>39</sup> This strategic importance of the area was underscored at the beginning of both world wars, when scanty British reserves of men and material were sent to the Suez Canal zone, as an imperial line of communication, at “their blackest hour of peril.”<sup>40</sup> However, the strategic importance of this region was not peculiar to the British Commonwealth. In a broader context, every power that had an instinct for world domination showed keen interest in this strategic area and thereby put its expansionist eyes on that part of the world. These interested powers naturally needed to risk much to put that part of the world under their political and military control, for neither Power showed corollary interests in each other. The very result, as historically proven, happened to be continuing rivalry for the Middle East. According to Sir Percy Loraine:

...the economic life of this world depends on keeping open the east-west or, shall I say the horizontal communications, and whenever an attempt has been made to cut across, or drive a wedge of forces across the horizontal line of communications, there has been a bitter and bloody war.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Ritchie Ovendale, *Britain, the United States and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East, 1945-1962* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996), 2.

40 Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371 / 52346, *British Policy in the Melting Pot - Can We Recast it in a New and Stronger Mould?*, 11 May 1946; Elizabeth Monroe, “British Interests in the Middle East,” *The Middle Eastern Journal* 2 (April 1948): 132.

41 Loraine, “Perspectives,” 11. He represented Great Britain as Minister to Tehran, High Commissioner for Egypt & Ambassador to Turkey in different periods.

While this kind of explanation is not enough to cover every aspect of historical conflict in regard to the Middle East, it might be enough to explain a great deal of conflict in modern Middle East, in which the Ottoman Empire as the sole sovereign authority along with interested powers, namely Russia and Britain played greater roles. In this contemporary era, the “Eastern Question” had dominated both Middle Eastern international affairs and great power rivalry in the strategic areas of the Middle East.<sup>42</sup>

Although it was generally confessed by British policymakers that “there were large portions which interested Russia much more than England and vice versa” in areas “which drains into the Black Sea, together with the drainage valley of the Euphrates as far as Bagdad,”<sup>43</sup> as a least interested power, British government had many good reasons for not letting any other power having a dominant position in that part of the world. Among others, two factors largely determined the place of the Middle East area in British imperial policies. Firstly, no subject commanded more British interest and thus became a prime factor than the geographical position of the region as a communication hub at the junction of three continents. Geographically, the area along with Northern Africa was stationed on the lifeline stretching from the British Isles to India. However, it was after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 that that part of the world jumped on “second-to-none position” for the defense of the British Empire. From the point of view of communication, the Suez Canal provided the shortest route from Europe to India and constituted the “gem of the British

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42 The Eastern Question in 19th century can be summed up in general terms as the result of the conflicts between national and imperial interests of the Great powers over the Ottoman territory. Russian Empire along with Austria Empire thrust upon the Ottoman Empire in order to have access by water to the Mediterranean; British cause to maintain the security of the communication line to India either from Ottoman or Russia and finally the desire of especially non-Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire for independence. Some other scholars sum up the Eastern Question as merely ‘the Straits Question’. Nonetheless, it would be imprecise to assume that the classical “Eastern Question” followed a consistent pattern throughout the history.

43 G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origin of the War, 1898-1914*, vol.1, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), 8.

imperial system.’’<sup>44</sup> Therefore, looking at the evolution of British interests toward this region, to an extent that affected British policy, it is not a coincidence that the interests of Great Britain in the Middle East grew after nearly the same period when its colonial interests concentrated on India.<sup>45</sup> Concomitantly, traditional British policy in the Middle East centered on the hard core of Empire’s defense, with an emphasis on this line of communication.<sup>46</sup>

While this prime factor remained constant throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until the end of the war, the pattern of strategy pursued by the Whitehall in order to maintain the defense of this horizontal communication line continuously was attuned according to changing world power issues in that part of the world. Till the outbreak of the First World War, British policy, therefore, concentrated on a policy that would preserve intact the status quo in the Middle East with an emphasis on the Persian Gulf area.<sup>47</sup> In this respect, Her Majesty’s Government (Queen Victoria r. 1837-1901) sought to preserve the balance of power by upholding the sole nominal power in the most part of the region - the Ottoman Empire - as a buffer state against southward expansionist aspirations of Russia. British concern was obvious. It preferred to maintain a weak Empire on the way of its communication line rather than to deal with any other possible powers. Great Britain, therefore, employed its mastery in diplomacy to prevent any nation from becoming strong enough to dominate the Ottoman Empire. Suffice it to say, keeping

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44 Jacop Abadi, *Britain’s Withdrawal from the Middle East: The Economic and Strategic Imperatives, 1947-1971* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Kingston Press, 1982), xiii-xiv. The Suez Canal across the Isthmus of Suez links two seas- Mediterranean and Red Sea. It was completed by the French but the British government purchased substantial shareholding in the Suez Canal.

45 Halfrod L. Hoskins, *The Middle East: Problem Area in World Politics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 6-7; William Hale and Ali İhsan Bağış, eds. *Four Centuries of Turco-British Relations: Studies in Diplomatic, Economic and Cultural Affairs* (North Humberstone: The Eothen Press, 1984), 2.

46 Abadi, xiii-xiv; *FRUS*, 1947, vol. 5, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 511.

47 For a background information, see George E. Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East: From the Rise of Islam to Modern Times* (Washington, DC.: Public Affairs, 1949); Hoskins, *Middle East*; George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, 4th ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980); Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963).



the weak Ottoman Empire strong enough against other powers, and playing with the balance of power in the region according to the changing international circumstances, the British governments succeeded in preventing any power from having a dominant position in that region, practically until 1912.

Meanwhile, the British were not reluctant to take advantage of the Empire's weakness in those areas deemed important for the defense of the communication line. For this end, British policymakers made use of every opportunity in order to put the defense of the line on a sound footing and creating their own defense system. Acquisition of Malta at the Congress of Vienna by Great Britain in 1814 was followed by assuming the administration of Cyprus during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-78. There followed, in 1883, British occupation of the Nile Valley under the justification of crushing ongoing Arab rebellion. Naturally, all these outposts added much to the security interests of Great Britain in the Middle East.

Secondly, quite apart from these strategic interests, oil became an additional and vital economic stake for the British Empire after dependence on oil rose dramatically in the early twentieth century. While importance of oil as a marketable commodity had began to be perceived since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it did not have a high priority in the hierarchy of British imperial objectives in regard to the Middle East until WWI. Thus, the real factor that gave Middle Eastern oil a rating in the course of British foreign policy and thereby security considerations concerning the Middle East had to do with mainly the development of the Royal Navy. Among others, Sir Winston Churchill, then first Lord of Admiralty, was the dynamo that produced the necessary vigor. His role in regard to this issue came from his "epoch-making," but "risky for his nation" decision in 1913 that stimulated the

transition of the Royal Navy from coal to oil.<sup>48</sup> The historical significance of this decision was reflected in the Oil & Gas Investor's special issue on the "100 Most Influential People of the Petroleum Century," as:

By the summer of 1914, the British Navy was fully committed to oil, and the government had assumed the role of Anglo-Persian's majority stockholder. For the first time, oil had become an instrument of national policy and a strategic commodity. It has remained so ever since.<sup>49</sup>

Technically speaking, there was no question that oil as fuel had countless advantages compared to coal. However, a switch from coal to oil had also many strategic implications for the imperial policies of Great Britain toward the Middle East. Contrasted with the coal resources at its disposal, Great Britain was extremely poor in oil resources. This great disadvantage was, of course, foreseen by Churchill. "The oil supplies of the world were in the hands of vast oil trusts under foreign control. To commit the navy irrevocably to oil was indeed to take arms against a sea of troubles..."<sup>50</sup> As a solution, the British government "bought," on May 20, 1914, 51 per cent of the shares in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (a fully British firm operating in Persia) in order to safeguard sufficient supply of fuel oil to the Royal Navy at a reasonable price.<sup>51</sup> By then, the British were in occupation of southern Persia.

By this linking up of British naval power with the oil resources of the Middle East, the area assumed new importance for the Whitehall. Henceforth, maintaining oil supply both in time of peace and war started to become one of the principle features in British Middle Eastern policies. The vital aspect of oil in the persecution of war was appreciated, without doubt, by the First World War as attested by Lord

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48 Hoskins, *Middle East*, 199; Erik J. Dahl, "Naval Innovation: From Coal to Oil," *Joint Force Quarterly* 27 (Winter 2000-2001): 50-6.

49 "100 Most Influential People of the Petroleum Century," *Oil and Gas Investor* 20, Special Issue (2000).

50 Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol.1, (New York: Scribner's, 1923), 133-6.

51 Benjamin Shwadran, *The Middle East Oil and the Great Powers* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 19. By that time, Burmah Oil Company owned 97% of its ordinary shares. The rest were owned by Lord Strathcona, the company's first chairman.

Curzon's oft-quoted remark that "Truly posterity will say that Allies floated to victory on a wave of oil."<sup>52</sup> However, increasing significance of oil beyond its importance as a trading commodity, brought to the fore some strategic questions of fundamental nature in execution of war. Because, the need for sufficient petroleum reserves for long-sustained military effort was no longer open to question not only for the British Empire but for any world power. Consequently, the struggle for acquiring oil concessions in the Middle Eastern areas intensified, which, in turn, aggravated Middle East international relations and great power rivalry concerning that part of the world.

While the increasing importance of oil in peace and more especially in war added a new momentum to British Middle Eastern policy. The most influential change had to do with this policy at the outbreak of the First World War as a result of Ottoman Empire's participation in the war on the side of the Central Powers. Naturally, it created a "diplomatic paradox" for Great Britain since it had to abandon its traditional policy of preserving the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire at any rate as long as it served its own interests.<sup>53</sup> For the Whitehall, a new policy, in any case, necessitated the partition of the Ottoman territory. Therefore, shortly after the outbreak of War, the Whitehall initiated to shape the future of the Middle Eastern politics according to its own interests.

In this context, the British government made "contradictory" commitments both to the Zionists and Arab nationalists, which would, as realized in later decades, had far-reaching implications for the instability of the region, in order to gain their military and political support in the British war effort against the Triple Alliance. To the Arabs, Great Britain pledged that it would "recognize and support the

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52 Cited in Daniel Yergin, *The Prize* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 183.

53 The British Middle Eastern policy, at least until the last decade before the First World War, had been that they did not "aim at no partition of territory, but only partition of preponderance." See Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, 8; Lenczowski, *Middle East in World Affairs*, 74.

independence of the Arabs in all regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca.” To the Zionists, a far-reaching promise was made, with the Balfour declaration of 1917, for support in “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”<sup>54</sup>

During the same period, the British government did not waste any time to make secret arrangements with other Entente powers, in which the areas nominally under Ottoman sovereignty were divided into respective parcels suiting their long term imperialistic objectives in the postwar world.<sup>55</sup> The first set of these secret arrangements was the Constantinople Agreement, drawn up over several diplomatic exchanges between Great Britain and France on the one hand, and Russia on the other. This arrangement was of great significance because it completely reversed the traditional western policy in regard to the Straits and realized Russians’ “time-honored aspirations” concerning the Middle East.<sup>56</sup> Also, this agreement alone was enough to indicate, without doubt, to what extent the Whitehall was “compelled,”<sup>57</sup> by virtue of the war, to set aside its traditional Middle East policy. For this arrangement “involved a complete reversal of the traditional policy” of Great Britain and was “in direct opposition to the opinions and sentiment at one time universally held in England and which have still by no means died out.”<sup>58</sup>

However it should be noted that, Great Britain had not refrained from making arrangements with the Russians, whenever British desiderata elsewhere was considered bearing more strategic importance. But, more specifically, the Whitehall thought making arrangements “mutually beneficial,” with Russia over common

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54 For the “Husayn-McMahon Correspondence between 14 July 1915 and 10 March 1916,” in which territorial arrangements and other political conditions were decided, see J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, vol. 2, (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), 13-7.

55 For official documents about these wartime secret arrangements, see *ibid.*, 7-25.

56 Aide-Mémoire from Russian Foreign Minister to British and French Ambassadors at Petrograd, 19 February/4 March 1915 cited in *ibid.*, 7. It was also called as “the richest prize of the entire war” by His Majesty’s Government.

57 Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914-1918: British-Jewish-Arab Relations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 15.

58 British Memorandum to the Russian Government, 27 February/12 March 1915 cited in Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 8.

areas, to control the limits of Russian expansionist aspirations in the direction of its sphere of interest. Still before the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907 concerning Persia, in a telegram transmitted in 1898 to British Minister at Constantinople, Sir N. O'Connor by the Marquess of Salisbury, a policy of "partition of preponderance" over the territory of the Ottoman Empire (and China) was put forward as the tenet of a possible understanding with Russia.<sup>59</sup>

Whereas the Tripartite (commonly known as the Sykes-Picot) agreement was of greater significance since it carried the lion's share among other wartime secret arrangements not only for the future political life of the Middle East but also for postwar British Middle Eastern policy. It was signed between Great Britain and France with the consent of Russia on May 16, 1916.<sup>60</sup> Under the terms of this secret agreement, the general area of the post-Ottoman Middle East, which had already been allocated for an independent Arab unity as mentioned above, was divided into spheres of influence to suit the two European powers' long term strategic interests. Literally, the agreement divided the area, without any reference to the inhabitants, into the areas (A) France and (B) Great Britain. However, the text of agreement would seem to suggest, without doubt, that the matters adjusted were purely imperialistic in character<sup>61</sup> and gave no sincere thought to the region's stability. On the contrary, as proved by later events, the provisions of the agreement added too much to the volatility of the region.

Under all these circumstances, the end of the First World War became a watershed in the Middle East. A different "form of colonial administration" was imposed over the inhabitants of the region by "the magic of the word mandate" at the

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<sup>59</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> See Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 18-22.

<sup>61</sup> For Barbara Tuchman, this agreement was "a pure imperialist bargain in old pattern," see Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 209.

San Remo conference as outlined at the Sykes-Picot Agreement.<sup>62</sup> From then on, the Middle East became no longer a single political unit as had been under Ottoman rule. But rather the “artificial”<sup>63</sup> countries of the area were dealt with individually by the Whitehall through “special political relationships (mandates, protectorates, treaties of mutual assistance) backed by the threat of use of military force by small but effective garrisons maintained at bases selected for strategic importance.”<sup>64</sup> On paper, this kind of governance was needed since these new founded countries were not able to “stand alone” and therefore they had to be replaced under the “Mandatory Powers” such as Great Britain “until the territories deemed capable of self-government.”<sup>65</sup> But in practice, it was a new beginning of a set of turmoil in the Middle East after a period of stability under Ottoman rule.

More importantly, post-WWI era presented Great Britain, at least in the Middle East, a unique opportunity. Owing to the defeat of Germany, dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, elimination of presumed Russian southward expansionist aspirations after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, at least for a while, it was possible for Great Britain to have a preponderant position in the region during the interwar period. While there were no external pressures to British predominance except American economic initiatives to launch an open door policy in order to obtain more oil concessions in the region, the principal challenge came from domestic variables of the region. The inhabitants of the region, who had been lured by British promises during the war, felt betrayed when they encountered the outcome

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62 Monroe, *Britain's Moment*, 67-72. The victorious powers broadly reaffirmed the terms of the Tripartite Agreement at the San Remo Conference (19-26 April 1920) under the Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

63 After the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the frontiers of new and succession states of the Middle East was drawn according to the recommendations of the Territorial Commissions after the First World War. For these commissions, three considerations-ethical, economic and strategical- were taken as references. However, the strategical consideration was of such importance as to override the ethical and economic considerations. See Loraine, “Perspectives,” 12

64 *FRUS*, 1947, vol.5, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 511.

65 Quotations taken from Article 22 of League of Covenant. For full text see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 61-2. As seen from postwar practices, “the mandates system of the League of Nations was converted by the victorious empires into a cloak for a good measure of imperialism...” see Monroe, *Britain's Moment*, 141.

of British dual policies during and after the war. However, except for minor incidences of violence in the immediate aftermath of the war, it was in 1936 that as result of increased Jewish immigration to Palestine the Arab revolt erupted. It lasted three years till the British White Paper of 1939 restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and provided a temporary, forced solution for the country.

The recent historical background is recorded largely in order to show that it is self-evident that the foundations of post-WWII problems of the Middle East were sowed both in secret agreements between foreign powers and in the public declarations in the course of the war by those powers and then consolidated by the postwar diplomatic settlements again extraneously. Therefore, one should dwell on the past in order to understand both the difficulties that imperialistic policies built up for the inhabitants of the region and the part that European powers, and significantly Great Britain, had played in building up difficulties for themselves.

However, all these determinants that hitherto exercised a decisive influence on the shape of British imperial policies toward the Middle East began to change considerably starting with the end of the Second World War. While Great Britain emerged from the war as the weakest of the three major powers, it still appeared as a formidable power in the Middle East by holding some strong points and having treaty arrangements with countries in this region. Several developments combined to lessen Britain's relative military and economic strength and gravely impaired its ability to maintain its imperial position in the Middle East. Indeed, doubts had already begun to appear, during the Second World War, as to "whether the Great Britain would be able to support [in postwar era] the burden of the joint Common-

wealth defense system,” in which the Middle East constituted one of the major defensive fronts.<sup>66</sup>

The reason for these doubts during the war had been mostly about the economic situation of Great Britain after the end of the war. These doubts proved to be real in the postwar era since “the war had left the British economy in a state of near prostration.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, British policymakers found a good chance of postwar recovery and “avoiding such perilous risks as they ran in the recent past” in “cutting their post-war coat according to their cloth.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, they had to practice economy of force in order not to get deeper into difficulties. But London’s economic situation should not be taken as the sole factor responsible for the new phenomenon: “Britain’s withdrawal from the Middle East.” Several other factors led to British retreat from the Middle East and thereby a drastic reduction of overseas commitments should be attributed to a three decade-long process. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the postwar era did not mark an abrupt watershed in Britain –Middle East relations as largely assumed but started a process of declining British preponderant position and its scale of interests in the general area of the Middle East. This circumstance was not altogether surprising and was not peculiar to this region. Rather, it was only a part of the common situation faced by Great Britain following the postwar shifts in the balance of power, as well as nationalist movements and de-colonization.

Generally speaking, this process of withdrawal might well be discussed under the domestic and external context. For the domestic context, British financial crisis

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66 Chatham House, “The British Commonwealth and the Post-War Settlement,” *International Affairs* 20 (January 1944): 97-8; Jan Melissen and Bert Zeeman, “Britain and Western Europe, 1945-1951: Opportunities Lost?,” *International Affairs* 63 (Winter 1986-1987): 86.

67 J.C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 227; for detailed accounts about the wartime economic losses of the Great Britain and its economic situation at the end of the war see *Bank for International Settlements, Fifteen Annual report* 1st April 1944-31st March 1945; available from [http://www.womensgroup.org/english/015\\_1945\\_e.pdf](http://www.womensgroup.org/english/015_1945_e.pdf); Internet; accessed 27 March 2006.

68 FO 371 / 52346, *British Policy is in the Melting Pot- Can We Recast it in a New and Stronger Mould?*, 11 May 1946.



between the critical years 1945-1948 became the most important factor,<sup>69</sup> from which other domestic constraints derived. Among others, the historian Jacop Abadi stated that “domestic constraints are not less crucial in the making of foreign and defense policy than the changes in the external environment” when he identified several domestic constraints, in addition to the economic condition.<sup>70</sup> These factors were generally counted as: readjustments in British defense policy in line with the economic situation and with the impact of new technological developments; of Arab nationalism; adaptation of new ways other than military control for safeguarding the flow of oil from the Middle East; and finally the change in perception of its own image as a great power.

As a principle external factor in postwar era that affected British imperial security and accelerated the process of British withdrawal from the Middle East, a more serious development was the emergence a strong Soviet Union as a world power only second after the US on Britain’s communication flank. It was a serious determining factor because British defense policy was completely based on the possibility of war with Russia. Moreover, according to a report prepared by the British Chiefs of Staff in 1947, “the area in which Russian expansion would be easiest and at the same time would hurt British Empire most would be the Middle East.”<sup>71</sup> Consequently, Britain, with historical experience, entertained grave doubts as to the intentions of the Russians in the regional scheme of things since some signs reflecting the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the region were shown in the countries on Russia’s border, such as in Iran and Turkey, if not Greece.

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69 For detailed information about the effect of British economic position on foreign policy see FO 371/45694, *Effect of British External Financial Position on Foreign Policy*, 1945.

70 Abadi, *Britain’s withdrawal from the Middle East, 1947-1971: The Economic and Strategic Imperatives* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Kingston Press, Inc., 1982); Ovendale, 1-23.

71 Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 21/1800, *Report by the Chiefs of Staff, Future Defense Policy*, 22 May 1947.

According to the same report, the importance of the Middle East in the postwar era for Great Britain was two-fold:

Our experience in other areas such as Eastern Europe has shown that when Russia gains control our economic interests are forfeited and our communications are cut. The first impact of Russian expansion into the Middle East would therefore be upon our oil supplies and upon Commonwealth sea and air communications. The importance to us of present and potential oil supplies in the area is as great, if not greater, than ever, particularly in peace. The importance of the Middle East as a centre of Commonwealth communications remains, and will remain, beyond question.<sup>72</sup>

However, the views of Chiefs of Staff might well be attributed to their professional obligation to look at international circumstances on the basis of a clearly defined potential enemy. Therefore, the Chiefs of Staff, establishing policy on historical background, only considered British strategy in relation with the Soviet Union without looking at the whole matter on broader lines. After a close look at domestic politics in Great Britain about the Imperial situation and thereby the postwar strategic importance of the communication line, one point attracts attention. Without an Empire, what was the importance of the communication line? A negative answer to that question naturally assigned economic factors more weight than strategical factors in the British strategic planning process. With the gradual loss of Imperial assets, the idea of the Mediterranean as a kind of covered passage for Britain exploded.<sup>73</sup> Thereby, some strategic countries, for example Turkey and Greece, positioned on the communication line lost their *raison d'être* for Great Britain.<sup>74</sup>

British postwar fear of Russian expansion in the Middle East did not only emanate from their common historical background of rivalry in the region. But, for the first time, Great Britain, at least during the critical years of 1945 and 1946, found

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Francis Williams, *Twilight of Empire: Memoirs of Prime Minister Clement Attlee* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1962), 178.

<sup>74</sup> Ovendale, 1-23.

itself alone, and in a weaker position in both economic and military terms in its rivalry with the Russians. Therefore, without putting the American factor into postwar regional balance of power, the Soviet Union was in a position to do whatever it desired, the British feared. In respect to this, the Whitehall had two possible choices-to continue wartime cooperation with Stalin or to turn its pre-war mission despite the fact that Britain was unable within its power to counteract on its own as it did in the recent past. Of course, it would be more advantageous to cooperate provided that Britain took the lead.<sup>75</sup> But, since it was quite impossible for the Soviet Union as the sole great power in Eurasia to cooperate as an inferior partner under British lead, the remaining choice was inescapable for the Whitehall, even if it did not have adequate power-economic or military- to follow this course of action. Therefore, it had to look for some other ways to maintain its strategic interests, particularly in the Middle East. Britain hoped to find it first in the United Nations Organization. But “because of the Veto,” and other objections in the Cabinet and military quarters, policymakers in the British administration did not regard the organization as a guarantee to safeguard the political and strategic interests around the world to prevent a possible war with the Soviet Union.<sup>76</sup> Naturally, Great Britain had to turn to the U.S.A. since in the postwar era no European country or a combination of European powers would be strong enough to resist Russian aggression. Therefore, Britain, in order to redress the shattered balance in favor of itself, had to have “the active and early support of the US” since:

The United States alone, because of her man-power, industrial resources and her lead in the development of weapons of mass destruction, can turn the balance in favor of the Democracies. Apart from other considerations, the United States will for some years at any rate, be the sole source from which we [the Great Britain] can draw a supply of atomic bombs.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> FO 371/62407, *Cabinet Information Paper Concerning Disputes between the USSR and Britain and France*, 5 July 1947.

<sup>76</sup> CAB 21/1800, *Future Defense Policy*, report by the Chief of Staff, 22 May 1947; Abadi, 12.

<sup>77</sup> CAB 21/1800, *Future Defense Policy*, report by the Chief of Staff, 22 May, 1947.

In short, the emerging determinants whether internal or external, in the immediate postwar years all shared one common component: alignment with the US was rapidly becoming a more attractive option for the British administration. Because, beginning in the early months of the postwar era, political and economic costs of continuing single-handed control and secure the vested interests in the region rose sharply. A central goal, therefore, was to share the cost of responsibilities with a powerful ally, notably the US.

Great Britain needed to secure American support in order to retain its role as one of the great powers in the postwar era. Also, London undoubtedly needed to achieve a close co-ordination of policies with the United States in order to contain the advance of Soviet power not only in Middle East but also in Europe. The British administration assumed that, with “their own experience and superior wisdom,” they, as a “junior partner,” could guide this “lumbering giant” to their own ends.<sup>78</sup> The British administration acted on this rhetoric. The former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill appeared as the first prominent official to give expression to the idea, in his well-known speech generally known as the “Iron Curtain” speech on March 5, 1946 at Fulton, Missouri. Churchill, in an effort to “gang-up” against the Russians, emphasized, in his speech, the need for a closer Anglo-American collaboration on the other side of the “Iron Curtain.”

Although British efforts to convince the Americans for a close cooperation against the Soviet Union in the Middle East, before and after Churchill’s speech succeeded to considerable extent, the occasion should nevertheless be taken nothing more than a “catalyst.”<sup>79</sup> In this respect, it has often been suggested in the orthodox

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78 Peter Weiler, “British Labour and the Cold War: The Foreign Policy of the Labour Governments, 1945-1951,” *Journal of British Studies* 26 (January 1987): 57.

79 Anderson, 116-7.

Cold War literature that Greece and Turkey were handed over by Great Britain to the US. This is at best an imprecise manner of speaking in that the extent to which a precise policy of taking responsibility for Greece and Turkey was developed within American policy-making circles between the British notes in February and Truman's speech before the Congress is very much open to question. Contrasted to this general understanding of the Cold War literature, the assumption by the United States of responsibilities within this area resulted from the practical requirements of leadership in the postwar world. In a broader context, American Middle East policy was a constituent part of emerging global policy which had been labeled as "containment." The basic tenet of this policy was that "all nations not now within the Soviet sphere should be given generous economic assistance and political support in their opposition to Soviet penetration."<sup>80</sup> However, in its efforts to establish situations of strength in the Middle East, the United States felt the necessity at the outset of "proceeding more or less in the role of deputy of the powers which, although enfeebled by war, still maintained recognizable spheres of influence in the area."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it would be more appropriate to suggest that US policy was shaped mainly by the stimuli of perceptions of the Soviet Union. In that point of view, the British share might have been well be to provide practical causes for the American administration to move away from its traditional isolationism and to attune their Middle East policy to events in the general area of the Middle East and specifically in Turkey and Greece.

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80 Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, eds. *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

81 Halford L. Hoskins, "Some Aspects of the Security Problem in the Middle East," *The American Political Science Review* (March 1953): 189.

### 2.3 The U.S.A. in the Middle East

It has become a truism to state that the Second World War marked a turning point in the relationship between the US and the Middle East and propelled the U.S.A. actively into its complex politics. But the United States, with its long-standing commercial and cultural ties, was not a newcomer to this region. Washington had had particular axes to grind in that part of the world before the war. Nonetheless, it took the Second World War with its dramatic consequences that gave Washington a sense of political and military involvement with the Middle East. Before, the interests of the US for the most part, in a limited scope of objectives, had been confined in scope and intensity to cultural relations such as colleges and archaeologists, philanthropic relations through missionaries, and commercial relations.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the tenets of official American diplomacy in the pre-war period appeared “little more than extending protection to American philanthropic and missionary activities and assurance of equality of opportunity for nominal exchange of goods.”<sup>83</sup>

By the end of the war, the general area of the Middle East came to be a significant area for Washington’s postwar role not only by virtue of its natural sources but also by its geostrategic location at the crossroads of three of most volatile regions in the postwar world - the Balkans, Asia and northern Africa as well as its geographic proximity to the USSR. Before that new chapter in the history of relationship between the Middle East and the U.S.A., this part of the world had been assumed and accepted to be in Great Britain’s political and military sphere of influence. And the US, in its relation with this region, did not seek to undermine or

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82 For an overview, see John A. DeNOVO, *American Interests and Politics in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 8-18, 28-45, 253-272. DeNOVO made the fallacy of the popular assumption clear in his conclusion that the Middle East was not terra incognita for the United States before World War II.

83 *FRUS*, 1947, vol.1, Memorandum prepared in the Department of State: The British and American positions, 511.

oppose the influence of Great Britain. In line with the wisdom of abstention from international politics, it had, to a considerable extent, refrained from any involvement in international affairs of this region that would “commit it to foreign obligations or entanglements.”<sup>84</sup>

Thus during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the U.S.A. maintained its strict neutrality and refused to join the European powers in the “Eastern Question,” which engaged the European concern with Middle Eastern politics for almost more than two centuries. Compared with other powers, such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, Washington appeared politically disinterested in Middle East’s troublesome political affairs. No basic change occurred in the development of American policy at the outbreak of World War I. Washington carried on with its policy of nonintervention, at least in this region. Following the First World War, after some diplomatic initiatives, though failed, the US hastened, “to the deep disappointment and disillusionment of the peoples of the Near East,”<sup>85</sup> to withdraw into its isolation. Suffice it to say, till the beginning of World War II, the US maintained a certain level of aloofness from becoming entangled in the region’s political and military conflicts and its approach to the region remained on an economic and cultural level.

By the beginning of the Second World War, however, a heightened American presence in some particular areas of the Middle East such as Cairo, the southern part of Iran and Saudi Arabia was observed. Still, this presence was not enough to construe as politically motivated. In essence, it was militarily motivated and American technical and military advisors constituted most of this presence according

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84 There might be two exceptions- though both of them failed- for this contention: the Chester Project and two missions at the time of Peace Settlement sent to the Middle East. For the Chester Project see DeNOVO, 58-87; Bilmez Bülent Can, *Demiryolundan Petrole Chester Projesi (1908-1923)* (İstanbul: Numune Matbaacılık, 1995).

85 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 3, The Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to Brigadier General H. H. Vaughan, Military Aide to President Truman, 10.

to the needs of the war. Americans provided exclusively for the needs of the British and Soviet forces through Lend-Lease and cooperated with the British government in the operation of an economic planning agency, the Middle East Supply Centre, by providing required resources and technical assistance.<sup>86</sup> Again, as before the war, the predominant position of Great Britain in the Middle East was recognized and the US played a supportive role for the needs of the British and Soviet forces.<sup>87</sup>

Against this background, the end of the War ushered in a new period in the Middle East-U.S.A. relations, and the beginning of a trend toward ever deeper American strategic interest in this region. Assuming “dutifully” the leadership of the “free world” with its preponderant military and economic power, Washington enjoyed a powerful say in matters of world politics including the political and economic life of the Middle East, hitherto which lay principally within British responsibility. Subsequently, the Middle East’s peripheral place, in political and military terms, elevated gradually to an area of increasing strategic importance in Washington’s foreign policy. As a result, policy makers in Washington came to appreciate “the tremendous value of this area as a highway by sea, land and air between the East and the West; of its possession of great mineral wealth; of its potentially rich agricultural resources.”<sup>88</sup>

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86 In addition to economic and military aid, the US set up two military missions sent to the Middle East theater; one to operate in the Persian Gulf area, serving India, Iran, and Iraq; and one in the Red Sea area in order to support supply facilities at ports and repair establishments. See Lecture given by Major General Russell L. Maxwell, “Organization for Economic Warfare (Middle East 1940-1943),” 15 June 1948, The Industrial College of the Armed Forces Washington, D. C.; available from <http://www.ndu.edu/library/ic1/L48-165.pdf>; Internet; accessed 23 April 2006.

87 Major General Russell L. Maxwell emphasized this situation several times in his lecture. He mentioned that the Missions even refrained from “too involving in the economic operations of the area” in that they “would have been certain to have become involved in the political operations”; and they “had no directive that called for participation in political affairs.” Ibid.; *FRUS*, 1947, vol.1, Memorandum prepared in the Department of State: The British and American positions, 511.

88 *FRUS*, 1947, vol.1, Memorandum prepared in the Department of State: The British and American positions, 511.



Nevertheless, Americans, relative to other great powers, were newcomers to Middle East politics, which they “by temperament were poorly fitted to cope.”<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the US came out of the war without a well-defined military and political policy for that part of the world other than economic interest<sup>90</sup> and what was comprehended under the general principles of the United Nations Charter.<sup>91</sup> Suffice it to say that, Washington’s Middle East policy evolved with the advent of the Cold War or in other words it was predicated by the subsequent circumstances which were not consistent with previous assumptions about the upcoming conjuncture. Therefore, it so happened in subsequent years that, many long-term strategic issues faced by the United States were “handled on an emergency basis” by the administration in Washington as they came up, instead of following a carefully prepared plan.<sup>92</sup>

Just before 1945, when the global hostility was over and there were no indicative signs of the Cold War from the American point of view, that part of the world was assumed to be the most suitable region in which Washington and the Kremlin’s policies could “be made to dovetail with minimum friction.”<sup>93</sup> In this respect, President Truman not only indicated his agreement with the assumption of Near East Mission Chiefs that there had been “existence of parallelism” between their policies in that area with those of Russians. But he consistently reassured the representatives that there needed to be no conflict between them. Although the Joint

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89 J. C. Hurewitz. “The Eisenhower Doctrine and other United States Commitments in the Middle East: An Evaluation,” in *New Look at the Middle East: A Series of Addresses Presented at the Eleventh Annual Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs*, ed. William Sands (Washington: Middle East Institute, 1957), 28-9.

90 For a detailed account, see Nathan Godfried, “Economic Development and Regionalism: United States Foreign Relations in the Middle East, 1942-5,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 22 (July 1987): 481-500. Also for an official account of postwar economic policies see *FRUS*, 1945, vol.8, Report by the Coordinating Committee of the Department of State: American Economic Policy in the Middle East, 34-48.

91 For political objectives of the US during the War, see *FRUS*, 1945, vol.8, Report by the Coordinating Committee of the Department of State, 34.

92 Campbell, *Problems of American Policy*, 25; Hoskins, “Security Problem in the Middle East,” 189; C.E. Black, “United States: Old Problems in New Hands,” *Current History* 21 (July 1951): 28.

93 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Conference of Chiefs of Missions in the Near East with President Truman on November 10, 1945, 10-4.

Chiefs of Staff came to realize the threat of Soviet military power to the US the next year, only the Far East was considered as the area of direct “clashes of vital interests” between the US and Soviet Union.<sup>94</sup> The other parts of the world, especially the Middle East, were seen as areas where national objectives of the Soviet Union and Great Britain “collide head-on.”<sup>95</sup>

Yet, in the immediate aftermath of the war, American representatives in the Middle East were anxious whether their country would “become a mere passive spectator” in this region or not. Realizing this indefiniteness in policy toward this region, Loy Henderson, Director of the Offices of Near Eastern and African Affairs, recommended to the Secretary of State that a conference be held between the Chiefs of Mission in the Middle East and the President. The very reason for this meeting was not only to give the envoys (who were anxious about the postwar policy of their Government), the tenets of the US postwar policy in this region but also to give them the reassurances that the US “had no intention of becoming again a mere passive spectator in the Near East.”<sup>96</sup>

From a military point of view, the picture was not different. While military planners in Washington were cognizant of the strategic importance of this oil-rich region in line with its newfound world role, the US gave every indication of its intention to continue to play the role of free riders in the strategic areas of the Middle East. This consideration was in keeping with the United States’ traditional position that the general area of the Middle East was primarily political and military responsibilities of Great Britain. Overall these military considerations were exemplified by the State-War-Navy-Coordinating Committee’s (SWNCC) policy

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94 *FRUS*, 1945, vol.1, The Joint Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State, 1165.

95 *Ibid.*; *FRUS*, 1946, vol.7, Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, 1-3.

96 US Ministers in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria and Lebanon as well as US Consul General to Jerusalem were present at the meeting. *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Director of the Offices of Near Eastern and African Affairs to Brigadier General H. H. Vaughan, Military Aide to President Truman, 10-1.

paper prepared in response to the suggestion of the Department of State. Therein, the committee examined “over-all requirements for military bases and base sites outside the continental limits of the United States” according to the strategic situation all around the world. As a result, it enumerated a list of thirty-two priority sites, in which there was no base site in the general area of the Middle East.<sup>97</sup> But it was very normal for that time because strategic planners did not contemplate of any need to call for a base in the Middle East. For them the only place, of which security could not be transferred to any other power or institution such as United Nations, was the American continent. Therefore, military planners only needed to establish a defense system, more limited geographically to the American Republics.

Viewed from this perspective, military planners thought that protection of the western hemisphere and Far East which comprised their immediate neighbors against any possible future attack were their primary responsibility and security in other parts of the world should be maintained through the United Nations or pre-war status quo powers.<sup>98</sup> In the case of the Middle East, it was the strong feeling of the American government that Great Britain should “continue to maintain primary responsibility for military security in that area.”<sup>99</sup> As a historical fact, traditional British policy in the Middle East had been, with a fair degree of success, that of preventing any power to acquire a strategic position along economic or political lines. Under these overall calculations, Americans contribution in the Middle East would not be in the military sense. But its contribution would be through “actively

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97 For list of these bases see *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 1, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of State: Over-all Examination of US Requirements for Military Bases and Rights(SWNCC 38/25)), 1112-17. This policy paper was reviewed twice by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1946 and 1947 at least in the years under consideration but except minor changes it remained the same. See *FRUS*, 1946, vol.1, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee February 11, 1946 (SWNCC 38/30), 1142-43; *FRUS*, 1947, vol.1, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC 38/46), 766-9. Also for elaborate information about establishing base systems in the immediate postwar years see Melvyn Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginning of the Cold War, 1945-1948,” *American Historical Review* 89 (April 1984): 346-81.

98 Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 96-8.

99 *FRUS*, 1947, vol. 5, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 514.

implemented economic policy” and by the supportive role of the US in economic and political terms to the status quo power, Great Britain.<sup>100</sup>

However, from the American point of view, maintaining the position of Great Britain, militarily and politically, did not mean that the US would follow and support British policies in this region to the detriment of American economic and political interests. Conversely, there was a critical approach in many circles of the American government against British imperialistic policies in the Middle East. Yet at the end of 1945, some policy makers, like George Wadsworth, tried to impress the Administration with the gravity of the situation in the Middle East: unless the US supported the Middle Eastern countries in their effort to block efforts of Britain and France “to consolidate their pre-war spheres of influence” in that region, these countries would “turn to Russia and would be lost to our civilization.”<sup>101</sup> This was a correct appraisal of the situation and Americans were eager not to repeat the errors of the previous Great Powers. In contrast to the British version of imperialistic policies, Americans pursued an open door policy since the beginning of their interests in the Middle East, which rejected the very idea of “a single power maintaining a paramount position” in any Middle Eastern country “by special treaty provisions.”<sup>102</sup> Aside from economic interests gained by this open door policy, the American thinking was to bring interested powers into the Middle Eastern picture on an cooperative basis and thereby to prevent great power ambitions and rivalries and local discontents and jealousies from developing into open conflict which might

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100 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Report by the Coordinating Committee of the Department of State, 35; Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 96-8.

101 George Wadsworth, Minister to Syria. *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Conference of Chiefs of Missions in the Near East with President Truman on November 10, 1945, 14.

102 *FRUS*, 1946, vol.7, Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, 2. For most revisionist Cold War historians, especially William Appleman Williams, Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, “Open Door” diplomacy was discerned as American imperialism. For a more detailed account about open door diplomacy of American government and especially contribution of this diplomacy to the origins of the Cold War, see William Appleman Williams, *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

eventually lead to a third World War.<sup>103</sup> At this point, the US and Great Britain had divergent outlooks. While Great Britain also wanted great power cooperation, it wanted this cooperation to come “on a basis which they would lead and guide. But the US insisted on cooperation “along the line of free competition in trade and communications matters, complete liberty on the part of the independent countries of the Middle East.”<sup>104</sup> Obviously the American sense of cooperation might have offered more advantageous terms for regional governments. And Washington’s position differed greatly from the interest in prestige and imperial position of Great Britain.

Also Washington was very eager to employ its economic power, which was considered the most effective weapon at their disposal, both to influence Middle Eastern political events in direction with their desires and its relation with Great Britain. In a memorandum prepared by the Department of State, employment of economic power for political and strategic reasons was oversimplified as a matter of “simple bargain.” The memorandum read that “If for political and strategical reasons we want them [Britons] to hold a position of strength in the Middle East, then they must have from us economic concessions with respect to the area which will make worth while to stay there.”<sup>105</sup> This kind of thinking became the tenet of postwar military and political policies in regard to regions carrying secondary importance for American national security.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it was necessary for Washington to meet Britain’s economic needs “in order to enable them to meet American desires in the

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103 *FRUS*, 1946, vol.7, Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, 1-6. *FRUS*, 1947, vol. 5, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 513.

104 *FRUS*, 1947, vol. 5, Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 6-7.

105 *Ibid*, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 516.

106 This kind of thinking was not, of course, for postwar American thinking. Still during the war in 1944, US Ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman was considering “economic assistance as one of the most effective weapon at their disposal to influence European political events and to avoid the development of a sphere of influence of the Soviet Union over the Eastern Europe and the Balkans.” See *FRUS*, 1944, vol.4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to Secretary of State, 951.

political and strategical field.”<sup>107</sup> In regard to the same issue, comments of a columnist, in the American periodical *Nation* in October 1946, a week after the British loan issue was debated in the Congress, was remarkable since it reflected the main characteristic of American-British relationship in the transition period:

... one nation was asking economic help of the other, while the other was making political demands upon the first. The economically powerful nation feels politically frustrated and the nation with world-wide political sovereignties which she is no longer able to sustain economically suffers from the frustration of economic weakness...<sup>108</sup>

In any event, the critical years following the end of the war passed without a joint Anglo-American approach to the affairs of the Middle East. Rather some Middle Eastern affairs, such as Palestine, generated discord between them and political divergences between the two governments dominated Anglo-American relations in that part of the world. Americans sought to profit from London's established political and military position in that part of the world without assuming any commitments other than providing economic assistance to Great Britain. In turn, Great Britain tried, to a considerable extent, to maintain its position in the Middle East by obtaining economic assistance from the US without having its preponderant position snatched by Americans. Although faced with “Soviet expansionist aspirations” towards the Middle East, the need for coordinated approach toward Middle Eastern affairs emerged in 1946.<sup>109</sup> It took the informal “Pentagon Talks of

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Palestine: British-American Dilemma,” *The Nation* 163 (August 1946): 239.

<sup>109</sup> The year 1946 was of crucial importance not only for the Middle East but in general context for the beginning of a series of crisis in US-Soviet relations and thereby beginning of the Cold War. Also it is generally assumed by most Cold War historians that a reorientation in American policy occurred from the early days of 1946. President Truman's directive to the Secretary of State on January 5 to “stop babying the Soviets,” “Long Cable” from US Chargé d'affairs in Moscow on February 22, Byrnes's speech on February 28, “Iron Curtain speech of former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill on March 5, and some subsequent officials evidenced that the American administration started to pursue a tougher diplomacy in regard to the Kremlin by 1946. For a complementary study ascribing causative importance for these events see Fraser Harbutt, “American Challenge, Soviet Response: The Beginning of the Cold War, February-May, 1946,” *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (Winter 1981-1982): 623-39.

1947”<sup>110</sup> that a sense of cooperative attitude was reached between the two governments.

From the American point of view, disunity in their respective policies needed to be narrowed, since the full consequence of failure to do so would “have disastrous effect not only on American interests in the area but on our [American] general position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.”<sup>111</sup> Strategically, it would mean that the region would be exposed to the influence of the Soviet Union and would give the opportunity to Russians to get in the picture in the Middle East. Concomitantly, several regional affairs drove them to reach that kind of thinking. Soviet diplomatic pressure upon Turkey and military occupation of northern Iran, and the civil war in Greece were the basic occasions. While all these issues were not new in early 1947, Washington, concerned about United States - Soviet relations, gave little reassurance till that year to the British government.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, it took time for Washington to become oriented in the complexities of the Middle Eastern international politics.

## **2.4 The USSR in the Middle East**

The end of hostilities in 1945 was a great turning point for Soviet Russia. It meant for Kremlin the prelude of new upheavals in a completely new situation in world politics, in which it found a chance to play a great power role along with the US alone. However, with regard to Russia’s relations with the Middle East, it was hard, at least in the period under consideration, to speak about such a turning point, but rather about a resumption of traditional Tsarist Near Eastern policy, that had been frozen in the interwar period. There is no tangible evidence to speak about a different interpretation. Since postwar circumstances in the northernmost areas of the Middle

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110 For detailed account for Pentagon Talks see *FRUS*, 1947, vol. 5, 488-620.

111 *Ibid.*, Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State: The British and American Positions, 514.

112 Harbutt, “American Challenge,” 625-6.

East, notably in Iran and Turkey, as well as in Greece, were such that provided enough evidence for such an interpretation to be constructed and gave warning signals, in advance, of future Soviet intentions. Stalin's pressure on the Turkish government for concessions with grave implications on Turkey's national integrity, or not withdrawing his troops from northern Iran in violation of wartime agreement had to do with historical tendencies, or by Soviets' self-image as a great power rather than security concerns. Therefore, Soviet foreign policy toward the Middle East in the immediate postwar years was treated on the basis of a reference to foreign policy of tsarist Russia, fashioned after George Kennan's "Long Telegram" of 1947.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that the general area of the Middle East had a special place and priority in Soviet foreign policy. But rather, Russian foreign policy was characterized by a shifting mix of objectives with respect to different components of the general area. Correspondingly, the Soviets divided the general area of the Middle East into three regions,<sup>113</sup> according to the relative importance of regions in Soviet foreign policy. The so-called "Middle East" constituted the entire belt of lands bordering the USSR between the Turkish Straits and Afghanistan, which went under the American definition of a "Northern Tier." The rest of the area was divided into two regions as the "Near East" and "North Africa."<sup>114</sup> This study will necessarily examine Soviet policy in the region that was called the "Middle East" by the Soviets and, for the sake of clarity, employ, at least in the period under consideration, the Soviets' own definition while examining their policies.

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113 Central Intelligence Agency(CIA), *Soviet Policy toward the Middle East* (SOV 86-10048X), 12 January 1986; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; Internet; accessed 4 April 2006.

114 The countries of Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel) and the Arabian Peninsula, along with Iraq, Egypt and Sudan constituted the "Near East" and the rest of the countries of North Africa west of Egypt under the term of "North Africa." See *ibid*.



That concentration was indeed the result of Russian policies implemented until the mid-1950s. Until that time, only Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan had appeared as the main countries that had to deal with the prospect of direct Russian threat, as evident in numerous wars and frontier engagements before and after the Soviets. Russian policy toward the rest of the region was fairly vague. In this sense, Khrushchev saw the year 1956 as a historic turning point since “before that, the Soviet Union and Imperial Russia before it- had always treated the Near East as belonging to England and France.”<sup>115</sup> This is also evident in Khrushchev’s reference to Stalin’s response to King Faruk’s appeal for arms in order to force Great Britain to evacuate its troops from Egypt. Stalin’s justification of his refusal was that the Near East was part of Britain’s sphere of influence, and, therefore the Soviets could not go sticking their nose into Egypt’s affairs.<sup>116</sup> However, that is not to say that they kept their eyes closed to that part of the region if opportunities in their favor arose such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. But in this case again, they refrained from overt actions, which, in turn, could provoke a possible counteraction from the Great Britain and U.S.A. Therefore, it might be said that it was only after the Suez crisis of 1956 crisis that Russia advanced far enough in its political and military penetration in the Near East.<sup>117</sup>

While the history of Russian relations with the Middle East might well be traceable to early times in diplomatic history, there is no need to give here a detailed historical survey in order to comprehend the persistent features of Russia’s foreign and economic policies concerning the region, which adjoined the southern frontiers of Imperial Russia. Since what remained persistent throughout imperial Russian

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<sup>115</sup> Nikita Sergey Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (New York: Little, Brown and Company Inc., 1971), 431.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Nikita Sergey Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 340-6, 362; George Lenczowski, “Evolution of Soviet Policy toward the Middle East,” *The Journal of Politics* 20 (February 1958): 172-82.

history can be summed as the struggle of Russian leaders to control the Straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, doors to the Black Sea, and to acquire Constantinople due to its significance to the (Greek) Orthodox Faith.

This traditional policy had been pursued for centuries, though with minor successes, till the First World War. During the war, tsarist Russia found a unique chance in its history to attain its aspirations relative to Constantinople and the Turkish Straits. In order to achieve its traditional goals, it demanded from Great Britain and France that “the question of Constantinople and of the Straits must be definitely solved according to the time-honored aspirations of Russia” in the event of an Entente victory.<sup>118</sup> In the face of counterclaims from Britain and France to recognize Russian claims, St. Petersburg gave its assent to the inclusion of the neutral zone of Persia in the British sphere of influence and recognized “the desiderata of Great Britain and France” relative to postwar Middle East. Later during the secret negotiations for partition of the Ottoman Empire, Russians put forward territorial claims in northeastern Anatolia as counterclaims to endorse the Anglo-French territorial claims in the rest of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>119</sup>

However, tsarist Russia did not survive long enough to see the accomplishment of its “time-honored” imperial aspirations. Following the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, the new Soviet state hastened to proclaim by a decree that, “Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Mohammedans”...“The treaty for the division of Persia is null and void” ...“The treaty concerning the partition of

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118 For full texts of diplomatic exchanges between Russia, Britain and France concerning the “Constantinople Agreement,” see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 7-11; William A. Renzi, “Great Britain, Russia, and the Straits, 1914-1915,” *The Journal of Modern History* 42 (March 1970): 1-20; Michael T. Florinsky, “A Page of Diplomatic History: Russian Military Leaders and the Problem of Constantinople during the War,” *Political Science Quarterly* 44 (March 1929): 108-15; George B. Zotiades, “Russia and the Question of the Greek Participation in the Dardanelles Expedition,” *Balkan Studies* 10 (January 1969): 11-22; Samuel Kucherov, “The Problem of Constantinople and the Straits,” *Russian Review* 8 (July 1949): 206-20.

119 For details see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 18-22.

Turkey and the subduction from it of Armenia, is null and void.”<sup>120</sup> As seen from its very contents, the new Russian government channeled its diplomatic efforts, the day after it took power, to arouse its southern neighbors to revolt against western imperialistic nations.<sup>121</sup> At the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920, the Soviets continued their efforts to attract the countries of the East and build a bridge between the Soviet Union and the Middle East through exploiting the strong anti-imperialistic and national sentiments in those countries. Later in 1921 and in subsequent years, treaties, based on recognition by each party of the independence of the other, were signed with each country bordering the new Soviet state-Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. All these kinds of “peaceful” overtones, in a broader context, took their bearings, of course, from the immediate domestic or external constraints, faced by the infant Soviet state:

Not having yet succeeded in creating adequate fighting forces for the defense of the country, surrounded by enemies awaiting its ruin, suffering from the incredible destruction brought about by war and Tsarism, Soviet Russia in its foreign policy had all the time to keep in mind the need of avoiding the dangers threatening its destruction at every step.<sup>122</sup>

With these considerations, peaceful overtones towards Middle Eastern countries mentioned above were all calculated steps as to “guard the gates against the British.”<sup>123</sup> As a result of these diplomatic maneuverings, the Soviet Union was regarded, to a considerable extent, as having broken with the Tsarist imperial tradition. However, the new Russian government’s aggressive policies in subsequent

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120 For full text of the decree of “All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants’ Deputies” see *ibid.*, 27-8.

121 Harry Nicholas Howard, *Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1913-1923* (Norman : University of Oklahoma Press, 1931), 198-200.

122 “Foreign Policy to the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets,” *Izvestia*, 5 July 1918; available from <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/foreign-relations/1918/July/4a.htm>; Internet; accessed 5 May 2006.

123 John C. Campbell, “The Soviet Union and the Middle East: In the General Direction of the Persian Gulf, Part I,” *Russian Review* 29 (April 1970): 145-6.

years to extend and consolidate its control over the peoples and territories of the former Tsarist empire in areas bordering the Middle East, if not beyond it, left grave doubts about its actual intentions in foreign affairs.<sup>124</sup> As most probably reflecting these doubts, during an interview in 1922, given to a representative of the British press by Leon Trotsky, then People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, the critical question was, in the words of the interviewer, "How does the Near-Eastern policy of the Soviet Government differ in essence from that of the Tsars and of Milyukov?" Trotsky's answer to this question was very limited in scope but indicative for two reasons. Firstly, Turkey and more specially the Straits and Constantinople were the only subject for comparison of Near Eastern policies. Secondly, the difference between successive states' and Near Eastern policies was, argued by Trotsky, "the same as between robbery and compensating the victims of robbery."<sup>125</sup> Then again, Trotsky was not again a determinant voice in Soviet policy.

During the interwar period, therefore, it might be summed up that there had been no concerted attempt to extend Soviet rule beyond the old borders, either through the Red Army or through the effective support of local communists. Thus, Soviet foreign policy was restricted largely to the promotion of nationalistic and anti-imperialistic tendencies as a check to the influence of foreign powers.<sup>126</sup> This atmosphere continued only until the beginning of the Second World War. The first structural change in Soviet foreign policy in regard to the Middle East thus prevailed in November, 1940. The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, put forward to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Friedrich W. Schulenburg, Soviet conditions for the acceptance of the

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124 Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 2.

125 *Pravda*, 9 November 1922 quoted in *The Military Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1921-1923*, vol.5; available from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1922-mil/ch14b.htm>; Internet; accessed 5 May 2006.

126 George F. Kennan, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1941* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), 66; Helmut Sonnenfeldt and William G. Hyland, *Soviet Perspectives on Security* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979), 75-80.

draft of the four power pact.<sup>127</sup> Molotov's official statement read that "The Soviet Union is prepared to accept the draft .... which the Reich Foreign Minister outlined ... "provided that the area south of Batumi and Baku in general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of aspirations of the Soviet Union" which "presumably meant eastern Turkey, Iran and possibly Iraq."<sup>128</sup> Another major demand at this time was that "the security of the Soviet Union in the Straits is assured by the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria... and by the establishment of a base for land and naval forces of the USSR within range of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles by means of long-term lease."<sup>129</sup> In short, in the planned division of the world between the governments of the Three Power Pact, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union, Stalin insisted on only one major area for penetration and expansion—the Middle East.

However, events unfolded quite differently from far reaching calculations. The Soviet Union found itself in deep disappointment by the "Operation Barbarossa." In order to survive the life-and-death struggle with Germany, Stalin was compelled to ally with his "capitalist" rivals in the Middle East. However, since the tide of war turned in their favor around 1943, Soviet political policy began to unfold "as applied to the specific problems of individual countries."<sup>130</sup> Soviets began to lay several test cases of their future relations with the countries adjacent to the Soviet Union. Some expressions of Soviet dissatisfaction with Iran and Turkey had already been increasingly ominous. Turkey's wartime policies such as neutrality and its trade with Germany appeared, among others, as issues to be exploited by the Soviet

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127 For background about conversations and drafts of the four power pact see Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, eds. *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948), 234-58.

128 Campbell, "Soviet Union and the Middle East," 151.

129 Sontag and Beddie, 258-9.

130 *FRUS*, 1944, vol.4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 862.

government in order to justify its bitterness toward Turkey. Turkey's severance of relations with Germany in August 1944 and declaration of war in February 1945 on Germany seemed inadequate to modify the Soviet attitude toward Turkey. Then, at the Yalta Conference, Stalin raised formally the revision of the Montreux Convention and impressed upon his wartime allies that "it was impossible to accept a situation in which Turkey had on Russia's throat."<sup>131</sup>

On the part of Iran, Soviet attitude toward this country deserve a definition more serious than just bitterness. Soviet occupation forces in northern Iran had already begun in early 1943 to disregard obligations of the Tripartite Treaty of 1942. They backed the reemergence of Tudeh (Masses) Party<sup>132</sup> in their zone and when events, as a result of agitation of the Soviets through this party, reached such a condition to threaten the integrity of Iran, they prevented the movement of Iranian security forces. Later in 1944, the Iranian Prime Minister Sa'id's negative answer to the demands of the USSR to grant oil concessions in northern Iran, resulted in the fall of Sa'id's cabinet in the same year. After the end of hostilities, Soviet leaders, having already recognized their own power backed by the Red Army and prestige during the war, began to act as a "world bully," wherever their interests were involved. Their global political and military policy was based mainly on the "disbelief" that "the Western world once confronted with life-size wolf of Soviet displeasure standing at the door and threatening to blow the house in, would be able to stand firm."<sup>133</sup> Operating on this premise, Stalin thought that the time has come to

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131 *FRUS, Malta and Yalta Papers*, Seventh Plenary Meeting, February 10, 1945, 903.

132 For detailed information about the Party and its activities in Iran, see CIA, *The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran* (ORE 23-49), 18 July 1949; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; Internet; accessed 7 May 2006.

133 *FRUS*, 1945, vol.5, Memorandum by Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union: Russia's International Position at the Close of the War with Germany, 860.

take up tasks which were interrupted by war.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, having already succeeded, up to a considerable extent, to expand westwards during the war almost without any resistance from their wartime allies, the Soviets did not hesitate to put their policies into practice where they saw victory in sight. Stalin, for this end, began to seize opportunities created by the vague international atmosphere in the immediate postwar era in order to increase his influence and to enhance opportunities to undermine the Western position in that area. As a result, Stalin lost no time in reactivating the traditional tsarist policy to the South. The “traditional” friendship established by the treaties with Turkey in the period following World War I (repeatedly in 1921 and 1925) was broken off once the war was over in 1945. Moreover, there seemed no hesitation in putting forward some conditions embodying irredentist and far-reaching demands to Turkey for revision of the neutrality pact which was allowed to lapse after 7 November 1945. In regard to Iran, the Soviets, instead of preparing to withdraw from their wartime occupation zone-northern part of Iran-, they reinforced their occupation forces with 15,000 soldiers.<sup>135</sup> When the deadline set by the Tripartite Treaty came, the Soviets refused to evacuate the Iranian territory. Moreover, in the intervening months, Soviet efforts culminated in two communist separatist regimes, the Kurdish People's Republic and the People's Republic of Azerbaijan, in the territory under the Red Army's occupation. The postwar speculations, therefore, centered as in early 1920s on such questions as to whether there was resumption of tsarist foreign policy. Soviet attempts for intrusion

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134 This kind of assumptions about Stalin's postwar aggression proved to be prescient and sobering of the explanation of then Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Saracoğlu in 1940, on his turn from negotiations with Russians in Moscow. His observation about the pre-war Soviets started with “the assumption that Soviet Russia has reverted to old Tsarist imperialism, but that it is not yet morally or materially prepared actually to fight for its imperial ambitions; and that it is therefore rather a jackal feeding where bolder beasts have killed....He thinks that Russia has not any concrete plan of expansion, but is simply on the watch for any advantageous opportunity that may turn up. He feels fairly confident that she will not risk any adventure,” *FRUS*, 1940, vol.1, The Ambassador in Turkey to President Roosevelt, 449.

135 CIA, *Developments in Azerbaijan Situation* (ORE 19), 4 July 1947; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; Internet; accessed 6 May 2006.

into the Northern Tier of the Middle East in the immediate post-World War II period thus deepened these concerns.

As seen, the pattern of these developments was consistent with the basic policies previously advanced in Soviet-Nazi diplomatic haggling in 1940. But these postwar developments should not mean that Stalin did not value the relations that he had attained during the war with his wartime allies. On the other hand, the Soviets were decisive not to “compromise certain basic principles which were believed essential to Soviet interests and security.”<sup>136</sup> And there was no indication that the Kremlin abandoned its faith in the program of territorial and political expansion outlined by the German-Russian non-aggression pact of 1939.<sup>137</sup> In regard to the Middle East, it meant southward expansion of Russian influence and control at the Dardanelles through the establishment of Russian bases at that point. By then, however, historical rivalry with Britain began to replace wartime cooperation between the “Big three.” Early postwar conflict between them extended from Eastern Europe to the rimland of the Soviet southern border.

In all of this, none of the existing evidence indicated that Moscow had any real intention and immediate plans of aggression toward this part of the world.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, it was not clear whether Stalin intended to enforce Soviet policies in that area by the use of force or by the threat of force. Regarding this question, while some Russian military activities were observed in Iran, in the case of Turkey, nothing more than some ambiguous intelligence reports were cited to back up those kinds of assumptions. Therefore, it has remained open to question as to whether Stalin made

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136 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 5, Memorandum by Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union: Russia's International Position at the Close of the War with Germany, 860.

137 *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, Memorandum by the Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union: Russia Seven Years Later, 906.

138 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 5, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 901-2; CIA, *Soviet Foreign and Military Policy* (ORE 1), 23 July 1946; CIA, *Revised Soviet Tactics in International Affairs* (ORE 1/1), 6 January 1947; available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; Internet; accessed on 24 March 2006.



any effort worthy of note to back up policies with the employment of Soviet military power. In regard to this controversial issue, an American intelligence report reached a conclusion that although the USSR had adequate military and economic power capable of overrunning both Western Europe and the Middle East including Turkey and Iran, these capabilities were not likely to induce Soviet leaders to undertake such a course of overt conflict with the “capitalist world” for an indefinite period.<sup>139</sup>

To sum up, an idiosyncratic reading of the “lessons of history,” showed that there had been no structural change in the historical attitude of the Russians towards that part of the world, except for the relatively weak times of the Soviets after the 1917 revolution, when the Soviet Union showed traditional state behavior of seeking peace. The Soviets conducted a policy of “waiting” and “maneuvering” until the completion of its nation building phase through creating the fictitious “homo Sovieticus.” And when they believed that they had enough power to pursue their policies, they “proceeded along their cautious but firm and calculating lines, to move into the Middle Eastern picture.”<sup>140</sup>

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139 CIA, *Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee: The Strategic Value to the USSR of the Conquest of Western Europe and the Near East (to Cairo) prior to 1950* (ORE 58-48), 30 July 1948; CIA, *Soviet Foreign and Military Policy* (ORE 1), 23 July 1 1946; CIA, *Possibility of Direct Soviet Military Action during 1948* (ORE 22-48), 2 April 1948; all available from <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; Internet; accessed on 24 March 2006.

140 *FRUS*, 1945, vol.8, Draft Memorandum to President Truman, 45.

## CHAPTER III

### TURKEY'S POSITION IN THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

Trying to look for the origins of the Cold War in the latter phase of World War II or in the aftermath of the victory leads the debate nearly to impasse. Its complexity ostensibly arises from inconsistency and complexity of the policies conducted by the heads of the great powers from the very beginning of the Grand Alliance or after the end of the war. By the time the Grand Alliance was shaped, the seamy side of the hostility - the long-standing political differences in points of view and particularly political methods if not that of the military- between the members were forgotten or ignored for the sake of military collaboration. Thus, the supreme necessities of the war against aggressor nations menacing the peace of the world and thereby the very interests of great powers, notably the United States and Great Britain, dominated the attitudes of these nations toward the Soviet Union.<sup>141</sup> Consequently, the “joint struggle against German Fascism” had led to the close political rapprochement of the Allies. Meanwhile, it was expressed in some circles that “although Russians under circumstances making common cause with such democracies as United States and Great Britain, it could never be expected to shape

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<sup>141</sup> For Churchill “any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe....It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people” in Winston S. Churchill, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin ,1950), 54.

their political concepts or rid herself of innate political viciousness.”<sup>142</sup> However, the result was a political picture framed by the leaders of the Great Powers that did not reflect former differences embroiled in their political and ideological systems, but cohesion for the consumption of world opinion. Convinced of the justice of their cause and the rightness of their policy from the onset of the war, they adapted themselves to these new structural changes in the international environment during the Second World War and pretended consciously not to see the differences from the beginning of the “Grand Alliance” about the end-aims of the war.<sup>143</sup>

Concomitantly, concealing the previous hostilities and muting them in the interests of military collaboration, the US initially did not regard the Soviet Union or personally Stalin, notwithstanding unfavorable conducts in foreign relations, as an unacceptable partner with whom to collaborate in stabilizing and remarking the postwar world.<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, it was also needless, according to Roosevelt, “to worry about the possibility of any Russian domination” in the postwar era.<sup>145</sup> He, instead, appeared absolutely sure that London and Washington together would dominate the postwar world.<sup>146</sup> Later developments, however, proved these early assumptions to be premature in regard to postwar world domination. At the Moscow (October 18, 1943 to November 11, 1943) and Tehran (November 28 to December 1, 1943) Conferences, a new concert of power was developed, which necessarily signified awareness on the part of Roosevelt and Churchill of Moscow’s role in world affairs. Involving the Soviet Union was then recognized and accepted as “a

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142 *FRUS*, 1941, vol. 1, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 334.

143 William L. Langer, “Turning Points of the War: Political Problems of a Coalition,” *Foreign Affairs* 26 (1947): 34; William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War, 1940-1941* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), 537-41; Raymond H. Dawson, *The Decision to Aid Russia, 1941: Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 112-8.

144 Melvyn P. Leffler, “Cold War and Global Hegemony, 1945-1991,” *OAH Magazine of History* (March 2005): 65; George F. Kennan, *At a Century’s Ending: Reflections, 1982-1995* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company), 153.

145 “U.S. President Letter, June 26, 1941, to Admiral William D. Leahy, Ambassador to Vichy France,” in Elliott Roosevelt, ed., *The Roosevelt Letters*, vol. 3, (George G. Harrup & Co., Ltd.), 377.

146 William Appleman Williams, *American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947* (New York, Toronto: Rinehart & CO., Inc., 1952), 259.

constructive part as a full and equal member of family of nations in the movement of international cooperation” for a lasting peace based upon a policy of general security and cooperation.<sup>147</sup>

Nonetheless the inner side of the “Grand Alliance” or “Comradeship-in-Arms” was much more different from the prevailing political picture publicized by the heads of the Grand Alliance and by other important Allied statesmen that marked the diplomatic relationship during the war. Both the statesmen in Washington and London were keenly aware, since the very beginning, of the persistent and unvarying territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union in areas outside its own borders, especially toward its neighbors to the west, that were continually articulated with great frequency throughout the war.<sup>148</sup> In this respect, Soviet intentions such as to have their own *cordon sanitaire* and their own assurances, apart from any possible general security guarantee had already been made amply clear by the Molotov- Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. Following that Pact, forcible occupation and absorption of the previously independent Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into the Soviet Union in July 1940, Soviet territorial demands from Poland, attempts to seize territories from Rumania such as the mouth of Danube, its aggressive intentions and claims in respect to the control of Dardanelles through the establishment of Russian bases were all plain indications, which reflected the aims and maneuvers of Russian foreign policy to any sober observer of the international scene.

Without ever thinking of doing otherwise in spite of some counterarguments in the administrations, both the US and the Great Britain had tried carefully to avoid any disputation with the Soviet government. Instead, less particularistic solutions for the postwar world order were discussed. Both Washington and London, therefore,

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<sup>147</sup> *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers*, 1944, vol. 1, Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of State, 700-3; *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers*, 1944, vol. 4, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, 826.

<sup>148</sup> Williams, *American-Russian*, 263.

tried to abstain from pressing controversial, but crucial political issues. A briefing prepared by the Department of State, put this policy later as:

Because of the over-riding wartime necessity of avoiding friction which might jeopardize military cooperation, more emphasis had hitherto been placed on cooperating with the Soviet Union *per se* than on finding an agreed basis upon which the cooperation must be established if it is to endure and form one of the foundations of a secure and peaceful world order.<sup>149</sup>

At the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference in October 1943, when W. Averell Harriman, the US ambassador in Moscow, proposed raising the question of Poland, which later arose as one of the conflicting issues between the wartime Big Three, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, rejected the idea: "I don't want to deal with these piddling little things."<sup>150</sup> In a policy paper prepared by the Chief of Staff, it was recorded that "due to our [the US] *untimely* pressing the subject of territorial settlement – or other *avoidable* cause" might cause Russia to abstain from entering the war against Japan and thereby prolong it. Therefore, bearing in mind the "important connection between the *timeliness* of discussing territorial trusteeships or other forms of territorial settlements and the earliest and least costly defeat of Japan," the fall of Japan had to take place to reach a settlement with Moscow about "these *controversial* subjects."<sup>151</sup> (*Italics added*)

On the other side, Stalin did not indulge in a series of illusions compared to his wartime allies about the "temporary association." Stalin was well aware of the fact that Americans and Britons were assisting the Soviets only for self-serving ends, not because of cordial friendship.<sup>152</sup> The Soviet Union, though, found itself obliged to fight on the same side with the "capitalist" states for its own survival, and

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149 *FRUS, The Second Quebec Conference*, 1944, Department of State Briefing Paper: US Relations with the Soviet Union, 193.

150 Averell Harriman W. and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), 236.

151 *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers*, 1944, vol.1, Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of State: Fundamental Military Factors in Relation to Discussions Concerning Territorial Trusteeships and Settlements, 701-3.

152 The Congressional Research Service for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington: G.P.O., 1979), 118.

undertook some commitments later at Moscow and Tehran, both of which undoubtedly indicated some tendency to modify the previous concept of irreconcilability between “socialism” and “capitalism.” Stalin was not fully convinced that this new policy of collaboration with capitalist states would succeed.<sup>153</sup> However, in light of the Russian political tradition “preoccupation with the interpretation rather than the letter of an agreement,” there would be little danger, for Stalin, in incurring obligations which Russia itself would be able to interpret unilaterally when the time came to deliver.<sup>154</sup> At least, this cooperation would assure western material aid during the prosecution of the war, and for the reconstruction of the devastated country after the war. With all these considerations in mind, Stalin aimed to exploit, to the utmost, the circumstances that confronted him, and used cooperation merely as a means of facilitating attainment of far-reaching Soviet objectives at his allies’ expense.<sup>155</sup>

In this connection there was nothing inconsistent with Soviet history, theory, or practice, which could lead the other “democratic nations” in these years to the illusion that it was possible to reason with the Kremlin into accepting steadfastly the principle of cooperation for the sake of cooperation with them along the broad principles of the Atlantic Charter in the conduct of international affairs in the postwar era. “...it is [was] not possible to create “international good will” with them,” argued Laurence Steinhardt, American Ambassador in Turkey, already in 1941, “that they will always sacrifice the future in favor of an immediate gain, and that they are not affected by ethical or moral considerations, nor guided by the relationships which are

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153 *FRUS*, 1944, vol.4, Memorandum by Mr. Elbridge Durbow of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, 814.

154 I borrowed this phrase from Kennan, who used it to explain the Russian relations with western powers against the Nazi menace in *Ibid.*, 905.

155 William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy* (New York: London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 31; *FRUS*, 1944, vol.4, Memorandum Prepared in the Division of European Affairs: Current Problems in Relation with the Soviet Union, 840; *Ibid.*, Memorandum by the Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union: Russia-Seven Years Later, 902-13; For a short summary of theoretical explanation, see *Ibid.*, Current Problems in Relation with the Soviet Union, 839-40.

customary between individuals of culture and breeding.”<sup>156</sup> Attitudes and actions of the Soviet government in relations, including the early Lend-Lease meetings between the Harriman-Beaverbrook mission and Stalin supported those contentions, and became the early indications of Soviet thought. Even at a crucial time when great swathes of Soviet territory was enveloped by Hitler in September 1941 and the need for Allied assistance was high, it was not accidental that Stalin brought up the “political issue of Allied peace objectives” and “the matter of German reparations” after the war as the main items on the agenda for consideration. It evidently showed Stalin’s future expectations from this temporary association.

But when the end of the war approached, and thereby the common need that had provided the very reason for the alliance and held it together in subsequent years was removed, a revision of the policy became an inescapable reality for the administrations in Washington and London. Differences in political policies of the wartime Big Three about postwar international order had begun to unfold. When the US Ambassador transmitted a dispatch to Washington about a “startling turn” in Soviet attitudes, both leaders of the “free world” had already been caught in a dilemma that unless they accepted the Soviet position in Eastern Europe, they would not be judged as friends.<sup>157</sup> Nothing, which they could do, short of a military confrontation with Moscow, could alter it. This irreversible situation, of course, did not fully conform to the early calculations, which assumed that the Kremlin would collaborate with them in their terms for the postwar world order. Instead, they were

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156 *FRUS*, 1941, vol.1, Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State of a Conversation with the British Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 348.

157 Molotov’s statement quoted in *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to Mr. Harry L. Hopkins, special Assistant to President Roosevelt, 988.

being enforced “to accept all Soviet policies backed by the strength and prestige of the Red Army” because it won the war for them.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed it was understood precisely that the “democratic nations” and the Soviet Union had a “different concept of understanding.” Moscow was genuinely placing different connotations to words, including wartime declarations, than the Americans and Britons.<sup>159</sup> Each side interpreted the terms, especially the principal tenets of the postwar order in their own way. Thus, when Russians spoke of insisting on “friendly governments” in their neighboring countries,<sup>160</sup> or of “security” as well as “democracy,” they had in mind naturally something quite different from their capitalist allies. Consequently, the lack of accord in understanding indicated political consequences when the Red Army “liberated” Eastern Europe.

Terminological diversity notwithstanding, even at a time when the fall of Germany was in sight, there had been no “agreed and mutually acceptable political program” in regard to what would be necessary to enhance and preserve close collaboration in the postwar era between the Allied powers.<sup>161</sup> Meanwhile the wartime declarations in this respect about peaceful postwar world order carried a certain perfunctory quality. Still at Yalta when the very real danger to the hope of stable peace after the end of war existed, Churchill and Roosevelt furthered the “appeasement” policy, because of their wartime practical interests. In order “to save American lives” and have the support of the Soviet Union to defeat Germany and then to defeat Japan when the war in Europe was over, they supported the Soviet

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 989.

<sup>159</sup> *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 992-3; FO 371/47964, *Soviet failure to give effect to provisions of the Yalta Agreement*, July 20, 1945.

<sup>160</sup> *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 992.

<sup>161</sup> *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 1945, Briefing Book Paper: The Necessity of the three principal Allies arriving at a common political program for liberated countries, 102.



arguments in a direct or indirect way.<sup>162</sup> Further, the deal on “spheres of influence,” that implicitly operated since October 1944, gave Stalin a moral justification to further his objectives in Eastern Europe. In this respect, Molotov’s indications on a number of occasions to Harriman summarized the consequences of their policies. Russians, quoted Harriman, “considered that after they had put us on notice of a Soviet policy or plan and we did not at that time object, we had acquiesced in and accepted the Soviet position.”<sup>163</sup>

In the end, it is difficult to put one’s finger on the origins of the cold war without referring to the history of relationship between the wartime Big Three before and during the war. It is the easiest way to explain the causes of the postwar-short-of-war situation by referring to the aggressive conduct of the Kremlin or personally to Stalin in international affairs. Asserting the contrary should not mean that the Soviet Union was innocent. But it was hard to contend that there was a change in the fundamental policy or attitude of Moscow toward the “democratic nations.” In other words, it was impossible to argue that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union conducted before the establishment of the alliance, especially between 1939 and 1941, resembled the foreign policy pursued in postwar years; that was assumed later as the trouble spots between the parties. It might well be that postwar developments brought to the surface the underlying attitudes of democratic nations. Since sufficient solidarity with the Soviet Union was needed to complete the victory over Germany and end the war against Japan, the United States or Great Britain did not risk any venture with Moscow. But, the evolution of events indicated that where Americans and English left a vacuum, or deferred a decision, Russians moved in. The West reaped the harvest of its “appeasement” policy pursued during the war. The result

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 93-102. For Soviets role in Pacific operations look at *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers*, 1944, vol.1, Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of State, 701-3.

<sup>163</sup> *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 992.

prevailed as physical possession of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Army and a chance to pursue its political objectives in that territory. Westerners tried to fill this vacuum in the years following the end of the war, but it was too late for a negotiated settlement. They were not able to enforce the Kremlin to interpret wartime declarations in particular and the world in general in their own way—a situation that set the stage for the postwar confrontation.

In sum, there were three major issues. In the first place were limits of power. Secondly, the dichotomy in US foreign policy, between realism and liberalism, was executed by realism in decision-making. Lastly, the continuation in Russian/Soviet foreign policy of reaching for buffer zones prevailed. It is now evident, albeit in retrospect, Turkey realized by 1944 that it might become one of those buffer zones. Except that this time, however in vehemently the İnönü government perceived it, Turkey was in a position to freely choose sides in the upcoming polarized world.

### **3.1. Turkish- Russian Relations prior to Post-War Crisis**

A glance at the history of Turkish-Russian relations would show that centuries-long rivalry (18<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) for regional influence-both in the Caucasus and Balkans marked this relationship. Since either one or the other power had in the European state system a shared history, one side expanded over at the expense of the other. When the tide started to turn in favor of tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire sought to relieve Muscovite danger by acting on the balance of power, between Russia and the western powers, especially Great Britain. However, when the interests of the western powers and Russian Empire coincided, for the first time in history during the First World War, the Ottoman Empire could not escape from being prey to them.

Thus, the First World War happened to be the last stage of the Ottoman-tsarist Russia relations. In this stage, Russian demands during the wartime secret arrangements among the Entente powers for the partition of the Ottoman Empire evidenced and in a sense summarized century-long Russian aspirations over the Ottoman Empire. However, the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 provided a setback on the part of Russian Empire to realize its “time-honored aspirations” and opened a new page in Turco-Russian relationship. This revolution also became the turning point in Turkish- Russian relations which initiated a new era.

Although the main theme of this thesis centers on the period immediately following the Second World War, it has also proved necessary to cover the period before and during the war. This chapter, therefore, retraces the successive stages in the development of Turco-Soviet relations until the end of the Second World War. In order to put issues in perspective, this study will start with a brief survey of Turco-Russian relations, focusing on the reasons, influences and factors, which caused and speeded up the rapprochement between the two countries during the interwar period. The second part will examine the relationship in the context of the whole international configuration during the Second World War and evaluate the relationship on the basis of shifts in both Turkish and Soviet policies. The investigation of Turco-Soviet relations both during the interwar years and during the war is most enlightening, as it enables one to comprehend the post-Second World War crisis between the two neighboring countries, which in turn affected and reflected the policies of the other great powers.

### 3.1.1. A Period of Peaceful Interregnum

World War I ended officially on November 11, 1918. Nonetheless, the end of this global hostility did not bring peace to the geography of the Ottomans and Russians, but turbulent times for the two countries. On the part of Turkey, the armistice of Mudros (October, 1918), which provided for a total and unconditional surrender of the Ottoman Empire, led to a national resistance movement, though scattered but intact, all over the Anatolian homeland. When the “peace” treaty of Sèvres was signed in August 1920 by the Ottoman representatives, a Turkish national assembly apart from the İstanbul government had already been established in Ankara, which unified, to a considerable extent, the national resistance movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk].<sup>164</sup> The Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal were struggling to thwart the imperialist powers’ envisaged plan to partition their homeland and to replace the Sultan’s government with a national government. Simultaneously, the northern neighbor of the Turks for centuries, Russians (the Bolsheviks), were increasingly preoccupied, after overthrowing tsarism by the October revolution, with preserving and consolidating their hold against internal and external military challenges. Thus, in the same period, both the Turks and Russians were beleaguered by the interventionist powers and preoccupied with safeguarding their national integrity against them.

Under these conditions, the coincidence of common opposition against interventions in order to assert themselves as new national entities in the same period merged the two emerging states in the practical field of common interest.<sup>165</sup> Thus, in

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<sup>164</sup> Mustafa Kemal was given the surname Atatürk by the Assembly, only after a Turkish law of 1934 obliged all Turkish citizens to take family names.

<sup>165</sup> This cause was reiterated nearly in all diplomatic correspondence between Mustafa Kemal and Lenin. For the texts of these correspondence, see Sadi Borak, *Öyküleriyle Atatürk’ün Özel Mektupları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1980), 195-205. Also this cause was emphasized in the text of the first treaty between Russia and Turkey in 1921: “...noting the solidarity between them in the struggle against

this development of mutual interests, it was not unnatural that a process of rapprochement took place between the two infant revolutionary states. This closeness of national interests enabled the two emerging states to put aside historical rivalries and ambitions that each of them associated with a discredited past.

However, at that point, it should be noted that this rapprochement was not immune to confusions on both sides. On the part of Turks, a climate of confusion and suspicion prevailed since the initial stage of the War of Independence. The very reason for these confusions and suspicions was simply the lack of information about what Bolshevism was which led to the dilemma in the minds of ruling class about on what bases the future relationship with Bolshevik Russia should be established.<sup>166</sup> On the other part, to turn the Turkish independence movement into a "revolutionary movement" that would embrace all eastern peoples appeared as the main idea in the Soviet leaders minds.<sup>167</sup> Although, cognizant of the fact that "the movement headed by Kemal is not a Communist movement,"<sup>168</sup> they still kept encouraging and supporting the communist Turkish factions in the Caucasus who were waiting for the defeat of the ongoing national movement on Turkish soil and preparing the ground for communism in Turkey.

Under these circumstances, in building policy toward the Bolsheviks, Mustafa Kemal and his inner circle were inspired and guided mainly by interrelated but at the same time paradoxical objectives: to obtain military/ financial aid from the

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imperialism as well as the fact that any difficulties created for any one of the two nations cause a deterioration of the position of the other nation..." For the text of the treaty, see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 95-7.

166 Borak, 168-196; Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, vol.2, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 351.

167 Kılıç, 28; A. Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East: Strategy and Tactics* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984) quoted in H. B. Paksoy, "U.S. and Bolshevik Relations with the TBMM Government: The First Contacts, 1919-1921," *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 12 (1994): 219; George Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford, Calif.: The Hoover Institution, 1967), 62; Roderic H. Davison, "Turkish Diplomacy from Mudros to Lausanne," in *The Diplomats, 1919-1939*, eds. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 184; Kâmurân Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri, 1920-1953* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 13-7.

168 G. Zinoviev's speech as chairman of the Congress of Eastern Peoples at the First Session, held in September, 1920; available from <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/ch01.htm>; Internet; accessed 26 March 2006. He also expressed the same thoughts in his article "Bolshevik Aims in Asia," *Current History* 8 (March 1921): 465.

Bolsheviks<sup>169</sup> but at the same time to “check,” during the interval until independence was achieved, the possible penetration of Bolshevism into the Turkish lands.<sup>170</sup> By careful observance of these objectives, the Turks achieved to establish the first diplomatic bond with Bolshevik Russia. On March 16, 1921 the Treaty of Friendship and Fraternity was signed between the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic<sup>171</sup> and the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

This treaty carried much more importance for Ankara than Bolshevik Russia where civil war and the Allied intervention had been successfully overcome. Generally speaking, this treaty provided Turkey in the short term with comfort in the eastern front, which was assumed to be much more important than the material help in arms and money given by Moscow to carry forward the Turkish National War of Independence.<sup>172</sup> In the long term, the common frontier of the two nations was delineated in the Caucasus (Article 1, 2), “final settlement of the international status of the Black Sea and the Straits” was agreed to be solved without “harming Turkey’s sovereignty in any way” (Article 5), and former treaties “hitherto concluded between the two countries [that] fail to conform their mutual interest” were renounced (Article 6, 7).<sup>173</sup>

By this treaty, a new era of friendly collaboration with the Russians was opened. But also by this treaty, the new relationship started to take its real shape.

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169 For a detailed information about the military and financial aid from the Bolsheviks during the war of independence, see Erol Mütercimler, *Kurtuluş Savaşına Denizden Gelen Destek: Sovyetler Birliği’nden Alınan Yardımlar: Kuvay-ı Milliye Donanması* (İstanbul: Yaprak Yayınevi, 1992).

170 For detailed information about Atatürk’s foreign policy toward Bolsheviks and their ideology during the War of Independence, see Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faaliyetler* (Ankara 1967), 118-378; Borak, 168-205; Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 344; Paksoy, “U.S. and Bolshevik,” 211-51; Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy*, 4-7.

171 After the collapse of Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks formed the Union of Soviet Republics, which comprised officially six Soviet Republics or Federated Soviet Republics. The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic was only one of the constituent part of this Union. Other Republics were, the White Russian Socialist Soviet Republic, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, the Transcaucasian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, the Uzbek Socialist Soviet Republic, and the Turkoman Socialist Soviet Republic.

172 K. Krüger, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East* (London: George Allen & Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1932), 24-5.

173 Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 95-7.

Through the provisions and the spirit on which the Moscow treaty was based, all possible cause of friction - mainly the questions of Armenian and the Straits- seemed to be solved with mutual understanding. However, a real test in this relationship had to do with the Lausanne Peace Conference in 1923. During the sessions of the conference, which dealt with the question of the Straits, the Turkish delegation failed to support either Soviet opposition to the Allied suggestions or their own principles, and felt obliged to accept the compromise solution suggested by the Allied powers.<sup>174</sup>

While Soviets unwillingly signed the treaty, though never ratified it, a degree of estrangement was inescapable. The Turkish stance during the Conference was contrary to the spirit of the relevant provision of the Moscow Treaty as well as to the interests of the Soviets. However, in their opposition of Western imperialism, this situation did not seem to drive a serious wedge between the two states. Both of them were cognizant of the fact that they were left isolated and needed peaceful relations rather than hostility between themselves as well as the European powers. This was the case again in 1925 when the two countries demonstratively signed the Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression.<sup>175</sup> The underlying reason for the renewal of Turco-Soviet friendship was a reaction to the unfavorable settlements confronted separately by both states in the international arena.<sup>176</sup> In 1929, a new dimension was added to the relationship when the two parties decided to extend the 1925 Treaty for two more years. In it, the two states accepted that they would not enter into political

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174 İsmet İnönü, who headed the Turkish delegation during the Lausanne Conference, explained in his memoirs why the compromise solution had to be accepted, see İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralarım*, vol.2, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1985), 76; Yücel Güçlü, "The Uneasy Relationship: Turkey's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union at the Outbreak of the Second World War," *Mediterranean Quarterly* (Summer 2002): 60; Aydın Güngör Alacakaptan, "Türk-Sovyet ilişkileri, 1921-1945," in *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Süreç*, ed. İsmail Soysal (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 284; Davison, "Turkish Diplomacy," 203.

175 Protocol enlarging and prolonging the validity of this treaty, signed in Ankara on December 17, 1929; further prolonged by Protocol signed in Ankara on October 30, 1931; and prolonged until November 7, 1945 by Protocol signed in Ankara on November 7, 1935.

176 Reference is made to the Locarno Treaties on the Soviet side and Mosul settlement on the Turkish side, Kennan, *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 66-7; Gürün, 107-9.

negotiations with a neighboring nation without consulting the other and not to conclude any agreement without concurrence of the other.<sup>177</sup> In this respect, Turkey sought Soviet approval before joining the League of Nations in 1932 as well as before forming the Saadabad Pact in 1937.

In the later years down to the World War II, Turkish- Soviet relationship continued to be “a reverse function of the differences both parties had with the western powers.”<sup>178</sup> In this fragile period, the Turkish government, despite its obvious western orientation and its stubborn attitude toward communism, succeeded in keeping its relations with the Soviet Union at a favorable level. However, since differences of the parties with western powers started to diminish in the light of emerging threats from Europe in the mid-1930s, tendencies of the parties changed in a parallel way.

This situation became obvious during the Montreux Conference of 1936. Although Turkey and the Soviet Union had been in complete accord at the time conference convened, the Soviets changed their position without informing the Turks beforehand. They displayed a sense of reluctance to concede to Turkey full control of the Straits that somewhat clouded the friendship. However, what was more critical for the future of the relationship was the unofficial proposal of the Foreign Commissar Maxim Maximovich Litvinov about the bilateral Soviet-Turkish pact for joint defense of the Straits and in turn attitude of the Turks to this overture. In response to it, Turkish government not only displayed strict resistance, but also

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177 Full text in Güngör, 290-1. It was interesting that the supplementary protocol which counted the neighboring nations of each other was kept secret.

178 Kennan, *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 66.



informed Britain about the Soviet move, which indeed really annoyed the Soviet government.<sup>179</sup>

Therefore, the Montreux Conference could be taken as one of the breaking points in Turkish-Soviet relationship. It became clear that there were no longer common interests as had existed during the 1920s. The Soviet press, which supported Turkey for its struggle against imperialism, began from that moment on to charge Turkey with playing the game of the “imperialist powers.”<sup>180</sup> At this juncture, it is worth noting that the underlying reason for Soviet coolness was the new western orientation of the Turkish government and specifically the renewed cordiality between Britain and Turkey.<sup>181</sup> On the Turkish part, “a certain amount of suspicion arose” and in consequence, “Turkish policy reoriented away from the Soviets and towards Britain.”<sup>182</sup> This process of reorientation in Turkish policy continued with an increasing trend until 1939 and culminated in Anglo-French-Turkish alliance in that year.

However, the cordial relationship appeared to continue after Montreux. As the Soviets did not further insist on their unfriendly attitude toward Turkey, most probably due to the deteriorating international situation in Europe, the relationship continued as before Montreux until the crucial year, 1939. However, the “cordial” relations came to end, according to Saracoğlu, just after the Anglo-French-Turkish treaty was signed on October 19, 1939:

From that time on Soviets no longer kept Turkey informed of their negotiations with neighboring powers and after a while Turks ceased furnishing similar information to the Soviets. While relations between

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179 İsmail Soysal, “1936 Montreux Boğazlar Sözleşmesi ve Sonradan Çıkan Sorunlar,” in *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Süreç* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 312; Cevat Açıkalın, “Turkey’s International Relations,” *International Affairs* (October 1947): 479.

180 Necmeddin Sadak, “Turkey Faces the Soviets,” *Foreign Affairs* (April 1949): 452.

181 Kılıç, 58-65; Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 2.

182 *FRUS*, 1942, vol.4, *The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State*, 818. In this telegram, Steinhardt only quoted the words of Turkish Foreign Minister, Şükrü Saracoğlu and therefore could be taken as official view of the Turkish government; Gürün, 168-9.

[the] two countries continued to be “correct,” the former friendship and intimacy no longer existed.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, the process of rapprochement that began early in the 1920s, proved to be temporary and opportunistic before the war. As Mustafa Kemal put it upon the treaty with Bolshevik Russia, the success of the treaty depended on the future attitudes of the two parties and more specifically on not changing their position under the effect of their old customs or for any other reason.<sup>184</sup> The developments of the period seemed to imply Moscow’s return to its old (tsarist) customs. Whatever the exact reason was for changing its position, the new conjuncture prohibited a reasonable relationship which had been maintained with considerable success for two decades. Having stated this factor though, the Nazi threat to Soviet Russia should also be born in mind.

### **3.1.2. The Situation during the War**

The relationship between the two countries during the Second World War followed an uneasy pattern. Contrasted with the pre-war situation, it developed within a broader context, in which the relationship could no longer be taken as an isolated issue. Their dealings with European powers rather than mutually became much more influential in shaping the relationship during the period under review. More specifically, Soviet relations with Germany appeared as the determining factor for the relationship of the two neighboring powers. Therefore, in contrast to the relatively consistent pattern of the relationship in the pre-war period, sharp turning points reasoned by Soviets’ as well as Turkey’s changing wartime positions were

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183 *FRUS*, 1942, vol.4, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 820.

184 The letter of Mustafa Kemal to Enver Pasha on October 4, 1920. A copy of this letter could be found in Borak, 215-8.

observed during the war. Accordingly, the wartime period of the relationship should be examined through three interlinked periods.

The first period began with the efforts of the countries to draw their line of action in face of the approaching war. To this end, Turkey, intent on associating itself with Great Britain without hurting its relations with the Soviets, whose friendship was held in high esteem, was far more eager for a tie between Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>185</sup> Therefore, while discussions for a mutual assistance pact with Britain went on, Turkey assigned itself a mediatory role when the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations reached an impasse. In the words of Saracoğlu, Turkey hoped that it could constitute itself as “a bridge across the gap between Britain and France and the Soviet Union.”<sup>186</sup> On the other hand, meanwhile Moscow was vacillating between different foreign policy options. The Soviet Union, on the one hand, gave the impression during Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Potemkin’s visit (April 28-May 5), who made favorable remarks concerning the Anglo-Turkish Declaration of Mutual Co-operation and Assistance in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, that it would take the same course.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, the Kremlin considered rapprochement with Germany among its possible policies. To that effect, it had already made tentative efforts to improve relations with Berlin, which culminated in a Non-Aggression Pact in August 23.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, it conducted the pact negotiations with Britain and Turkey in a dilatory manner in order to gain time to see the result of its negotiations with Germany. Moscow thought in

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185 While Turkey’s main policy during the war and immediate prewar era was to maintain its neutrality as long as possible, it struggled to align itself with western powers, especially with Great Britain in order to “insure” itself in case it had to enter the war. For President İsmet İnönü’s ideas about Turkey’s neutrality and alliance with Britain, see Faik Ahmet Barutçu, *Siyasi Anılar, 1939-1954* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1977), especially 36. However, Turkey, as President İnönü emphasized, was “anxious to take up a position between two opposing parties.” See İsmet İnönü, “Türkiye üzerine bir makale,” *Ulus*, 15 September 1947.

186 *FRUS*, 1942, vol.4, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 819.

187 In his speech before the Assembly during the Anglo-Turkish Declaration was read, Turkish Prime Minister Refik Saydam emphasized on the mutual understanding between Turkey and Soviet Union in regard to future policies, for the related part of the Prime Minister’s speech, see Gürün, 187. For an opposite interpretation of Potemkin’s visit, see Sontag and Beddie, 20.

188 Sontag and Beddie, 1-48.

furtherance of this plan that it could induce Turkey to “act at the same time and in the same manner” as the Soviet Union.<sup>189</sup>

At this juncture, Saracoğlu negotiations of autumn 1939 carried utmost importance. The two sides saw the negotiations as the last chance to induce the other to act in the same manner as the other. Although this hope of Ankara had been demolished and complicated by the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, Turkey did not abandon its efforts in that direction. Under these circumstances, negotiations between the Turkish Foreign Minister, Saracoğlu and Stalin began officially on September 26 in Moscow. After several attempts were made to reach a mutual understanding, the negotiations failed on October 16, at the time when it seemed to promise a favorable result.<sup>190</sup> The reason for this failure was the Soviet suggestion for an arrangement in their favor concerning the provisions of the Montreux Convention and a reservation regarding Germany.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, the period of hard bargaining during the last days of peace and in the first days of the war ended with unexpected results. Contrary to the initial hope of Turkish policy makers for an improvement in the relations between Russia and Great Britain through Turkey, Ankara found itself in a new, unexpected, and in many ways disturbing situation. To the displeasure of the Soviets, Turkey signed the Tripartite Pact of 1939 with Britain and France on October 19, 1939, which proved to be anchor of Turkish foreign policy throughout the Second World War. The Soviets envisaged this fact to be against Germany, with which the Moscow linked its interim

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189 Ibid., 20.

190 During the last meeting before the close of the negotiations, Stalin said he would sign Soviet-Turk treaty. However, as early as on 9 October (since October 1 no meeting had taken place), Molotov expressed the view that “in all likelihood a mutual assistance pact with Turkey would not be concluded.” Ibid., 120.

191 İsmet İnönü, “Türkiye üzerine bir makale.” *Ulus*, 15 September 1947.

fate.<sup>192</sup> But it is quite interesting that despite the Soviet attitude toward Turkey, Turkish officialdom described the Turkish-Soviet relationship as “correct” but lacking “former friendship and intimacy.”<sup>193</sup> In addition, while the Tripartite Act was geared singly and totally against a military threat emanating from the Mediterranean (i.e. Italy) the extremely cautious Soviet sensitivity over the rapprochement between Rome & Berlin is noteworthy.

Nonetheless, the inner side of the relationship in this period was different from what appeared to be. Ever since the failure of the negotiations in 1939, considerable uneasiness dominated strategic considerations in Ankara. The most important reason for this uneasiness was the vagueness of the attitude and policy of the Soviet Union in this period. On the one hand, Turkish leaders hoped that trend of events would gradually force restoration of the cordial relations that formerly existed between Turkey and Russia possible.<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, the same leaders were apprehensive about the possible aggressive policies of the Soviets in regard to the Straits or to the Eastern provinces of Turkey.<sup>195</sup> These apprehensions of the Turks emanated partly from Russian military activities in Eastern Europe in the summer of 1940. But more importantly, political aggression of Germany against Turkey was the main source of apprehension for the Turkish government.

During the occupation of France certain documents purporting to show the support of Turkey for French and the British intentions directed against Russia were made public. France and Great Britain were dissatisfied at the delivery of materials to Germany in accordance with

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192 Turkey insisted on a reservation in the pact in respect to the Soviet Union whereby the Tripartite Pact would not obligate the Turkish Government to any kind of assistance aimed directly or indirectly against it, and thereby absolved it from any action likely to lead to war with it. Protocol 2 of the Treaty signed on October 19 was about that reservation.

193 *FRUS*, 1942, vol.4, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 820.

194 The Ambassador in Turkey to the Department of State, “Developments during the past Seventeen Months in the Attitude and Policies of Turkey relative to the International Scene,” *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1945-1949* (hereafter IAT) (Washington: National Archives, 1983), microfilm, Roll 23.

195 Ibid; *FRUS*, 1940, vol. 1, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 515. Turkish Chief of Staff, Kâzım Karabekir expressed his view on several occasions that there was no possibility of an Soviet attack in regard to the Straits or Eastern provinces of Turkey since Moscow could not trust Italian or German armies, see Kâzım Karabekir, *Ankara’da Savaş Rüzgarları: II. Dünya Savaşı - CHP Grup Tartışmaları* (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1994), 208-9.

the Russo-German Pact. The Soviet Union did not conceal its displeasure at Turkey's alliance with France and Great Britain. The Germans, when they published the French documents, were working zealously, in a tense political atmosphere, to create armed conflict between Turkey and Russia, and seeing Turkey isolated, they believed that, as was the case with Romania, it would be drawn closer to them against an eventual Russian aggression.<sup>196</sup>

However, German White Papers delivered to the Soviets seemed inadequate to be an effective source of friction, let alone creating armed conflict between the two neighboring states. But they were enough to increase uneasiness in high circles in Ankara as reflected in İnönü's speech of July 12. In this speech, the Turkish President emphasized the readiness of Turkish people to take up arms to defend their independence and integrity. His speech was generally meant to convey a warning to Moscow not to make any demands which would impair either the independence or the territorial integrity of Turkey.<sup>197</sup> Around the same time, Molotov read a report at the joint session of the Supreme Soviet, in which he stated that although the relation had been qualified since July by the German White Papers leaked, there had taken place no important changes in the relations of the Soviet Union with Turkey.<sup>198</sup>

But in the following months, Molotov, as if to give substance to Turkish apprehensions, was immersed in some long range diplomatic activities together with Hitler and Ribbentrop in Berlin. In the course of conversations, Soviet government demanded from Hitler as conditions for accepting the proposed Four Power Pact, a base within range of the Straits and recognition "the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf as the centre of the aspirations of the Soviet

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196 İsmet İnönü, "Türkiye üzerine bir makale," *Ulus*, 15 September 1947. Concerning this issue, it was interesting that despite mentioned activities of Germany in regard to Turkey- Russian relations, President İnönü offered himself to German Ambassador, Franz von Papen, in August of the same year, to become a mediator-for-peace in Europe, especially between London and Berlin, see Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi, 1938-1945*, vol.1, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 510-1.

197 The Ambassador in Turkey to the Department of State, 26 October 1940, "Developments during the past seventeen months in the attitude and policies of Turkey relative to international scene," IAT, microfilm, Roll 23.

198 *FRUS*, 1940, vol.3, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 208-9.

Union.”<sup>199</sup> According to the files of the German High Naval Command, Molotov also requested in addition to bases in the Straits the Kars-Ardahan region of Turkey.<sup>200</sup> Additional evidence, which became available to the Turkish authorities after a while, was the offer by Arkady Sobolev, then General Secretary of the Soviet Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, to Bulgarians to partition Turkish Thrace.<sup>201</sup>

Despite all these aggressive demarchés of the Soviets, there were no proposals to the Turkish government in regard either to the modification of the regime of the Straits or to territorial rectification. Nonetheless, this situation did not reflect a change in Soviet policy toward Turkey. This was related more with the relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union. New problems emanating from the implementation of the Secret Protocol of German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact created grave concerns about German intentions in the minds of high circles in the Kremlin. Moreover, the Soviet government was still awaiting an answer from Berlin in regard to its statement of position of November 25 concerning the issues raised during the Berlin discussions.<sup>202</sup>

At this juncture, German forces, after occupation of Greece, appeared at the western borders of Turkey. In Ankara, it was mainly assumed that Hitler had two options at that moment- descending to the Middle East through Turkey or attacking the Soviet Union from the west, - while the later option found more supporters.<sup>203</sup>

The general view in Ankara was, therefore, that Germany could not afford the Soviet

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199 The Four Power Pact was proposed by Hitler and intended to achieve collaboration between the countries of the Tripartite Pact- Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union. In it, the spheres of influence of these four countries were defined in bold outlines. For detailed information, see Sontag and Beddie, 195-260; for Soviet conditions and background conversations concerning the Pact, *ibid.*, 195-260.

200 Quoted in Kılıç, 86.

201 Bulgarian government informed Ankara officially at that time about Soviet's offers. In return, Ankara inquired this issue from Moscow but could not get any explanation, see Koçak, *Millî Şef Dönemi*, vol.1, 510-1; *FRUS*, 1941, vol.3, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 871. The Ambassador quoted from Turkish Foreign Minister Numan Menemencioğlu.

202 Starting with January 1940, Molotov drove the issue into German officialdom but could not get a specific answer. See Sontag and Beddie, 258, for background conversations, *passim*, for example 270.

203 Metin Toker, *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşa'lı Yılları, 1944-1973: Tek Partiden Çok Partiye, 1944-1950* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1998), 20; Lenczowski, *Middle East in World Affairs*, 129; Barutçu quotes that İnönü said that "In the near future, we will watch an interesting war." And this war will be between Germany and Soviet. Barutçu, 188.

army in its backyard and, therefore, Hitler would firstly attack the Soviet Union. However, the Turkish leaders were also aware of the fact that Hitler needed to ensure, at least, Turkish neutrality before embarking on an offensive upon the Soviets,<sup>204</sup> otherwise Turkey could face the same eventuality. Therefore, fear of a possible German offensive over Turkey seemed as natural and primary reason, which had been instrumental on the part of Turkey in bringing about the Turkish- German Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression Pact.

Nonetheless, other considerations that could plausibly be assumed to have played a non-negligible role in signing the treaty were taken into consideration in the decision-making process of the Turkish ruling elite. It had been neither fear of German attack nor fear of Soviet attack alone that occupied the minds of the Turkish leaders during and before 1942. Rather it was the likelihood of an alignment between Germany and Soviet Union.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, it might well be argued that Turkish leaders under fear and antagonism toward the Soviets, which had come to exist in Turkish high circles,<sup>206</sup> regarded the Treaty with Germany as a way to impede alignment of Germany with the Soviets. Inseparably linked with this consideration of the Turks were the advantages Germany would gain from this treaty- protection of their right flank in the German-Russian struggle, and thereby, facilitate the German-Russian war.

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204 *FRUS*, 1941, vol. 3, The Ambassador in Turkey to Secretary of State, 870.

205 Karabekir believed that neither Germany, whether along with Italy or not, nor Soviet Union could do nothing alone to Turkey unless they made an alignment between them. In this respect, Karabekir quotes a private meeting with President İnönü in which he expressed his grave concerns that "if Germany and Soviet Union had reached an agreement, this would extremely calamitous for Turkey." In return, Karabekir reminded that he had said several times that an agreement between Germany and Soviet Union had been very possible and therefore necessary measures in order to prevent this possibility should have been taken. Karabekir, 208-10, for the minutes of the meeting between Karabekir and the President, 285-300.

206 These anti-Russian sentiments in the minds of the Turkish leaders were commonly exploited by Germany in order to convince Turkey to enter Axis forces or at least to ensure its neutrality. To this end, Hitler himself had divulged to the Turkish ambassador in Germany, Hüsrev Gerde about Soviet demands in 1940 concerning the Straits. See Hüsrev R. Gerde, *Harp İçinde Almanya, (1939-1942)* (İstanbul: ABC Yayınları, 1994), 184. For impacts of this issue on Turkish leaders and later in Turkish media see Koçak, *Millî Şef Dönemi*, vol.1, 543-4, 600-3. However, the original documents concerning Soviets demands over the Turkish Straits were not given Turkey before on August 19, 1941. In other words shortly after the Soviet denial on June 27 in regard to "allegations" disseminated by Germany. See Lothar Kreckler, *Deutschland und die Türkei im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1964), 191-2, quoted in *ibid.*, 603.



Then not unexpectedly, only three days after signing of the treaty between Turkey and Germany came the Operation Barbarossa. Turkey declared its neutrality in the face of the German-Soviet war. Meanwhile upon the news of German attack on the USSR, a release of tension was observed in Turkish high circles, who had been under enormous stress during the passing months and managed to avert, at least for a while, the two possible menaces from their country. Also an “atmosphere of festival” was apparent around the country.<sup>207</sup>

It was also specifically during this period that some Turks including several senior officials ventured into some dangerous activities, which inevitably were perceived by the Soviets as a threat to them. One of these issues, indeed the most dangerous one to Turkish international relations, especially with the Soviets, was the German sponsored<sup>208</sup> Pan-Turanist movements within Turkey. It began effectively after the outbreak of German-Soviet war, mostly as a part of the German attempt to convince Ankara to enter the war on the side of Germany. For the Pan-Turkists, the Second World War was a unique opportunity, which they had been waiting, for realization of their goals. Therefore, the hopes and activities of Pan-Turkists to unite of all Turkish people increased in direct proportion to German victories on the Soviet Union.<sup>209</sup> This increase in Pan-Turkist sentiments and indeed aggressiveness toward the Soviet Union were best observed from the Turkish media and publications during that period.

As to the policy of the Government itself this state of affairs in the following years until 1943, it was ostensibly different from its pre-war policies, which had especially been established and pursued by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While there is

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207 Barutçu, 206-11.

208 It was known from German documents that Germany sent 5 million Reich marks to support propaganda activities in Turkey. See *German Foreign Office Documents: German Policy in Turkey, 1941-1943* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948), 57.

209 Jacop M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 112.

no concrete evidence to suggest that the Government of Turkey itself officially favored and supported Pan-Turkist leanings in that period,<sup>210</sup> its policy of aloofness from this state of affairs alone formed such a flagrant contrast to what the regime and the government had been standing for. Moreover, it was observed that the Turkish government's attitude toward Pan-Turanian leanings developed from strong official opposition to a mild tolerance during that period. Also this development in the Government's attitude naturally brought about "the lessening of Turkish sensitivity to possible Russian criticism of such activity."<sup>211</sup>

But it should also be noted that the change in the attitude of the Government was not true in essence and therefore, need not be interpreted as a possible change in the official position of the Turkish ruling elite toward this movement. It should rather be taken up as an attempt of the Turkish government to bend with the course of events after the German offensive on the Soviet Union.<sup>212</sup> In its "ticklish" international position, keeping a closed eye to the flaring Pan-Turanist sentiments in Turkish media and winking at some "unofficial" contacts of Turkish statesmen with German officials, the government pursued two mixed policies. On the one side, the

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210 Soviet Union published some series of captured German documents in order to display certain aspects of Turkish-German relations on Pan-Turkism. While it became clear from these documents that some Pan-Turkist policies attracted some Turkish leaders including Marshal Çakmak, there was no indication that Pan-Turkism became the government's policy, which was shaped mainly by President İnönü or there were any links between Pan-Turanian movement and the Government. See Charles Warren Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets: The Turks of the World and their Political Objectives* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957), 171-83; Koçak, *Millî Şef Dönemi*, vol.1, 694-5; Süleyman Tüzün, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'de Dış Türkler Tartışmaları (1939-1945)* (Isparta: Fakülte Kitabevi, 2005 ), 59-105, 181-227, 279-282; Günay Göksoy Özdoğan, "II. Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türk-Alman İlişkilerinde İç ve Dış Politika Aracı Olarak Pan-Türkizm," in *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2004), 140-7; Weisband quotes from his personal interview with Leo D. Hochstetter that "American intelligence during the war never found any evidence that connected İnönü and Menemencioğlu with the Pan-Turanists." He also quotes many other personal interviews with prominent Turkish scholars or statesmen including President İnönü, see Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943-1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics* (U.S.A.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 238-39, 246n56.

211 The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, April 9, 1947, "Changed Political Conditions Reflected in Acquittal of Pan-Turanians tried at İstanbul," IAT, Roll 23.

212 The international position of Turkey was best summarized by Stalin. In his personal message to Churchill, he defined Turkey's position as ticklish: "On the one hand, she is linked to the USSR by a treaty of friendship and neutrality, and to Great Britain by a treaty of mutual aid in resisting aggression; on the other hand, she is linked with Germany by a treaty of friendship concluded three days before Germany attacked the USSR. I do not know how, in the present circumstances, Turkey expects to square fulfillment of her obligations to the USSR and Great Britain with fulfillment of her obligations to Germany." See "Personal Message From Premier Stalin to the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill" in *Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*, vol. 1, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, [1957]), 92-3

Government sought to mollify German pressure on Turkey by giving the impression that they had mutual feelings toward a possible unity of Turkic elements in the Caucasus under Germany's authority after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In other words, the Pan-Turanianism was used as an issue in Governments diplomatic efforts to keep its neutrality in the face of German pressure to drag Turkey into war against the Soviets.<sup>213</sup> On the other side, Ankara sought to keep the Pan-Turanian movement under close observation and control, which was assumed to be inevitably on the agenda in the event of a German victory over the Soviets. In other words, it was part of the Government's effort to cover all options by providing a contingency plan in the event of clear German victory."<sup>214</sup> Under these considerations, Pan-Turanian movements continued to play a role in Turkey's relations with Germany on a course following German advances in the Soviet Union.

On the Soviet side, a process of reorientation in their attitude toward Turkey was initiated as the military and political situation in Europe progressed to their disadvantage. But it was, however, shortly after the German attack that the Soviet Union as the new ally of Britain issued a declaration:

The Soviet Government confirm their fidelity to the Montreux Convention and assure the Turkish Government that they have no aggressive intentions or claims with regard to the Straits. The Soviet Government, as also His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, are prepared to render every help and assistance in the event of her being attacked by any European power.<sup>215</sup>

The second period started by this declaration, during which the Soviets needed Turkish friendliness more than the Turks needed them. Especially after the German attack on the Soviet Union, which made the friendship or at least neutrality

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213 Günay Göksu Özdoğan, "Turan'dan "Bozkurt"a : Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946) (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 126-7.

214 According to Koçak's assessment this kind of calculation is not out of keeping with typical Turkish foreign policy, see Koçak, *Milli Şef Dönemi*, vol.1, 695.

215 *FRUS*, 1941, vol 3, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 391-2. Also in oral preamble to this written declaration, the Soviet Government felt the need to deny the reports that had been spread during the period of well-known treaty relations between the USSR and Germany.

of Turkey extremely important, the Soviet government reiterated, on every occasion, its assurances about Turkey's territorial integrity, including "Straits and all Turk interests" in order to attract Ankara to join the Allied block. Nevertheless, Turkish leaders no longer entertained the thought that "after about 20 instances in which since war began Turks had suggested to Soviets various bases for new rapprochement" friendship between the two countries could be restored.<sup>216</sup> On the contrary, they were convinced that Moscow was definitely hostile to Turkey. However, despite all these anti-Russian sentiments in Turkish high circles, there seemed no official change in the attitude of Turkey toward the Soviets.

In this period, the eventuality of war between Germany and Russia played a considerable role in forming Turkish foreign policy in regard to western powers and the Soviet Union. While neither side's defeat was more favorable to the Turks, it became evident in the later stages of the war that, Turkish ruling classes "greatly feared a German defeat, Soviet predominance and the bolshevization of Europe."<sup>217</sup> Parallel with this observation, the President of Turkey, İsmet İnönü, in a conversation with the American Ambassador, Laurence Steinhardt, expressed his grave concern about the result of a possible victory of the Soviet Union over Germany: "Soviet imperialism to over-run Europe and the Middle East."<sup>218</sup> On the other hand, despite the Non-Aggression Pact, German threat was still a factor that the Turkish government could not disregard in any sense. It was not difficult for Turkish leaders to realize that German victory would mean the end of Turkish independence. Therefore, Turkey hoped that Germany would exhaust its resources in Russia,

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216 *FRUS*, 1941, vol. 3, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 871.

217 Government Communications Headquarters (HW) 1/1077, *North Africa: Portuguese Minister Reports Anxiety in Turkey*, 11 November 1942.

218 *FRUS*, 1942, vol. 4, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 683.

otherwise, as Marshal Fevzi Çakmak expressed, “We realize that if Germany has a quick success over Russia we will be next sheep for slaughter...”<sup>219</sup>

With these considerations, the best policy in order to meet all diplomatic and military eventualities was to preserve neutrality and wait for the results. This expected time came in the last months of 1942, when the military tide turned in favor of the Soviet Union after the victories in the Battle of Stalingrad. This time also marked the beginning of Soviet pressure on Turkey, which followed an increasing trend parallel with the military situation in the war. For the Soviets, “the neutrality of Turkey became increasingly more favorable and necessary to Germany as Turkey secures the safety of the Balkan flank for the German armies, and allows the Germans to continue to hold very limited forces there and to concentrate the overwhelming proportion of the German troops on the Soviet-German front...”<sup>220</sup> Therefore, the Soviets, for whom the preservation of Turkish neutrality had been an important strategic consideration, started to employ pressure directly or through Britain and US to persuade Turkey to abandon its neutrality and take an active part in the war against Germany. Soviet pressure included an assassination attempt on the German Ambassador in Ankara, Franz von Papen through the machinations of the NKVD.<sup>221</sup>

For its own part, apprehensive of its position during and after the war in view of the increasing political and military strength of the Soviets, Turkey began its struggle to improve its position in the face of the Soviets. To this end, Ankara lost little time to approach the Soviet ambassador in Ankara on February 13, 1943 to start negotiations for the improvement of Soviet-Turkish relations. Turkish parleys with the Soviets were intended to establish closer political cooperation through an

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219 FO 371/R7421/236/44 quoted in Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 124.

220 George Edward Kirk, *Middle East in the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 458.

221 Barry M. Rubin, *Istanbul Intrigues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 8-11.

agreement with them. The military situation, however, made it more tempting for the Soviets to act with greater boldness in their dealings with the Turks. The reply of the Soviets, therefore, reflected this boldness as well as their sense of “betrayal”:

...under the conditions, when the Balkans are at present in the hands of Germany, which is waging war against the USSR and with which Turkey is not in a state of war, but is bound with a friendship treaty and is rendering her economic aid, the proposal by the Turkish Government of political cooperation and consultation in respect to the Balkans is losing its significance without Turkey basically changing its relations with Germany.<sup>222</sup>

Britain, albeit for its own reasons, started to harbor the same view in regard to the Turkish position after the situation in the battlefield had changed around 1943.<sup>223</sup> Apart from the shared Allied cause to shorten the war against Germany, the Whitehall had another motive to urge Turkey to take an active part in the conflict- to prevent possible Soviet expansion into the Balkans with the collaboration of Turkey.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, the year 1943 represented for Turkey increasing pressures from its ally, the Great Britain. Against these increasing pressure from London, Turkey generally put forward two concerns. The first was related with the military situation that could plausibly affect Turkey. More specifically, it was the German threat, which, for the Turks, was still strong enough, notwithstanding serious defeats in the face of Soviet forces, to inflict great damage to Turkey.<sup>225</sup> The second and also the main concern of the Turks was political dangers surrounding their entry into the war which was somewhat identical with that of British: Russian predominance in the Balkans after German forces withdrew and thereby left a power vacuum in the

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222 *FRUS*, 1944, vol.5, The Soviet Embassy to the Department of State, 875-6.

223 Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 697.

224 Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye’de Milli Şef Dönemi (1938-1945)*, vol.2, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 167-8; Elisabeth Barker, *British Policy in South East Europe in the Second World War* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1976), 111.

225 Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin and Steven Morewood, “Turkey’s Reliance on Britain: British Political and Diplomatic Support for Turkey against Soviet Demands, 1943-47,” *Middle Eastern Studies* (March 2004): 28; Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An ‘active’ neutrality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 145.

area.<sup>226</sup> For the Turks, the Soviets would fill the power vacuum either by occupying the area including the Turkish straits as liberators or by act of aggression.<sup>227</sup> At this juncture, although the ultimate concern was identical, it was the question of tactics that drove a wedge between Turkey and Britain. To the Turkish mind, Russia would not attack Turkey, if Ankara stayed out and “remained strong and intact.” However, Britain thought the opposite.

During that period, Britain did not refrain from engaging in different tactics to convince Turkey to enter the war on the Allied camp. It should be noted that British tactics proved to be detrimental to Turkish national interests, if not during the war, in the immediate postwar era for these tactics gave most probably the impression to Stalin, he had in post war era, that the Soviet Union would be in a position to get every advantage from an isolated Turkey without facing British opposition. Churchill especially personally took a conciliatory attitude towards Russian aspirations, specifically in regard to the Turkish Straits. At the Tehran Conference in November 1943, in order to give an Allied ultimatum to Turkey, Churchill assumed the mission of informing the Turks the price of a refusal. Ankara’s refusal to accept the Allied ultimatum “would have very serious political and territorial consequences for Turkey, particularly in regard to the future status of the Straits.”<sup>228</sup> For Churchill, it was a simple calculation for Ankara: Turkey, provided that it entered the war on the Allied side, would make good use of British alliance in postwar era when it had to

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226 FO 371/44188, *Foreign Office Research Department: Turkey: Foreign Relations*, 1 July 1944.

227 Prime Minister’s Office(PREM) 3/446/3, *Note by Prime Minister: The Adana Conference, Second Meeting*, 13 February 1943. Indeed this kind of concerns was not new for this period. Still in 1930, İnönü, while presenting his analyses after his return from the Soviet Union, explained that “the Russians felt isolated particularly by the West and, as a result, were obsessed by what they believed to be the insecurity of their western borders. They desired and would continue to seek friendly relations with Turkey provided that the Turks refrained from actions which seemed calculated to put pressure upon Russia from the east. The Russians wanted their eastern front to be quiet in order to gain time to secure their borders in the west. As soon as they came to regard their western boundaries as safe, they will no longer care to be friends with us.” See Weisband, 44.

228 *FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, 1943, Second Plenary Meeting, November 29, 1943, 4 P.M., Conference Room, Soviet Embassy, 536.

confront its fear of the Soviet menace; if not, Ankara would find itself alone vis-à-vis the Soviets.

On the other side, not different from what Germans did, British policy makers tried, for their own ends, to make use of Turkish fear of the Russians. Even on the way of his first meeting at Adana with İnönü, Churchill harbored the idea in his mind that “he would not undertake to control the Russians regarding the Dardanelles,” if Turkey did not abandon its policy of neutrality in favor of the Allied powers.<sup>229</sup> While this did not become the case during the meeting at Adana, it was during the meeting between the Turkish and British Foreign Ministers at Cairo that Ankara was threatened to be left in “the unenviable position in which Turkey would find itself vis-à-vis the Russians in the event it declined to meet British wishes.”<sup>230</sup> However, what was much more striking was the fact that during this discussion, the two ministers, who should be assumed to be on the same side, found themselves on the opposite sides. While Anthony Eden was annoyed by Turkish discourses on Soviet’s post-war position, which seemed to them “little more than echoes of Axis propaganda,” Menemencioğlu did not behave shyly and accused him of acting as spokesman not only for Britain but for Russia as well.<sup>231</sup>

Along with these emerging realities in the international arena, Ankara set in motion a series of moves designed to smooth its relations both with the Soviets and other members of the Allied powers- Britain and the US. To this end, Turkey ceased transporting chromite to Germany upon serious protests from London and

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229 *FRUS, Conferences at Washington and Casablanca*, Hopkins-Churchill Conversation, January 19, 1943: Hopkins Notes, 643.

230 *FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, The Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs to the Under Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State, and the Advisor on Political Relations, 166.

231 *Ibid.*, 166, 181.



Washington,<sup>232</sup> when they also wanted the resignation of Foreign Minister Numan Menemencioğlu, who had been the target of bitter focus of Britain for his claimed pro-Axis stance.<sup>233</sup> Apart from these moves, Ankara was preoccupied in getting rid of a dangerous issue concerning its relations with the Soviets. This preoccupation reflected in the repressive raids with wide publicity against a secret “society” that was accused of propagating Pan-Turanian ideas. The persons, who were assumed to be members of this society, were accused of forming the society to engage in racist and Pan-Turkist propaganda in Turkey.<sup>234</sup> However, it was understood from President İnönü’s address on the occasion of “Youth and Sport Day, May 19” that the Turkish government’s action against this group and thereby this movement was intended not only to prevent the formation of any potential revolutionary group within the country. But this action also represented a desire to obliterate a possible source of friction between Turkey and Soviet Russia and sweeten, if possible, the relationship by presenting this action as a concession to the Soviets.<sup>235</sup>

However, the Soviets were far from being impressed by suppression of Pan-Turanists. The whole affair was regarded by the Russians, as revealed in their press

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232 On April 19, 1944, the British and American ambassadors protested the chromite shipments of Turkey to Germany with identical notes, *FRUS*, 1944, vol.5, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 825-6. On April 20, Turkish government announced the cessation of all chromite shipments to Germany.

233 It will be enough to mention that this issue should be regarded as “public sacrifice” in the attempt of Turkish government to win its way back into favor with Britain. For information about this issue, see Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 169-72; Weisband, 261-8. Koçak assess the retirement of Chief of Staff Kâzım Karabekir in this context see Koçak, *Millî Şef Dönemi*, vol.2, 237-8.

234 Twenty-four persons were arrested on May 9, 1944 under accusation of forming a Pan-Turanian organization with racist implications. For list of arrested persons see Özdoğan, “*Turan’dan “Bozkurt”a*”, 303. In the speech delivered by President İnönü on Youth Day, May 19, 1944, he vigorously criticized such activities as being harmful to Turkey’s international relations and to unity of the Turkish people at home. For original indictment of Turkish government in full detail could be found in “İrkçılık ve Turancılık Tahrikâtı Yapanlar Hakkında Hükümetin Tebliği,” *Ayın Tarihi*, May 1944, 21-3.

235 The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 27 August 1946, “Reopening of trial of Pan-Turanians at İstanbul,” IAT, Roll 23; Özdoğan, “*Turan’dan “Bozkurt”a*”, 125; Charles Warren Hostler, “Trends in Pan-Turanism,” *Middle Eastern Affairs* (January 1952):10; Weisband, 237. President’s speech was not the only indication of the Government’s tendency in this affair. Wide publicity given to this arrests and especially the timing of these arrests were other decisive indications revealed in these books in order to support this contention. The later stages of the action also reflected the place of this issue in the relationship between Turkey and Soviet Union. The first trial, which opened on September 8, 1944 before the İstanbul Court of Martial Law, was concluded on March 29, 1945. It resulted for most of the defendants in sentences of hard labor terms of two to ten years on grounds of “having plotted against the Government, impugned the Government’s authority, making illegal propaganda, and instigating public demonstrations prejudicial to internal security of the country.” The trial of these persons reopened on August 20, 1946 in Martial Law Court No.2. This second trial was finally concluded with a verdict of acquittal for all the accused on all charges on March 31, 1947. Not accidentally, Turkish-Soviet relations were on such a footing that the Turks no longer felt it necessary to make concessions in the matter.

and radio, nothing more than “eyewash.”<sup>236</sup> From that time on, it became clear that the Soviets, cognizant of the fact that if the war went on expectedly, they would surely have a powerful say in postwar world affairs, expanded their pressure over Turkey. Suffice it to say, the more Turkey adopted a mild manner toward breaking off its diplomatic and economic relations with Germany, the more of the USSR’s displeasure increased.

Toward the closing stages of the war, when the decision of Turkish government to rupture its relations with Germany on August 2, 1944 became evident, the attitude of the Soviet Union toward Turkey had already changed: “[The] Turkish question” was to be left to the postwar era. This idea was clearly open in the Soviet reply to a British memorandum in which the decision of Turkey to rupture its relations with Germany was quoted. The Soviet reply stated that Turkish government’s new position in respect to Germany was unsatisfactory as well as too late. The Soviet government expressed, as a last remark before its denunciation of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression between the two countries, its consideration to discontinue pressure on the Turkish government and “leave it entirely to its own will.”<sup>237</sup>

### **3.1.3. Conclusion**

After a peaceful interregnum between the 1920s and mid-1930s, Turkish-Soviet relations were tested in the Second World War. The relationship proved, by the events in the late 1930s and during the Second World War, to be grounded on national interests rather than on good will and sentimentality. While common

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236 A.C. Edwards, “The Impact of the War on Turkey,” *International Affairs* (July 1946): 398; for effects of Pan-Turkist activities during the war to post war Soviet perceptions of Turkey, see Artiom A. Ulunian, “Soviet Cold War Perceptions of Turkey and Greece, 1945-58,” *Cold War History* 3 (January 2003): 36-45.

237 *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 5, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, 893.

struggle against imperialistic powers in the early 1920s and thereafter common stance against the same powers had provided the binding clause until the mid-1930s for the isolated states of the post- First World War era vis-à-vis the international system, this clause became invalid in the changing international positions of both countries. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, both states succeeded in consolidating, to a considerable extent, their internal and external conditions and, as a consequence, dependence on each other's friendship lessened. On the part of Ankara, this process was accelerated by deep seated suspicion and indeed fears in the minds of Turkish leaders that the Soviets would begin to pursue tsarist policies in regard to Turkey once they ceased to perceive Western Powers as a menace to their national interests. However, the Turks, cognizant of the fact that the influence of every great power was indirect and transitory but the Soviet Union owing to its geographical proximity, continued their friendly but cautious policy toward Moscow. Nonetheless, without the glue that had linked the two states throughout the 1920s and 30s, the friendship would inevitably be subject to strain.

That being the case, the Montreux Convention was the most appropriate time for a turning point in the relationship, not only between Turkey and the Soviet Union but also between Turkey and the western world, particularly Britain. During the negotiations at Montreux in 1936, Anglo-Turkish relations, which revived since 1926, were further advanced at Russian expense. From then on, Turkey's relations with Britain were based on much friendlier terms than with the USSR. However, a real blow to the relationship between Turkey and Soviet Union might well be said that it came after the Turkish effort on the eve of the Second World War to link its two separate relationships with the Great Britain and France on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other side failed. Moreover the Soviet's Non-Aggression Pact

with Germany caused the two states to bind themselves, after a brief period of being on the same side, on the opposite camps.

Repercussions of this situation, however, could be much more different had not Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941. Firstly, it might well be the beginning of the traditional rivalry between Russians, who linked somewhat their faith with Hitler, and British that allied with Turkey. Because Soviets evidenced having revived their tsarist policies in regard to Turkey in particular as revealed during Saracoğlu's Moscow visit in October 1939 and in general to the Middle East as revealed by the Berlin negotiations in 1940. Therefore, it was the German advance over Soviets that provided a pause to Soviet's revisionist policies in regard to the Middle East in general and Turkey in particular.

Under these circumstances, the relationship started to take a new shape by the Second World War. Throughout the war, the relationship developed within a broader context, in which it could no longer be taken as an isolated issue. Their dealings with European powers rather than bilateral dealings became much more influential in shaping the relationship. Indeed, these dealings of Ankara and Moscow shaped the relationship by providing a test case for each country to display their intimacy toward each other. Russians in their dealings with Germans felt that they could accomplish their time-honored aspirations over Turkey. Despite this situation, however, they showed no hesitation in bringing strong pressure to bear on Turkey, after German advance in 1941, to pursue a policy, which was in keeping with their national interests but detrimental to Turkish interests.

On the other side, from the beginning of the war, Turkey pursued a consistent policy toward the Soviet Union in accordance with the treaties signed between them before the war. In every step, Ankara took great care to remain loyal to the

provisions of these treaties. In any case except some minor controversial issues such as passage of Axis shipping through the Straits, Turkey “literally” did not deviate from these treaties. Nonetheless, Ankara could not escape from being criticized, condemned and towards the end of the war accused for its foreign policy, which reached a level in postwar era to slander. Accordingly, Turkey “would have attacked USSR had not USSR turned Germans back at Stalingrad.”<sup>238</sup>

It is evident that Ankara’s policies throughout the war were attuned in each case according to immediate circumstances of the war and to the needs of national interests. This situation naturally rendered it impossible that Turkish policy could be ruled by long-term considerations and, in turn, gave way to criticism such as breach of faith. However, it should be noted that these condemnations and in later stages accusations could go in no way beyond the moral tone. Turkey pursued a cold-blooded, pragmatic, and totally realistic approach to world power politics during the war. But in each case, an emphasis on “legality” and “legitimacy” could be observed in Turkey’s dealings both with western powers and with the Soviet Union.<sup>239</sup>

However, beneath its legalistic attitude, the Turks’ traditional fear of Russia was quickened by the grave prospect of Soviet expansionism in the Balkans in the face of growing Soviet political and military power. This concern of Turkish ruling classes was transformed into the necessity for a firm and well defined attitude toward the Soviets. To this end, Turkish ruling circle, in every opportunity, struggled to draw the attention of London and Washington to this approaching danger. But it can not be said that the remarks of the Turkish statesmen had any convincing influence over American and British policy makers, who indulged in appeasing the Soviets for

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238 “Position of Turkey During the War,” *Pravda*, 27 March 1947.

239 Selim Deringil, “Aspects of Continuity in Turkish Foreign Policy: Abdülhamid II and İsmet İnönü,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* (Summer 1987): 48-9.

the sake of short-term military necessity. On the contrary, it seemed that the Turkish endeavor was received, at least in some circles, with great reticence.

To the Turkish mind, British and American arguments that postwar peace could be attained through a viable world organization seemed inadequate to contain highly prospective Soviet expansionism, which was perceived as a serious threat to Turkish national interests. In this respect, contrary to American and British thinking that formal accords reached at the wartime Big Three Conferences would be enough for the foundations of a secure and peaceful world order, the informal and unspoken agreements were much more important for the Turks. For Ankara, only a viable balance of power could keep rein Soviet expansionism in the postwar era.<sup>240</sup>

Therefore, toward the end of the war, Turkish leaders were highly anxious about the possible repercussions of American and British appeasement policy on the national interests of Turkey. Because, appeasement policy of the US and Great Britain meant “isolation” in the international arena for Ankara. Turkish leaders were cognizant of the fact that as a small power in the neighborhood of an aggressive world power, Turkey could not face serious military and political challenges emanating from the Soviet Union without effective support of the Great Britain and US. But since strategic planners in London and especially in Washington placed more emphasis on cooperation with the Soviet Union “because of the over-riding wartime necessity of avoiding friction which might jeopardize military cooperation,”<sup>241</sup> they were not ready to allow long term concerns of Turkish leaders about Turkey’s national interests to drive a wedge between the US along with Britain and Soviet Union.

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240 Weisband, 319-20.

241 *FRUS, The Second Quebec Conference*, 1944, Department of State Briefing Paper: US Relations with the Soviet Union, 193.

Under these circumstances, it could be argued that the ground for a postwar crisis in Turkish-Soviet relations had already been there during the later phases of the war. It was in part because of the policies pursued by Ankara, which came into conflict with the interests of the Soviet Union and in part because of the immediate concerns of the US and Great Britain concerning the mounting and evidently expansionist Soviet power. At the end of the war, the Soviet Union was a world power in closer cooperation than Turkey with other world powers, which resembled in a sense the situation in 1915. Whereas, Turkey was somewhat an isolated small power that would surely have to confront political challenges from the Soviet Union in the postwar era.

Simply to say, the picture in the northernmost part of the Middle East, at least in Turkey had all the signs to point to the revival of the historical rivalries in that part of the world. The only thing that was waiting was the placement of every actor in this picture.

### **3.2. The Postwar Crisis**

#### **3.2.1. The Soviet Denunciation of the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression**

War in Europe ended officially in 1945. The Turkish government succeeded in maintaining its neutrality right up to 23 February 1945, when it declared war on Germany and Japan. While it was emphasized in the Assembly debate that the declaration was “the natural consequence of [Turkey’s] alliance with Britain within the framework of our friendship with the Soviets,”<sup>242</sup> this, however, appeared nothing more than a tactical move on the part of Turkey to become a charter member

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<sup>242</sup> *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi*, 7 nci Toplantı, February 23, 1945, 1 nci Oturum, I, 131.

of the United Nations in accordance with the Yalta decision that “only those nations which had declared war on Germany before March 1, 1945, would be invited to San Francisco.”<sup>243</sup> It thus appeared also the first tactical move on the part of the Turkish government to enhance its post-war situation.

However, the end of hostility in Europe caused no rejoicing in Turkey. On the contrary, the Turks had to continue to be preoccupied with Soviet Russia. Thus, it just became, for the Turks, the continuation of the “war of nerves” with the Soviets, which remained comparatively latent in the early stages of the war, but started to manifest itself, with mounting intensity, since the Battle of Stalingrad. But in the immediate postwar era, Ankara had to face the Soviets in a sense of isolation. Therefore, Turkish leaders had to pursue and defend their foreign policy under a less favorable condition than before.

At this juncture, the decision of Moscow to denounce the neutrality pact with Turkey should be regarded as a key turning point not only in this relationship but also in the great power rivalries, which seemed to have stilled during the interwar years, in the Middle East. By this decision two neighboring nations came to an historic crossroad. Therefore, two years following the end of hostilities in Europe constituted the most troubled period in the history of the Soviet Union-Turkey relationship, which dated back to the end of First World War.

### **3.2.1.1. The Soviet Note of March 19, 1945**

Subsequent to the Yalta Conference (February 4- February 11, 1945), Molotov, in his meeting with Selim Sarper, the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow, who was prepared to depart from Moscow, informed him of the Soviet decision to

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243 Ahmet Demirel, *İsmet İnönü: Defterler (1919-1955)* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2000), 424.



denounce Soviet- Turkish neutrality pact with all its supplementary clauses, which was to expire on November 7, 1945. For this effect, on March 19, Molotov handed Sarper, on behalf of Soviet government, a statement for transmission to Government of Turkish Republic. In this statement, which was made public on March 20-21, it was declared that:

Soviet Government, acknowledging value of Soviet-Turkish Treaty of December 17, 1925 in cause of maintaining friendly relations between Soviet Union and Turkey, nevertheless considered it necessary to assert that owing to deep changes which had taken place particularly in course of Second World War, this treaty no longer corresponded to the new situation and required serious improvement.<sup>244</sup>

The Soviet notice was surely in accordance with points of November 17, 1935 protocol providing for procedure of its denunciation, and therefore the denunciation itself was not a surprise.<sup>245</sup> The Soviet Ambassador to Turkey, Sergei Vinogradov, emphasized that his country's move was not unfriendly, but merely reflected a desire to update relations with Turkey.<sup>246</sup> Nonetheless, the perceived motive of Moscow for giving notice of termination at that time gave way to doubtful interpretations. For Americans, the Soviet government regarded this time as propitious to induce the Turks to enter into bilateral discussions looking to a modification of the Montreux Convention, and, at the same time, to confront the British with a *fait accompli*.<sup>247</sup> On the side of the Turks, who had indeed been anticipating this Soviet move long before,<sup>248</sup> Soviet move was the forerunner of the

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<sup>244</sup> *Türk Dış Politikasında 50 Yıl: İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları (1939-1946)* (Ankara: T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Araştırma ve Siyaset Planlama Genel Müdürlüğü, 1973), 251. It is noteworthy to emphasize the fact that there was no mention to the treaty of 1921, which had established the frontiers between the two states. According to George Harris, "the results of this probe must have seemed encouraging to the Soviet leaders, for the United States and the United Kingdom found it difficult to react firmly to what ostensibly was a matter of consequence to the contracting parties alone." See George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish- American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945-1971* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 15.

<sup>245</sup> According to the protocol of November 7, 1935 the treaty itself was renewed for 10 years, to be prolonged by tacit consent for further 2-year periods unless denounced six months before expiry. If therefore the treaty were not to remain operative until at least November 7, 1947 it would have to be denounced by one party or the other by May 7 of 1945, at the latest.

<sup>246</sup> *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1224.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 1226.

<sup>248</sup> It was long anticipated in Turkish circles in Moscow that the Russians would wish to denounce the treaty, and the Turkish Ambassador had advised his Government to this effect 1 or 2 months ago. See *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 248-50; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in

inevitable request for a modification of Montreux Treaty.<sup>249</sup> The Turks were also inclined to interpret the timing mostly in line with the evolving international context by the end of the war. It was, thus, the impression in Turkish official circles that the timing of the notice reflected a desire on the part of Soviet government “to avoid the exaggerated importance that might otherwise be attached to such a notice, were it to be given immediately prior to or at the time of the San Francisco Conference.”<sup>250</sup>

Most probably to prevent this from happening and transform the event into remedy its political isolation in the emerging international system, Ankara sought, from the beginning, to draw Britain into the decision-making process. The Turks, upon Soviet denunciation, did not lose any time to approach Britain to this effect and sought their advice. Only three days after the Soviet note, Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka summoned the British Ambassador in Turkey, Sir Maurice Drummond Peterson. After informing the Ambassador about the Soviet denunciation, Saka expressed the wish of his government to consult, before deciding on the form of reply to the Soviets, the British government whose advice they would greatly value. Saka further explained that their greatest worry was that the Russians “in reality wished to have bilateral conversations with the Turks in order that the Montreux Convention be modified” before a new treaty was negotiated or before it was brought to any meeting of the three Grand Alliance powers.<sup>251</sup> This was indeed the case as British Deputy under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Orme Sargent

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the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1221; *ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1223-4; also for Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka's view see *ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1229.

249 In his report sent to Turkish Foreign Ministry upon Soviet denunciation, Sarper surmised that Russians would wish to replace the denounced treaty with a new treaty of neutrality and friendship or with a treaty of alliance. But he also emphasized the fact that Moscow's ultimate aim would surely be to obtain a revision of the regime of the Straits more favorable to Russian prestige and security than the present one. See *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 252. Also see *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1220-1.

250 Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri ve Boğazlar Meselesi* (Ankara: Başnur Matbaası), 249-50; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1220-1, 1225.

251 FO 195/2487/401, *Peterson to Foreign Office*, 22 March 1945; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 1224-5. In the meantime, secretary general of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Ünaydın and Turkish Ambassador in London, Cevat Açıkalın met, upon instructions of Turkish government, with Eden. Eden gave the same advises with Henderson. See *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 251-2.

informed American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, John J. Winant that the Foreign Office regarded the Soviet notice as the first move in a Soviet plan to “soften” Turkey preparatory to bilateral discussion on the Straits.<sup>252</sup> The Turkish government was, therefore, advised by the British government to reply that it would examine any proposals which Moscow might make for improved treaty, and to remind the Russians, if necessary, that the question of Straits regime could only be discussed multilaterally.<sup>253</sup>

This move of Turkish government indeed pointed out the beginning of a new attitude on the part of the Turks. At the time when the two countries were isolated from international systems, the previous agreements had been a reversed function of their relations with western powers. Accordingly, the two states negotiated and signed all the previous treaties *tete á tete*. But now, the Turks were not only aware of the emotional aversion with which they had been regarded in the Soviet Union, as well as the causes thereof. But also, they were aware that certain course of change in the attitude of Soviets, who were surely conscious of their growing political and military strength especially since 1943. Therefore, Turkey felt the need to turn to classical power politics-playing the historical rivals against each other. Thus, this move could easily be construed the Turks’ traditional appeal for British support against the Russians.<sup>254</sup>

As the wording of the Turkish reply of April 4 indicated, the Turkish government took British advice into consideration. Thus, in its conciliatory and cautious reply to the Soviet statement, the Turkish government officially announced

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252 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 1228-9.

253 *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 254; FO 371/ 59297, *Peterson to Bevin, Review of events in Turkey, 1945*, 1 February 1946; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 1229.

254 FO 371/44188, *Turkey: Foreign Relations*, 1 July 1944; Aileen G. Cramer, “Turkey in Search of Protectors,” *Current History* (October 1947): 210-6. This assumption could also be supplemented by Turkish leaders statements which formed the impression that Soviet menace was aimed not only at Turkey but also Britain. For Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka’s interpretation of Soviet motives and intentions see *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1229.

its approval of the Soviet suggestion with regard to “replacing the expiring pact with another pact more suitable to the present interests of both parties and including thorough-going modifications has informed the Government in question that it is ready to study with care and good intentions the proposals to be made to it with this aim.”<sup>255</sup> From then on, policy makers in Ankara refrained from making any suggestions for the conclusion of a pact. It was mostly because of the opinion in the minds of Turkish policymakers that any “accidental” suggestions, no matter how generous they were, would inevitably be regarded as insufficient by the Soviet side. Moreover, in the next step, according the Turks, the Soviets would inevitably exploit these suggestions as a springboard for better conditions.<sup>256</sup>

Under these considerations, refraining from making any suggestion the Turkish government appeared uneasy about possible Soviet proposals. Nonetheless, Soviet officials were inclined not to let Ankara get away with trumped-up excuses until after Molotov returned from San Francisco.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, on a number of occasions, when Turkish officials endeavored to explore what the Soviet government contemplated as the terms of a new pact, there consistently came the anticipated response from the Soviets. “Due to lack of time to examine the issue, they were unable to put forward anything. Nonetheless, they would very pleased, should suggestions came from Turkish side. Besides, this situation might well be advisable.”<sup>258</sup> It was thus evident that Moscow was trying to maneuver Turkish leaders into making some proposals first.<sup>259</sup>

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255 For full text, see *Ulus*, 7 April 1945.

256 Erkin, *Dişışlerinde 34 Yıl*, 146-7. For American view see *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1221-3.

257 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Chargé in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1232-3.

258 Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*, 250.

259 HW 1/371, *Soviet Attitude towards Britain and America: Report from Spanish Minister*, Angora, 6 April 1945. Moreover, “Turkish silence in the face of the denunciation of the Russo-Turkish pact is irritating and disconcerting Russia, who would have liked to know what course to follow concerning the reaction.”

In light of these monotonous Soviet responds, which were surely in line with Russian negotiation tactics, Turkish Foreign Ministry was insistently reminded not to suggest anything to the Soviets, but to throw the ball to the Soviets. In the following weeks of 1945, some developments in this respect, however, worried not only some senior policymakers in the Turkish Foreign Ministry but also American and British diplomats in Turkey. These developments, which were sought to proceed in secret manner from London and Washington, were surely related with the news about the “sweet talks” in Ankara between Sarper and the Soviet Ambassador to Turkey, Sergei Alexandrovich Vinogradov.<sup>260</sup>

During these talks, Sarper, representing the Turkish government and surely with the absolute consent of President İnönü, went over various aspects of Turkish-Russian relations and took some extremely dangerous initiatives, which appeared to detract the official stand of the Government. To this effect, apart from some concessions, made “in the hope of putting an end to Turkish-Russian complex,”<sup>261</sup> Ankara appeared as the party having made the initiative for a treaty of alliance with the Soviets, which would logically far transcend the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of 1925.<sup>262</sup> The contemplated alliance was to be about the security of the Black Sea in the form of either as a tripartite alliance between Turkey, Soviet Union and Britain or as an alliance between Turkey and Soviet Union with a reservation in respect to Britain. In it, there would be, as proposed by Sarper, a provision denying

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260 Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl*, 147-9. All information about the Sarper- Vinogradov talks written in this study depend on the minutes written at that time by Sarper himself. For summary of the minutes of these talks see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı yılları*, 255-9.

261 The first concession given to the Soviets was about the release of two criminals of Soviet citizenship, who were in prison because of their attempt to assassinate Von Papen and his wife in 1942. The second one was about the Turkic origin Soviet citizens who joined the German army and during the German withdrawal after 1943 took shelter in Turkey. Several of them were turned over to Soviet authorities who executed them before the eyes of Turkish authorities. Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl*, 148-9.

262 Then, it would be not so wrong to argue that the first initiative for an alliance with the Soviets came from Selim Sarper. Gürün, 281; Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl*, 148. It was also this contention that Stalin, during his meeting with Churchill, insisted on to defend Soviets territorial demands over Turkey. In reply to Churchill's ideas about this issue, Stalin pointed out that “this question of the restoration of the frontiers would not have been brought up if the Turks had not brought up the question of an alliance.” See *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, Seventh Plenary Meeting, 302-3.

passage through Straits to warships of Soviet's enemies in the event of a war. When Vinogradov inquired, in turn, how Turkey would implement this provision, if the enemy of the Soviet Union (referring to England) became a state that had an alliance with Turkey, the reply of Sarper was that the provision would be implemented even to this state.

While the other details of the contemplated alliance was agreed to be furthered between Sarper and Molotov once Sarper returned to Moscow, several points about these talks were already interesting in principle. One of these points was that, during the course of these talks, Vinogradov, of course representing Soviet thinking, proceeded with much more caution than Sarper in regard to their existing relations with Britain. When Sarper inquired whether the provision about the closing the Straits to the warships of other powers would add one more wedge to the set of frictions with Great Britain, Vinogradov gave a fast reaction and said that: "there have been none and there would not occur any disagreements with Britain. What are called as disagreements with Britain is nothing more than different point of opinions." On the other side, Sarper implied that Turkey could fight even with Britain in order to implement the mentioned provision concerning the Straits.

The second point was the implications inherent in the answer of Vinogradov to Sarper's question about contemplated alliance. An alliance against "no one" could only be interpreted that the Soviets wished "union of policies instead of friendship."<sup>263</sup> In the same line, Ambassador Feridun Cemal Erkin, soon to become secretary general of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, expressed his bewilderment to see how any useful purpose could be served by Turkey forming an alliance with the Soviet Union:

Friendship? Ok. But what about an alliance with the Soviets? Against whom? Which countries, especially at that moment, could endanger us

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<sup>263</sup> Gürün, 282.

[Turkey]? Would it be too surprising, if the countries, of which we [Turkey] sought sincere support, regard this alliance as formed against them?<sup>264</sup>

The final point is that the Turkish government preferred to keep the gist of the talks between Sarper and Vinogradov secret from the Americans and Britons. According to the instructions given to Sarper before his departure to Moscow,<sup>265</sup> Turkish Foreign Ministry planned to inform and receive consent of Britain only after the successful conclusion of the negotiations between Sarper and Molotov in regard to the contemplated alliance was seen in sight. In this connection, Sarper, after his last meeting with Vinogradov, in which an oral agreement was reached, visited the American Chargé in Turkey and the British Ambassador in Turkey in order to acquaint them with Turkish government's relations with the Soviets. In those meetings, Sarper stated that, while there had been some "conversations" with Russians since his arrival, no definite conclusion was reached with regard to any new Turk-Soviet agreement.<sup>266</sup>

The minutes of these talks, in sum, reveal that Sarper, of course with the consent of President İnönü, indulged Turkey's weakness vis-à-vis the Soviet Union: Turks' sense of isolation.<sup>267</sup> Although Turkish leaders would realize the grave consequences of taking initiatives with Soviet government shortly afterward, the situation seemed to have extremely complicated and, thereby, in a sense got out of hand. Therefore, Ankara would have to spend a great effort to get shut of from this strain in the following months.

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264 Erkin, *Dışışlerinde 34 Yıl*, 149.

265 For text of instruction see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 262-4. It was also agreed between Sarper and Vinogradov that Britain be not informed about these talks. See *Ibid.*, 261-3.

266 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Chargé in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1233-4. However, the Foreign Office was evidently aware of the contents of Sarper- Vinogradov meetings. According to a report of the Foreign Office, Sarper had the authority to inform the Soviet government that Turkey was in principle ready to conclude a "very advanced treaty amounting almost to an alliance" subject to its containing a clause applicable to Britain on the lines of the Russian reserve in the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 1939. See FO 371/59297, *Peterson to Bevin*, *Review of Events in Turkey*, 1 February 1946.

267 Erkin, *Dışışlerinde 34 Yıl*, 149.

### 3.2.1.2. The Soviet Demands of June 7

Against this background, it could plausibly be said that an optimistic view had dominated the Turkish ruling class during the period prior to the Sarper-Molotov meeting of June 7. During that period a far more transcending matter in importance than Turkish-Russian relations, according to Sarper, was that of “relations between three big powers, which seemed at moment not to be running too smoothly.”<sup>268</sup> Even extreme rumors concerning aggressive Russian plans against Turkey, which would be put forward as the concrete evidence of Soviet aggressive designs over Turkey after this meeting, seemed ineffective to cast this optimistic view in regard to Turk-Soviet relations into shadow. Reflecting this optimistic atmosphere in the Turkish government, he further stated that “Turkey stood firm in the face of Russian and German demands in 1939 and could not be coerced now.”<sup>269</sup> In this connection, any attempt on the part of Russia at that moment was unlikely. With this optimism, Sarper, upon his return to Moscow, took the opportunity afforded by the authority of the Turkish government to discuss the orally-reached agreement (between Sarper and Vinogradov) with Molotov. Nonetheless after the jolt which Sarper received from Molotov on June 7, Ankara was seriously discouraged to pursue this line further.

While the main theme of this meeting had already been evident for both sides, it proceeded to a much more different direction. At the outset of conversation<sup>270</sup> Molotov launched into statements that before it would be possible to win and deserve the friendship of the Soviet Union, it would be necessary to settle all outstanding questions between the two countries. The first question for the Soviets was the

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<sup>268</sup> *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Chargé in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1234.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Details about this meeting depend on the report sent by Sarper to Ankara. For summary of this report, see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 264–7.



situation created by the treaty of 1921, which was negotiated at a time, when Soviet Russia was weak, and therefore formed some “unjust” territorial adjustments. When Sarper asked, if Molotov hinted a rectification of the Turco-Soviet frontier, Molotov replied that he only meant to remove the present “unjust situation.” When Sarper protested that no government in Turkey could justify such a matter to the Turks and refused to discuss questions regarding Turkish territorial integrity, Molotov said that they would lay the question aside for the time being, but the Ambassador should understand that it remained unsettled.

The second issue was the preparation of the favorable ground for the Soviets to establish a military base on the Dardanelles. For Molotov, although the Soviets were sure about Turkish good intentions in defending the Straits, “goodwill” was not enough to guarantee Soviet security at the Straits. A people of 200,000,000 inhabitants could not depend solely on the goodwill of Turkey in this matter but must also consider what Turkey’s possibilities of defending the Straits are. When Sarper refused the idea of Soviet bases at the Straits, Molotov, reformulating his proposition, inquired again that if Turkey was unwilling to provide a base to the Soviets at the time of peace, what about Turkish attitude in time of war. In reply, Sarper said that he had not touched upon this issue before but if Turkey would enter such a war in accordance with the contemplated treaty of alliance, this issue could be discussed between each country’s Chiefs of Staff.

The third issue was the modification of the Montreux Convention governing the passage in the Straits through a bilateral understanding. Molotov argued that the two countries could make an agreement on the revision of the Montreux Convention prior to any future international conference for the revision of the Montreux and this issue could be negotiated in parallel with the negotiations of the contemplated

alliance. Sarper said that if, in the future, the Montreux regime was discussed multilaterally, there would surely be a difference between standing together as allied countries and as the countries with indefinite relations as of then. However, Sarper argued that there was no need now to discuss this matter since it could give way to some doubts and wavering on the part of the allied countries.

The forth issue was the fruits of the impressions that Sarper had during the course of conversation about “certain considerations,” which the Soviet government would in the case “contemplated to present.” On the course of conversation, Sarper formed the impression that these considerations, albeit seemed to have remained in the mind of Molotov, were most probably related with Soviet interference in Turkish domestic affairs. With regard to the same issue, Sarper remarked that in the face of unequivocal Turkish replies, Molotov would not present these certain considerations at any time in the future.

Despite Sarper’s speculation about this issue in his report, it gave way, in the following time, to further speculations about the real intentions of the Soviets over Turkey. The common point of these speculations was that this “vague” approach of Molotov was intended to bring Turkey, like Poland under direct Soviet influence. Indeed, this issue had already been made known indirectly to the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow around the time of denunciation that “Turkey was making a grave mistake in trusting the Anglo-Americans and that their best course was to link up with the Russians and abandon the Anglo-Americans who were too far away.”<sup>271</sup>

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271 HW 1/371, *Soviet Attitude towards Britain and America: Report from Spanish Minister, Angora, 6 April 1945.*

### 3.2.1.3. The Sarper-Molotov Conversations of June 18

Upon receipt of the Sarper report about June 7, the Turkish government cabled Ambassador Sarper on June 12, its opinion about the Soviet proposals for an alliance as well as its directions about future negotiations of Sarper with Molotov.<sup>272</sup> In it, Ankara informed its Ambassador that the Government could not accept as a basis for discussion the proposed territorial adjustments or bases at the Straits. In the same line, Sarper was also instructed that as an international Treaty, Montreux could only be modified on a multilateral basis.

The Turkish Ambassador in Moscow again met Molotov on 18 June.<sup>273</sup> But in this meeting discussions regarding a treaty of alliance were no more conclusive than those on June 7. Molotov reiterated during this meeting that if a treaty of alliance was in question, the Turkish government should settle the questions referred to earlier. In reply, Sarper reminded Molotov that Soviet territorial and base demands could never take place on the negotiation table since the meeting of June 7. At this juncture, Molotov seemed to reveal the Soviet's principle concern in these negotiations. He said that they could put aside the idea of alliance and go on discussing the Straits question. Thus, it could be argued that if the territorial demands were put forward in the frame of an alliance, these demands would logically be denounced after putting aside the idea of alliance.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 268.

<sup>273</sup> For details of the meeting see *ibid.*, 272-3.

<sup>274</sup> Turkey's acting Foreign Minister, Nurullah Sümer notes in his memorandum about his meeting with Soviet Ambassador in Turkey that "Vinogradov was not insistent on his answers in regard to Turkey's objections to the territorial demands of Moscow." See *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 273. From then on, this argument was reiterated on every occasion whenever territorial demands of the Soviets on Turkey were discussed. For the Soviets this matter was a simple equation: "They would not have raised this territorial question if the Turks had not asked for a treaty of alliance." However, "If there was to be an alliance, the frontiers had to be rectified. If this were not done the question of an alliance would be dropped." See *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 2, Seventh Plenary Meeting, July 23, 1945, 302-3; *ibid.*, Sixth Plenary Meeting, 22 July 1945, 257; *ibid.*, Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the Central Secretariat: Turkey and Black Sea Straits, 1439. Therefore, to assume the territorial demands as a bargaining counter as well as an element of political pressure upon the Turks was put forth in order to convince them to solve the Straits question according to the Russian aspirations.

Nonetheless, Sarper did not touch upon this point and asked Molotov what kind of benefits Soviets could expect to discuss a multilateral agreement through bilateral way. In reply, Molotov reminded Sarper of his former attitude on the same issue. Then Sarper explained to Molotov that Ankara had hoped to discuss the Straits question under the idea of an alliance but not in the framework of the Montreux convention and, after Soviet demands of base and territory, the basis for this alliance was destroyed. While Molotov continued to insist on discussing the Straits question through the idea of another agreement, Sarper reiterated in each case that the Turkish government had thought it possible to reach a solution about the security of the Soviets and Black Sea apart from the Montreux Convention and through another alliance.

Under these circumstances, the negotiations for an alliance that began by Sarper- Vinogradov meetings of March 20-21 came to an impasse on 18 June. The reason for this impasse was ostensibly the differences between the issues that had been reached at the closing of Sarper- Vinogradov meetings in Ankara and the issues that were put forward by Molotov in Moscow.<sup>275</sup> Nonetheless, the real reason was realization of the Turkish government the grave consequences of its initiatives that had been made on March 20-21. A conversation between Feridun Cemal Erkin and President İnönü after the Sarper-Molotov meeting on June 7, 1945 was enough to explain the penitence of the Turkish leaders about these initiatives. When Erkin explained his bewilderment about the alliance negotiations between Sarper and Vinogradov, İnönü expressed his feeling that it had been an illusion to have considered forming an alliance with the Soviets. Nonetheless, he added that “what’s

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<sup>275</sup> Two days after Sarper-Molotov meeting, Turkey's acting Foreign Minister, Nurullah Sümer met with the Soviet Ambassador in Turkey and explained the reasons for the emerged coldness on the part of Ankara for this meeting see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 273.

done is done. Now we look forward to working out a solution to escape from this grave situation.”<sup>276</sup>

In the meantime, the Turkish government sought British advice on the unacceptable Soviet demands. On June 20, Sir Maurice Peterson informed Ankara that there was no need to add to the remarks of Sarper. British Ambassador also enquired whether Ankara would wish for British intervention with Moscow before the projected meeting of the Big Three at Potsdam in July. The Turkish government was pleased at this suggestion and particularly welcomed the British promise of intervention with Moscow with or without US support.<sup>277</sup>

Nonetheless, at this time, motivation of the Turkish government seemed not only the need to consult with the British government on the Soviet demands. But it was much more related with the emerging psychology in Turkish ruling class concerning the likelihood of grave consequences in the event the USSR should insist on its demands.<sup>278</sup> In reality, these concerns were very result of the Soviet’s “war of nerves” that had been carried on since the denunciation.

#### **3.2.1.4. The Soviet “War of Nerves”**

Throughout these protracted maneuvers and negotiations in the last months of the war, the apprehensions of the Turkish government with respect to the possibility of aggressive action on the part of Russia were gradually heightened. In reality, these concerns were the result of Soviet’s intense “war of nerves” that had been carried out increasingly since the denunciation in March. In this war of nerves, the Soviet press and radio campaign against Turkey, which could evidently be regarded as

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<sup>276</sup> Erkin, *Dışışlerinde 34 Yıl*, 149.

<sup>277</sup> FO 371/59297, *Peterson to Bevin, Review of events in Turkey*, 1 February 1946.

<sup>278</sup> *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 268. Sarper was also informed about the Government’s contacts with Britain and instructed to keep this issue secret from the Soviets.

government-inspired, along with providing sources for the rumors of military action near Turkish frontiers seemed as the main issues.

In the early stages of Soviet campaign until June, the Soviet government gradually intensified its bitter press and propaganda campaign against Turkey in the attempt to support its official overture to Ankara. The leitmotif of Soviet propaganda in this period was, therefore, structured along similar lines with the contents of Molotov's note to the Turkish Ambassador. In this respect, while there are a great deal of examples indicating Soviet thinking in this period toward Turkey, an article in *Izvestia* on March 21, entitled "Regarding Soviet-Turkish relations" gave enough clue about the main tenets of Soviet propaganda. This article asserted, after quoting Molotov's statement of March 19 and reviewing the history of the treaty of 1925, in effect that:

...it cannot go unmentioned that during present war Soviet-Turkish relations have left much to be desired at various times. Automatically to leave in force a treaty concluded under completely different circumstances would not of course, be in internal interests of either side. It would also not be in interests of countries united for defeat of German aggressor have already concerned themselves with having foundation for lasting peace.<sup>279</sup>

In this period, a study made at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow revealed that Russian press criticism of the Anglo-Saxon powers, both "quantitatively and qualitatively," exceeded that of Turkey.<sup>280</sup> However, hostile Soviet propaganda against Turkey, parallel with the Kremlin's attitude toward Turkey, picked up after the Sarper-Molotov meeting of June.<sup>281</sup> From then on, hostile Soviet propaganda targeted not only Turkey's foreign policy (first of all Ankara's relations with "imperialist" countries, notably the US and Great Britain) but also the domestic

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279 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1220.

280 *Ibid.*, The Chargé in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1233.

281 *İkinci Dünya Savaşı yılları*, 270.

affairs of Turkey.<sup>282</sup> In this respect, Soviets suggested that relations between the two countries would be improved by a new government in Turkey more friendly to the Soviet Union and might even be raised “to the level of Soviet-Polish friendship.”<sup>283</sup>

Nonetheless, what formed much reaction from the Turkish press as well as Turkish government was the Soviet’s steady building up, in the following months, through press and radio, a case for annexation of Turkish eastern vilayets to the Soviet Armenian Republic.<sup>284</sup> Although practically no Armenians remained in Eastern Turkey, in the absence of any significant leftist opposition in Turkey, the Armenians appeared as a viable, though artificially created, discontented element for the Russians.<sup>285</sup> With regard to this issue, the publication in *Izvestia*, *Pravda* and *Red Star*, on 20 December, of the letter written by two Georgian professors (S.R. Dzanashia and N. Berdzenishvili), who demanded that 10.000 square miles of Turkey, “the seized cradle of our people,” be forthwith handed over to the Georgian SSR outraged the Turks.<sup>286</sup> The preceding day, the Soviets had announced in *Izvestia* and *Pravda* that they would give assistance to Armenians abroad, who wished to emigrate to the Armenian SSR, hoping that “a full-fledge crusade for Armenian SSR recovery of historical Armenian territory would draw popular Armenian support abroad.”<sup>287</sup>

To aggravate the war of nerves, the Soviet government was not confined to radio and press campaign. Soviets benefited from their military and political presence in the countries bordering Turkey which provided the Kremlin with

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282 Ayın Tarihi, No: 139, June 1945, 142, 150-2; Ibid, No: 140, July, 1945, 88-93; H.C.Yalçın, “Moskova Radyosunun Hücumları,” *Tanin*, 29 June 1945; Necdet Ekinci, *II. Dünya Savaşından Sonra Türkiye'nin Çok Partili Düzene Geçişte Dış Etkiler* (İstanbul: Zafer Matbaası, 1997), 267.

283 *FRUS*, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1271.

284 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1262; Edwards, “Impact of War,” 398.

285 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 5, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union, 901-2.

286 Another Statmos? *Time*, 31 December 1945; available from <http://time-roxy.yaga.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,886713,00.html>; Internet; accessed 4 May 2006.

287 Gürün, 287-8; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 5, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union, 901-2.

additional opportunities for its war of nerves against Ankara. Still on April 7, British representatives in Bulgaria had reported some “stories” current in Sofia that “the Russians contemplated some sort of aggressive action in Thrace against Turkey.” However, according to the same report, these stories were “planted, probably by the Russians in their current war of nerves.” Moreover, it was speculated that at the present juncture, it would be “fanciful” even to consider that “Russia would launch an act of aggression against Turkey.”<sup>288</sup>

In the meantime, Bulgarian Minister to Turkey, Nikola Antonov, was instructed by the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry to assure the Turkish government that “Bulgaria had no intention of altering its policy of good neighborly relations with Turkey and that the presence of Russian forces in Bulgaria could in no way modify the desire of Bulgaria to preserve such relations with Turkey.” The Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Petko Stainov, also added that there was no increase in strength of Bulgarian military forces in southeastern Bulgaria and that he knew of no recent increase in Russian forces in that area.<sup>289</sup>

Rumors of the dramatic activation of Soviet military in bordering countries such as Bulgaria and Iran continued through the Fall. Turkey was made even more apprehensive by the news flowing from Moscow. The reports from Moscow in October were full of news that Russian people were being told by internal party agitators “USSR might go to war with Turkey.” However, according to George F. Kennan, then the American Chargé in the Soviet Union, this domestic agitation

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288 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 1231; According to a report of War Office, there can be no reason for concentration of Russian troops in Romania and Bulgaria other than “browbeating” the Turks into accepting the recent Soviet proposals for the Straits. See *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Italy to the Secretary of State, 1042-3.

289 *Ibid.*, The United States Representatives in Bulgaria to the Secretary of State, 1232.



might, among other reasons, might well be planted on foreign observes as part of an unusually refined war of nerves designed to soften up Turkish government.<sup>290</sup>

Widespread alarmist rumors about ominous troop concentrations and movements heightened as the expiration day of 1925 the Treaty closed. And these rumors reached their zenith on October 25, when Turkish General Staff summoned British military, Naval and Air Attachés and informed them of the latest intelligence about Soviet concentration of troops in the Balkans (in Rumania and Bulgaria), Caucasus and Iranian Azerbaijan. In light of this intelligence, the Turkish General Staff argued that an “attack of Russian Army might take place about November 8 after expiration of 1925 Treaty which would give Russians 2 weeks to complete preparations.” Explaining these serious concerns to British Service Attachés with the statement that if a Russian attack took place Turkey would resist, the Turkish General Staff inquired as to what assistance they could count on from the British.<sup>291</sup>

In the face of Turkish concerns about a Russian attack, neither the British Ambassador, Peterson, nor American Ambassador Wilson seemed alarmed. Peterson was inclined to feel that this situation was “another phase of war of nerves” and therefore “Turkish General Staff was unduly nervous.”<sup>292</sup> For him, the reason for mentioned troop concentration in the Balkans was that “Soviets might feel their troops were so unpopular in Balkans that they must be kept on move from one country to another.” The Whitehall was of the same opinion with Peterson: “Russians would create any incident resulting in an overt act against Turkey.” Moreover, British Foreign Office argued that if the Turks keep calm in the face of renewed

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290 Ibid., The Chargé in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1252.

291 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1260-1.

292 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1261.

Russian war of nerves, they should be able to weather the storm and resist intimidation.<sup>293</sup>

On the same issue American Ambassador commented that:

If Soviets are engaged in intensified war of nerves they would probably do exactly what they are now doing as regards troop concentrations, coinciding with expiration of 1925 Treaty. They have in fact succeeded to limited extent in creating atmosphere of concerns here with hers with widespread alarmist rumors.<sup>294</sup>

On October, 30, Turkish General Staff, Mehmet Kazım Orbay reviewed the situation with the American Ambassador. In this meeting, he said that information regarding Russian troop concentration, of which he emphasized to be very reliable, at least as regards Bulgaria and Rumania, was mostly the same. Furthermore, he expressed that, under these circumstances, he was faced with grave responsibility of whether he should recommend mobilization and also Turkey, as member of United Nations Organization, “felt entitled to look to that organization for security.”<sup>295</sup> However, despite trustworthy information of the Turkish Chief of Staff about Soviet military activities, only two days later, the Turkish Foreign Minister told Wilson that “serious concern which existed few days ago regarding Soviet troop movements near Turkish frontier has diminished.”<sup>296</sup>

In all of that, the Soviets played their game very skillfully. But there was nothing unexpected about this war of nerves. In the same month with the denunciation, the American Ambassador to Turkey, Laurence Steinhardt predicted the possible Soviet foreign propaganda in the following days against Ankara. He believed that Soviet policy would follow the familiar pattern, from which there had been little deviation since 1939, - “criticism of the Turkish government and outburst

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293 Ibid., The Chargé in the United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, 1256.

294 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1261.

295 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1268.

296 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1270.

in the Soviet press and on the radio against the Turks.” Shortly afterwards, rumors would circulate of a nature tending to alarm the Turks. In consequence of these tactics, Turkey would presumably “soften” and enter into bilateral discussions with the Soviets in respect to future Turkish- Soviet relations including the Straits.<sup>297</sup>

Parallel with Steinhardt’s assessments about short-term Soviet tactics against Ankara, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hasan Saka conveyed the same views. He expressed that “the Soviet government will resort to its customary methods to achieve its ends and will not hesitate to exert extreme pressure including violent criticism and denunciation of Turkish government through the radio and by other means.” Whereas, according to Saka, Soviet government would not resort to armed force.<sup>298</sup>

In the view of the considerations and evidence outlined above, it can be plausibly said that Turkey as well as Britain and USA were fully aware of what was going on: the Soviet’s “war of nerves” against Turkey or Soviets “customary methods” to achieve its ends. They were also well aware of the state of mind of Soviet leaders, who were assumed not to attempt any venture that could bring the Soviet Union against the US and Great Britain. In connection with this, an overall examination of Soviet tactics in foreign affairs indicates “lingering Soviet hopes of achieving their foreign policy goals without undermining relations with the west, hopes which seemed to be alive as late as early 1946.”<sup>299</sup> Indeed the whole situation during this period under review was summed up by Churchill during the Potsdam Conference. As revealed in “Thompson Minutes,” British Prime Minister commented that:

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297 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1225-7.

298 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1229-30. For the views of American Joint Chiefs of Staff on the same issue see *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 2, The Joint Chief of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 1420-2.

299 Vladimir Pechatnov, “Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the early Cold War, 1945-47,” *Cold War History* (January 2001): 4-5.

Undoubtedly, Turkey was very much alarmed by a strong concentration of Bulgarian and Soviet troops in Bulgaria; by continued attacks in the Soviet press and radio; and of course, by the turn which the conversations between the Turkish Ambassador and Mr. Molotov had taken in which modifications of Turkey's eastern frontier were mentioned, as well as a Soviet base in the Straits. This led Turkey to fear for integrity of her empire and her power to defend Constantinople. He understood, however, that these were not demands on Turkey by the Soviet government. But that the Turks had asked for an alliance and then Molotov had stated the conditions for an alliance. He quite saw that if Turkey asked for an offensive and defensive alliance, this would be the occasion when the Soviets would say what improvements they wanted in the Turkish situation. However, the Turks were alarmed by the mention of these conditions.<sup>300</sup>

Under these circumstances, it should be made clear that while to perceive troop concentration, especially in the atmosphere of tension and mistrust in ongoing relations between the two countries as threatening was unnatural, it would be more helpful not to "lose sight of the tactics usually resorted to by Soviets."<sup>301</sup> But in the light of evidence, it might well be argued that the Turkish ruling class seemed to be inclined to dramatize and react disproportionately, if not to hostile Soviet propaganda through press and radio, to the rumors of military action against Turkey. In other words, Russian military activities during the period were not observed in their objective nature, but in their perceived meaning whereby Turkish decision-makers formed a picture of "threat" emanating from the Soviet Union.

The reasons for Turkish state of mind were, however, might well be Turkey's postwar isolation in foreign affairs due to its wartime neutrality and diminished popularity of the contemporary Turkish regime during the war. With regard to the first point, it could be argued that Ankara dramatized and capitalized on Soviet's war of nerves owing to Turkey's vested interest in accentuating its own geographical

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300 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, vol. 2, Sixth Plenary Meeting, July 22, 1945: Thompson Minutes, 256. In the same manner the Soviets argued that whole events resulted from Turkish initiatives regarding an alliance see *ibid*.

301 Against the speculations of Saka about the intentions of Russian in his meeting with Eden, Saka was told that "in judging recent Soviet moves one should not lose sight of the tactics usually resorted to by the Soviets." See *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom to the Acting Secretary of State, 1050.

importance especially regarding the Middle East in the eyes of Britain and the US and thereby getting support of these powers in the emerging international system against the USSR.<sup>302</sup>

With regard to the second issue, it was evident to the most casual observers that the popularity and strength of İnönü's regime had been suffering, particularly since the outbreak of war in 1939, a consistent diminution in popularity and public confidence.<sup>303</sup> The most important reasons for this trend were:<sup>304</sup> (1) "the growth of a top-heavy bureaucracy;" (2) the failure to check the inflationary spiral and thereby high cost of living (3) bribery and corruption (4) the lack of freedom of the press and of speech (5) wastage of Government funds and lack of an effective policy to promote the economic advancement of the country (6) "the merest lip-service to democratic forms." Nevertheless, the public had been exposed during the wartime years to more or less constant threat of immediate warfare and as a consequence the general focus of attention had been upon the war situation. Therefore, criticism of the home-regime had been tempered by the conviction that the Government was steering the safest course through the dangers.

Nonetheless, the relaxation of external danger now brought the Turkish people to a full realization of their unfortunate economic plight as well as political uneasiness. Turkey's ruling class knew too well of this frame of mind that could hardly result in a prudent and peaceful situation in domestic affairs. Thus, it was probable that the various manifestations of discontent, which was already felt in the

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302 Harris, *Troubled Alliance*, 9-10; *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, 1239-41.

303 Koçak, *Milli Şef Dönemi*, vol.2, passim; Yâkub Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Politikada 45 Yıl* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1968), 169-71; The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 19 February 1945, "Popularity and Strength of the Present Turkish Regime," IAT, Roll 3; Ibid, "Turkish Intellectual Criticises Turkish Political Setup," 5 March 1945; Ibid, "Turkish Political Comment as Expressed in Popular Doggerel," Ankara, 17 March 1945; Ibid, "Popularity and Strength of the Present Turkish regime," Ankara, 28 May 1945; Ahmet Emin Yalman, "Politik Hayatımızın bir Analizi," *Vatan*, 20 July 1945.

304 Derived from above mentioned sources.

press, would eventually lead to a political crisis in the country.<sup>305</sup> The implications of this situation were clear. Turkish ruling class sought in order to seek solace for its internal political problems, to capitalize on Soviet threat.<sup>306</sup>

#### **3.2.1.5. Turkish and British Efforts to Involve the United States in the Crisis**

Having obtained Ankara's agreement to intervene with Moscow, the British Chargé d'Affairs, John Balfour, representing the British government called on Acting Secretary of State, Joseph Grew on June 18. Reviewing Turkey's rejection of Molotov's demands of June 7, Balfour suggested that the US government join British government in its "firm" representations to the USSR regarding Molotov-Sarper conversation of June 7 on the grounds that Russian desiderata concerned powers responsible for World security Organization and that Molotov's action is contrary to explicit assurances given by Marshal Stalin at Yalta. Without committing his government, Grew promised to give immediate attention to the British government's proposal. He suggested, however, that it would be preferable, in any case, to withhold action until after the San Francisco Conference. Balfour expressed his agreement with the wisdom of delay but he also needed to express his hope that even if the US could not "feel in a position to make a joint approach with the British government," it would at least support the British action with some step of its own.<sup>307</sup>

A few days later, on 23 June, American reply to British aide-mémoire was handed to the British Embassy in Washington. The Department of State argued in its memorandum that the Whitehall was inclined toward an early approach to the Soviet government in "firm language" since the Sarper-Molotov conversation of June 7 had

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305 The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 19 February 1945 "Popularity and Strength of the Present Turkish Regime," IAT, Roll 3.

306 Alvarez, 51.

307 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, Memorandum by the Secretary of State, 1017-20.

taken place in a “friendly atmosphere and was of an exploratory character.” Therefore, the Department considered it “premature to protest what amounts to a preliminary exchange of views.” Moreover, a protest in firm language made by either Washington or London might “overemphasize” the importance of the conversation of June 7, in which no “formal demands” had been presented by the Russians to the Turks. Finally, the Department suggested that the best tactics under the circumstances would be to treat the conversation between Molotov and Sarper “as a matter not calling for special action because the forthcoming meeting of the Heads of Government is so close at hand.” Refraining from giving advice to the Turkish government, which had requested the views of the US, the Department was to express the “hope” that future “exploratory” conversations would be conducted in a “friendly atmosphere unclouded by threats” and “in accordance with the principles of the International Security Organization.”<sup>308</sup>

Washington in fact was aware of the implications of the situation in Turkey. Still in April, Wilson suggested to President Truman that “in view of fact Eastern Europe had been lost to USSR, our interests in the Middle East as well as our general interest in world cooperation and security should lead us to support Turkey in resisting demands affecting independence, in the event such demands should be made.”<sup>309</sup> While Truman replied affirmatively and expressed his thought that the US should support Turkey at that time, it was obvious that some other relevant aspects of the situation impeded immediate American support to Turkey.<sup>310</sup>

It was surely disappointing to Turkey along with Great Britain, both of which believed that American support was of crucial importance in face of Russian threat to

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308 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, The Department of State: Memorandum, 1027-8; *ibid.*, The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey, 1028-9.

309 *Ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1041-2.

310 See chapter II.

Turkey in particular and Middle East in general. On July 2, the Turkish Prime Minister expressed his disappointment at American views regarding Molotov-Sarper conversations. Speaking frankly, Saracoğlu said that he could not comprehend that the US wanted Turkey to conduct “further conversations” with USSR on matters relating to cession of Turkish bases and territory. Speculating on the disguised objectives of Russians, Prime Minister said that:

The Soviets gone mad; they dream of world domination. They are crossing you at many points; Bornholm, Trieste, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Iran. When they find a weak spot they exploit it. ...If you resist at one point they drop it for moment. But questions have been raised and they will come back to it.<sup>311</sup>

Under these circumstances, according to Saracoğlu, the situation could only be saved if the US and the Great Britain stood firm at Potsdam and refuse any compromise on principles. However, most American policy makers including President Truman were still hopeful that the Soviet Union was a power that could cooperate for world peace. Therefore, perceiving no conflict between American and Russian interests especially in the Middle East,<sup>312</sup> Truman decided “to stick carefully to our agreements and try our best to make Russians to carry out their agreements.”<sup>313</sup>

Despite American refusal for a joint demarche in Moscow with regard to the Soviet demands on Turkey, the British government informed the White House that it had decided to take action in Moscow after having considered most carefully all factors in the case. In particular, it was thought better that Moscow should be informed of British views in advance of Potsdam Conference rather than to give the impression that London was indifferent, and “spring it on them for the first time at the Conference.” Accordingly, the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir A. Clark, was

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311 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1034-5.

312 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Conference of Chiefs of Missions in the Near East with President Truman on 10 November 1945, 10-4.

313 Quoted in Gaddis, *Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 210.



instructed to point out to the Soviets that His Majesty's government had been very much "surprised" by the Soviet "territorial claims and demands for bases in the Straits, since these activities cannot be regarded as exclusively Turco-Soviet matters." Territorial matters should be examined in the light of the UN. And the latter affected the Montreux Convention. Moreover, it had been agreed at Yalta that the Soviet government should consult with American and British governments before approaching the Turks on matters affecting the Montreux Convention. The British government had been much more surprised at the recent Soviet press and radio campaign against Turkey recalling Stalin's consent to take no action affecting Turkey's independence and integrity. The British government wished the Soviet government to be aware of its views on these matters as it considered the whole question would have been discussed at the Big three meeting.<sup>314</sup>

### **3. 3 Great Power Debate over the Question of the Straits**

The Black Sea Straits, which have been Turkish territorial straits since 1453, constituted one of the constant issues of general European politics ever since Russia obtained an access to the Black Sea by the conquest of the Crimea and Rumania.<sup>315</sup> Before that time, the Black Sea was "a beautiful virgin in the harem of the Sultan" and the control of the Straits resided exclusively in the Ottoman Empire. In this peaceful period that no "question of the Straits" existed, even commercial vessels, let alone warships, were permitted to traverse the Dardanelles as far as Istanbul but no further. Nonetheless parallel with the decline in Ottoman power, this situation gradually changed. With this respect, the breaking point had to do with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, under which Sublime Porte remained obliged, after a six

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314 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945, The British Embassy to the Department of State, 1047-8.*

315 For the inception and evolution of the question of the Straits see among others, Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet ilişkileri*.

year war with Russia, to grant Russian commercial vessels the right to free navigation through the Dardanelles. While the “ancient rule” of the Ottoman Empire as to exclusion of foreign vessels through the Straits remained intact, similar privileges were granted subsequently to other powers and made universal by the Treaty of Paris in 1856.<sup>316</sup>

However, what made the Straits a major issue of power politics were the crucial issues of the passage of warships into or out of the Black Sea and control of the Straits. This was exactly the case that formed the question of the Straits not only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but also in the post- Second World War period. The reason was indeed simple. The Straits not only constituted “the major factor of national interests, existence, sovereignty, and security” for the Turks, they also constituted a major factor for some principal powers, notably Russia and Great Britain.<sup>317</sup> For Russia, the Straits afforded them the sole outlet by water to the Mediterranean, and conversely an inlet passage for attack by warships upon its backdoor through the Black Sea. On the other hand, it afforded Great Britain to keep Russian power away from its imperial line of communication and to keep the balance of power in Europe. Therefore, both states had been continuously concerned with the Dardanelles and the Straits and moreover anything advantageous in the regime of the Straits was for these reasons bound to be dangerous for the other. Accordingly for protection of their interests in the Straits, both states advocated on different phases of the Straits question some opposite regimes in the Straits when the principle of the closure of the Straits came up for discussion. For its own part, while the constant objective of absolute control over the Straits remained unchanged, Russia advocated,

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316 J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: Documentary Record, 1535-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), 155, 174.

317 Cemil Bilisel, “The Turkish Straits in the Light of Recent Turkish-Soviet Russian Correspondence,” *The Journal of International Law* 41 (October 1947): 731-7.

in times of weakness, that the Straits be closed to warships including its own and at times that the Straits be opened to all warships including its own. Britain's policy similarly changed according to its contemporary necessities and needs but principally regarded the alteration of the principle of the closure of the Straits in the interests of Russia as a *casus belli* with Russia.<sup>318</sup>

In this manner, the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833) opened a new phase in the question of the Straits.<sup>319</sup> Although it was ostensibly a treaty of mutual assistance between Sultan and Tsar, its secret article, which changed the "ancient rule" in favor of Russia, was enough to attract reactions of Big Powers, namely Great Britain and France. Hünkâr İskelesi, therefore, was not destined to last more than a decade. In 1841, Britain along with France managed to destroy the advantages of this treaty by the Convention of London of 1841, by which the "ancient rule" was accepted by the powers with some minor exceptions allowing light vessels serving diplomatic missions. From this treaty on, "ancient rule of the Sultan" was translated into an international concern.<sup>320</sup> Subsequently, the traditional right asserted by Ottomans was recognized by the European Powers and it continued in principle to be the law governing the passage of warships through the Straits until the end of the First World War.

### **3.3.1 Diplomatic Prelude**

In all of it, the Ottoman Empire sought to prevent foreign powers from achieving their aims on the Straits by maneuvering between these major powers. In most part of the period of the "Sick Man of Europe," Britain emerged as the

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318 Baron von Aehrenthal, "An Unpublished Memorandum on the Straits Question," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 2 (1926): 83-7.

319 For importance of this Treaty in the question of the Straits and its implications see Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, "The Straits Question: The Crux of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* (January 1947):292-3; Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*, 25-7; Cemal Tuğın, *Boğazlar Meselesi* (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 1999), 65-107; For evaluation of Russian claim to the treaties of Küçük Kaynarca and Hünkâr İskelesi see J.C. Hurewitz, "Russia and the Turkish Straits: A Revaluation of the Origins of the Problem," *World Politics* 14 (July 1962): 605-32.

320 Esmer, 293.

champion of the Ottoman Empire, and took the lead in resisting Russian policy over the Straits. However, it did not refrain from exploiting Russian aspiration on the Straits in order to protect its wider interests in the Middle East. This was the case in 1915 when Britain reversed its traditional policy and concluded the “Constantinople Agreement,” by which it was decided to put an end to the question of the Straits, at the general peace settlements, in line with Russian desires.<sup>321</sup>

While Russian desire to open up the Straits to war ships was legislated by the Straits settlement at the Lausanne Conference, it was now opposed by the Bolsheviks. At the sessions concerning the Straits, the new Soviet government proposed a straits regime constructed on the following lines: (1) complete and permanent freedom of waters from the Aegean to the Black Sea for commercial navigation of all nations in peace and war;(2) closure both in peace and war to ships of war and aircraft of all nations except Turkey;(3) recognition of the full sovereignty of Turkey on land and sea and the right for it to arm, fortify shores, own a war fleet, and employ every engine of modern warfare.<sup>322</sup> However, Britain along with other Allied powers insisted on the maintenance of Art. 37 of Sèvres that “...agree to recognize and declare the principle of freedom of transit and navigation by sea as well as by air...in the Straits” and consequently a compromise solution was agreed upon.<sup>323</sup> In it, the Straits were demilitarized and “complete freedom of passage for warships” in time of peace was legislated with the limitation that “the maximum

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321 For convenience of the diplomatic activities of European Powers in 1915 concerning the Straits see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, 7-11; Renzi, “Great Britain, Russia, and the Straits,” 1914-1915,” 1-20; Florinsky, “A Page of Diplomatic History,” 108-15; Zotiades, “Russia,” 11-22; Kucherov, “The Problem of Constantinople,” 206-20.

322 *Türk Dış Politikasında 50 Yıl: Lozan, 1922-1923* (Ankara: T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 1973), 49-50; for Turkish proposals, 52-4.

323 For text of the (Lausanne) Treaty of Peace with Turkey and accompanying Straits Convention see J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, vol. 2. *British-French Supremacy, 1914-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 325-36. İsmet İnönü, who headed the Turkish delegation during the Lausanne Conference, explained in his memoirs why the compromise solution had to be accepted, see İnönü, *Hatıralarım*, 76; Güçlü, “The Uneasy Relationship,” 60; Güngör, 284; Davison, “Turkish Diplomacy,” 203.

force which any one Power may send through the Straits into Black Sea is not to be greater than that of the most powerful fleet of the littoral Powers of the Black Sea...”

The Straits Convention, which was clearly more in the British interests rather than the Turks and Soviets, was signed by the Soviet Union on 14 August 1923 under protest and Moscow did not ratify it. Although in 1923 the Straits question surely was not solved, in broader context, by the Lausanne and its accompanying Straits Convention the perennial Eastern Question was to some extent stabilized. This stabilization, of course, was due to the emergence of a victorious Turkey at the end of the war of Independence and more importantly because of the weakness of Russia after the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917.

The Turks regarded the Straits Convention as a settlement infringing on their independence, exposing their biggest city and diminishing their value in the world of international diplomacy.<sup>324</sup> However, as long as the collective security system established by the League of Nations promised some hope of being successful, Ankara did not raise the question of remilitarization of the Straits.<sup>325</sup> Nonetheless, Turkey, due to the decline in international life in the early 1930s, vehemently felt the deficiency of demilitarization clause of the Convention. As a consequence, Ankara gave several warnings to the world that the country regarded the clauses relating to demilitarization as being of discriminatory nature and suggested revision of the Lausanne regime several times from May, 1933 onwards.<sup>326</sup> Finally, on April 11, 1936, Turkey formally requested the same to the Secretary General of the League.<sup>327</sup>

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324 A. L. Macfie, "The Straits Question: The Conference of Montreux (1936)," *Balkan Studies* 13 (June 1972): 14.

325 Esmer, 295.

326 Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*, 63-8.

327 Indeed Turkish move was well-timed. It came after the Rhineland remilitarization and at the time when Italian aggression in Abyssinia was being perpetrated. All these events naturally facilitated an immediate and favorable reply to the Turkish request. Ibid; Esmer, 295; Harry Howard, "The Straits after the Montreux Convention," *Foreign Affairs* (October 1936): 200.

At Turkey's request, the Conference powers met at Montreux on June 22, 1936. During the sessions of the Conference the discussion came around between the Turkish thesis, which was mostly favored by the Soviet Union, and the British thesis.<sup>328</sup> The Turkish thesis substituted the formula registered in the Lausanne Convention of "freedom of navigation" for absolute Turkish control of shipping, which naturally abolished the International Commission that imposed severe restrictions on the entry of non-Black Sea warships into the Black Sea and finally allowed full remilitarization of the Straits. Against the Turkish thesis, Britain insisted on the continuance of the International commission and free access into the Black Sea. Discussions around these theses hastened in view of dangerous international outlook and reached its final form on July 20, 1936.<sup>329</sup> The outcome of the Conference permitted Turkey to refortify the Straits and international control ended. Also by the new Convention, Turkey was granted the right to close the Straits to warships in time of war or of an immediate threat of war.

At this time the Soviet Union signed and ratified the Convention. But it was not that the Convention satisfied Moscow. Therefore, from 1936 on, Moscow sought favorable occasions to raise the revision of this Convention. The first move came at the beginning of the Second World War, when Turkish Foreign Minister, Şükrü Saracoğlu visited Moscow in the hope for a pact with the Soviet Union. During the meetings in Moscow, Russians revealed their concern emanating from spreading the conflict in Europe and wanted Turkey to close the Straits to warships of non-Black Sea powers, which surely was not in conformity with the Montreux Convention and

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328 For theses of principle countries, namely Turkey, Britain and Soviet Union see Erkin, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*, 70-5.

329 It was signed on July 20, 1936 and ratified on November 9, 1936 by Bulgaria, France, Great Britain, Greece, Rumania, Turkey, USSR, and Yugoslavia. Italy adhered in 1937. For full text see "Convention Regarding the regime of the Straits," *The American Journal of International Law, Supplement: Official Documents* (January 1937): 1-18.

therefore rebuffed by Ankara.<sup>330</sup> It became clear that the Soviets continued to harbor the same views in regard to the Straits regime, when the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Stafford met with Stalin on July 1, 1940. Stalin said that “Relations with Turkey could be straightened out ...But such relations depended on a mutually satisfactory resolution of the problem of the Straits.”<sup>331</sup> In the meantime, Stalin did not hesitate to offer Ankara to “give the Dodecanese islands and some territory in Bulgaria and possibly in northern Syria” in the hope of softening Turkey’s position regarding the Straits.<sup>332</sup>

Turkey refrained from discussing the revision of the Montreux Convention. But Moscow was not intent on giving up this matter and continued its approaches throughout the same year. The awaited opportunity came from Berlin in November, when the world was delimited into “spheres of influence” between Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union. At this time, Moscow was not content with a new treaty satisfying Soviet security concerns in the Straits. What the Soviet government demanded from Hitler as conditions for accepting the proposed Four Power Pact was a base for land and naval forces within range of the Dardanelles.<sup>333</sup>

On 22 June 1941, Germany attacked the USSR, by which the Russian dream concerning the Straits had to be one more time put off. Thereafter, Moscow felt the need to encourage Turkey to implement the Montreux Convention and, to this effect, announced its satisfaction with the Convention on 10 August 1941. However, once the military situation was reversed in favor of the Soviets after Stalingrad, Moscow again started to pronounce its desire to its new allies. It was obvious that post-Stalingrad years presented Russia with a unique opportunity to prepare the ground

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330 Ferenc Vali, *The Turkish Straits and NATO* (Stanford, California : The Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 29.

331 *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, iv.

332 Nur Bilge Criss, “U.S. Forces in Turkey,” in *U.S. Military Forces in Europe: The early years, 1945-1970*, eds. Simon W. Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), 335.

333 Sontag and Beddie, 195-260; for Soviet conditions and background conversations concerning the Pact, *ibid.*, 195-260.

for a solution of the Straits Question after the end of the war according to its own interests. Russians were again the ally of Great Britain. And Turkey seemed as a state which betrayed both the Soviet Union and Britain. This situation was indeed unfamiliar with both the Russians and British. This situation was, to some extent, like the situation in 1915. Therefore, it was “hard to suppose Russians forgot that Britain offered them Constantinople in the earlier part of the late war.”<sup>334</sup>

The first major effort of Stalin with regard to the Straits was to outline the Russian position to the allies took place at the Tehran Conference of 1943. It can be plausibly argued that during this conference Churchill paved the road for a postwar crisis regarding the Straits in particular and Turkey’s isolation in general. He suggested that if Turkey refused to enter the war, it would lose British sympathy and thereby “its post-war rights in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles would be affected.”<sup>335</sup> Furthering his policy, the British Prime Minister revealed, without taking care of Turkish national interests, his idea that such a “large mass” as the Soviet Union “deserved the access to warm water ports” and this question should be settled “agreeably as between friends” as part of the peace settlement.<sup>336</sup> Indeed, Churchill’s attitude towards the Russian aspiration was also in contrast to the reports prepared by both the British Foreign Office and Chief of Staff the same year. One Foreign Office report in July indicated that “though Turkey behaved badly in the war because of neutral position, Britain needed to defend Turkey for its own interests against Russia in the future.”<sup>337</sup> In the complementary report, the British Chief of Staff argued that “since it provides reasonable safeguards to the British interests in

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334 CAB 120/714, *Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister*, 6 June 1943.

335 *FRUS, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran*, 1943, Bohlen Minutes, 496, and Combined Chiefs of Staffs Minutes, 555-64.

336 *Ibid.*, 565-8.

337 FO 371/44188, *Report on the Straits of Istanbul by Foreign Office*, 28 November 1944 quoted in Bilgin and Morewood, 29.



the Middle East and Mediterranean, at no greater cost than that of providing diplomatic support to Turkey...<sup>338</sup>

At the end of the Teheran Conference, however, it was generally agreed that the regime of the Straits should be revised. However, since Stalin did not insist on this matter at that time, it remained untouched until the Moscow Conversations of Stalin with Churchill. In October 1944, Stalin raised the matter again wishing the Convention modified “to allow free passage at all times of Russian warships.” One of the reasons advanced by Stalin for the need of modification was that Japan was at present a party to the Convention.<sup>339</sup>

At that time, Churchill agreed with the need for revision, partly because of the situation of Japan as a signatory state but mostly because Turkey’s policy from 1943 on. “Inonu missed the market,” argued Churchill during the meeting, indeed which revealed his bitterness over Turkey’s non-belligerence and the abortive discussions with Inonu at Cairo in December 1943.<sup>340</sup> In other words, having received some weapons from Britain and when they were not in danger from Germany, the Turks were expected to come in on the British side and give Britain support from their territory. Otherwise, the Turks would have “a pretty raw deal at the peace and thereafter.” To this end, only the right moment to put this across awaited.<sup>341</sup>

It was agreed by Stalin and Churchill at the close of the meeting that the Soviet government would present notes through diplomatic channels to both the US

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338 Other conclusions were also interesting for the postwar attitude of Britain in regard to the Straits. They were (1) “for the security of British interests in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean it was most important that Russia should neither be in ‘physical control’ of the Straits nor be granted ‘unrestricted rights of passage;’ (2) if, however, insistence on either or both of these points by us is likely to result in additional claims or threats by the Russians in either directions particularly through the Caucasus towards Persia, then it might well be to our advantage to concede certain points from the Convention; (3) if Russia pressed for the revision of the Convention, a full appreciation of the British position vis-à-vis Russia in the post-war period would have to be examined before deciding definitely against such a revision. CAB, 119/126, *Report by the COS Committee on Turkey and the Dardanelles*, 22 September 1943 quoted in Bilgin and Morewood, 29.

339 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, Memorandum by the Assistant to the President’s Naval Aide, 1010.

340 Alvarez, 44n118.

341 CAB 120/ 714, *From Angora to Foreign Office about Soviet-Turkish relations*, 4 April 1943.

and Great Britain setting forth detailed proposals for the revision. In his telegram, Churchill, after informing of Stalin's views, advised Roosevelt that "revision is clearly necessary as Japan is signatory and Inonu missed his market last December."<sup>342</sup> Thus one of the implications of this October meeting was that the US, though not a signatory power to the Montreux, was drawn into the Straits question. However, the Soviet government did not send any notes presenting its proposals and the Montreux Convention, therefore, the issue did not come up again until 10 February 1945 at Yalta.

### **3.3.2 The Straits at Yalta Conference**

Contrary to the United States "hopes" regarding the Straits that this matter would not be raised and that "the Montreux Convention had functioned well and the Soviet government so declared to the Turks jointly with Great Britain,"<sup>343</sup> Marshal Stalin raised the question of the revision of the Montreux Convention at the plenary session of February 10<sup>th</sup>. Without stating his desiderata, he claimed that the treaty was now outmoded instigating that the Japanese played a more important part under the Montreux regime than the USSR; and that the Montreux Convention linked up with the League of Nations which was no longer a reality. Nonetheless, the real reason for Stalin seemed the unacceptable situation, in which the Turks could close the Straits "not only in time of war but if they feel that there is a threat of war." In other words, it was impossible for the Soviets to accept "a situation in which Turkey had a hand on Russia's throat." The Convention had been signed when Russian relations with Great Britain were not perfect. He was sure, however, that Great

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342 In his reply on October 22, Roosevelt commented that: "Your statement of the present attitude of U.J. towards ...and Montreux Convention is interesting. We should discuss these matters together with our Pacific war efforts at the forthcoming three party meeting." See Department of State, *The Conference at Yalta and Malta*, 1945, Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, 313 and 313n2.

343 Ibid., Memorandum regarding the Question of the Turkish Straits, 314.

Britain no longer had any idea of “strangling” the USSR with the help of Japan. He was sure that there would, therefore, be no objection to some revision of the treaty.

Both Churchill and Roosevelt agreed with Stalin that the treaty needed revision. Recalling the British sympathy with the proposal to revise the treaty when Stalin had first raised the subject last October, the British Prime Minister said that the present position under which the one exit to the Black sea could be closed was not satisfactory. Therefore, Churchill thought that consideration should be given to the desirability of accompanying any proposal for changes in the Straits regime to meet Russian needs and wished for reassurances given to Turkey regarding the maintenance of its independence and territorial integrity. In reply, Stalin said that he had nothing to hide and readily agreed that such assurances should be given.

While Roosevelt made no specific remarks on the Straits during the Conference, it was evident that he would “not object to minor changes in the Convention, if they were “suggested by the USSR or Great Britain.” However, it was also evident that any major changes in the regime of the Straits, which would “probably violate Turkish sovereignty and affect adversely the strategic and political balance in the Balkans and the Near East,” would not be accepted by Roosevelt.<sup>344</sup>

At the end of the Conference, it was agreed by the Big Three that the USSR would make known its wishes at a later date to the American and British Governments for discussion at the prospective “Meeting of Foreign Affairs” and that the Turkish government should be informed in general terms. On February 27, in accordance with this understanding, the British government informed Ankara in very general terms of what had passed in Moscow.<sup>345</sup> Some time later than Eden, Molotov

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344 Department of State, *The Conference at Yalta and Malta*, 1945, Briefing Book Paper, 314.

345 For the text of the message sent by Foreign Office to Ankara see *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, The British Embassy to the Department of State, 1047.

informed Sarper that the Soviet government would have to discuss the Straits at some future date.<sup>346</sup>

### 3.3.3 The Straits at Potsdam

After Yalta, there were neither Soviet proposals made for revision of the Straits regime nor a meeting as planned of the three Foreign Secretaries in London to discuss this matter. On the eve of the Conference, the US was in a mood reflecting its traditional approach toward the Straits question.<sup>347</sup> Therefore, while Turkish and British attitudes, let alone the Russians, were well known, American attitude on this issue was still defined on vague and confused terms.<sup>348</sup> Although Americans were dragged into the question after Yalta, since then they did not expose their own attitude on this question because the US had not been a signatory to the Montreux Convention and also because the Turks had not approached them.<sup>349</sup>

It is also interesting to note that although the American government had been well informed on the subject and its grave implications to world peace, the Straits question was yet being discussed on the first day of the Conference by American Joint Chief of Staff. At the meeting of the Joint Chief of Staff on July 17, Admiral Leahy, President's Chief of Staff opened the discussion concerning the Straits by mentioning that "the President had not given any consideration to this matter yet." It was also evident that there were still differences in points of view of the Army and the Navy. Under these circumstances, the discussions culminated in the agreement

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346 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1010.

347 For American policy in regard to the Straits see Harry Howard, "The United States and the Problem of the Turkish Straits: The Foundations of American Policy," *Balkan Studies* 3 (January 1962); Harry Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and US Policy* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

348 The State Department outlined the most important American interests in the Strait question as: (1) "to prevent the Dardanelles from becoming an area of international dispute and a potential threat to world peace;" and (2) "to ensure the unrestricted use of the Dardanelles for peaceful commerce," see *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 1, Revised Briefing Book Paper: Memorandum Regarding the Montreux Convention, 1013-15.

349 *Ibid.*, The Assistant Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, 1052.

with the attitude of the State Department to the effect that “the Dardanelles should be a free waterway without defenses by either Turkey or Russia.”<sup>350</sup>

In summing up, on the eve of Potsdam, while all parties agreed for the need of revision, there was lack of accord on the question of the passage of warships. Turkish attitude on this point was, as always had been, that “in time of war, Turkey must have the right to exclude all warships from the Dardanelles and any foreign bases in the Straits was out of question;” Russian attitude, again as always had been, as free passage of its warships through the Dardanelles at all times and bases on the Dardanelles for the joint defense of the Straits; and British attitude, was to support, though this would be detrimental to British strategic interests, the Soviet proposals for the right to send Russian warships through the Dardanelles in time of war as well as in peace, but to resist any Russian demand for bases in the Straits.<sup>351</sup>

With these considerations, the Potsdam Conference began with the meeting of Stalin, Truman and Churchill between 12 July and 2 August 1945 to discuss the post-war world order including the Turkish Straits. The question of the Straits was brought up on the agenda at the Sixth Plenary Meeting on 22 July.<sup>352</sup> Admitting the need to modify the Montreux Convention and his readiness “to welcome an arrangement for the free movement of Russian ships, naval or merchant, through the Black Sea and back,” Churchill, however, impressed on Stalin the importance of not alarming the Turks. Then Churchill revealed his understanding of the recent events until the time of the Conference and wanted to learn the recent position of the Russians. In response to his request, Molotov circulated a document, which declared that (1) the Montreux Convention should “be abrogated in the proper regular

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350 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 2, Meeting of the Joint Chief of Staff, Tuesday, 17 July 1945, 42.

351 *Ibid.*, The Deputy of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to the Secretary of State, 1053-4; also for British attitude, see FO 371/48699, CoS (45) 459(0), *Offices of the Cabinet and Minister of Defense*, 12 July 1945; CAB 119/126, JP(45) 170 (Final), COS Committee Joint Planning Staff JPS, 11 July 1945, quoted in Bilgin and Morewood, 29.

352 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 2, Sixth Plenary Meeting, July 22, 1945, 244-99.

procedure;” and (2) “the determination of the regime of the Straits...shall fall within the province of Turkey and the Soviet Union;” and (3) the new regime should also provide “in addition to Turkish military bases the establishment of Soviet military bases in the Straits.”<sup>353</sup>

As discussion continued, it became clear that the Soviets harbored aspirations not different from Tsarist Russia and they were in this regard, actually trying to dictate tsarist policies to Britain and the US. Upon Churchill’s statement that he could not consent to the establishment of a Russian base in the Straits and that he did not think that the Turks would agree either, Molotov replied by invoking the previous treaties (referring to the treaties of 1805 and 1833) had existed in the past between Russia and Turkey.<sup>354</sup> For the Soviets, these treaties meant what the Turks had feared the Soviets would do: “the settlement of the Straits question only by Turkey and Russia.”

In the course of discussions which went on in the same atmosphere in the Seventh Plenary Meeting on 23 July,<sup>355</sup> the Soviets insisted on their demands of base in the Straits referring to the situations in other canals such as Suez, Gibraltar or Panama. At this point, despite the fact that “the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal logically should receive the same treatment” in the event of “Internationalization” of the Straits, Truman proposed that “there be free and unrestricted navigation of such inland waterways ...and that the regulation of such navigation be provided by international authorities...”<sup>356</sup> Against Truman’s proposals to place the Straits of

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353 Ibid., Proposal by the Soviet delegation: The Black Sea Straits, 1427-8.

354 For the text of the referred treaties, see Hurewitz, *Documentary Record, 1535-1914*, 54-61.

355 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 2, Seventh Plenary Meeting, July 23, 1945, 299-305.

356 In the Briefing Book Paper prepared for the Yalta Conference, it was suggested that any major changes in the regime of the Straits such as “Internationalization” “probably would violate Turkish sovereignty and affect adversely the strategic and political balance in the Balkans and the Near East.” See Department of State, *The Conference at Malta and Yalta*, 1945, Briefing Book paper, 314. For Truman proposals during the Potsdam Conference see *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol.2, Proposal by the United States delegation: Free and Unrestricted Navigation of International Inland Waterways, 654. Britain agreed with this principle, see *ibid*, proposal by the British Delegation: International Inland Waterways, 1436.

Black Sea in a broader context, Stalin seemed unwilling to regard the Black Sea Straits as the Danube and the Rhine as a substitute for Soviet bases in the Straits. Upon Truman's insistence to regard them in the same way, Stalin indicated that they should put off the question "since their views differed so widely."<sup>357</sup>

In the end, it was agreed by the three Powers that the Montreux Convention should be revised (to accord to the vessels of Black Sea powers entire freedom of movement through the Straits). And "as the next step the matter should be subject of direct conversations between each of the three Governments and the Turkish Government."<sup>358</sup> Upon this conclusion, the Soviet government made known its view that "this freedom of transit should be guaranteed by Turkey and Russia jointly." On the other hand, British government was of the view that "the freedom of transit should be guaranteed by an international organization." Finally, the American government concurred, with the addition that "the Straits should be neutralized, thereby removing the necessity for any military establishment to guarantee the freedom of transit."<sup>359</sup>

On July 26, the British Ambassador informed the Turkish Prime Minister about the Potsdam discussions on the Straits and advised him that the Turks should "keep their heads and in reply to Russian approaches maintain firmly that question must be settled on international basis." He also stressed the significance for the Turks of having American guarantee of freedom of Straits. Nonetheless, upon being informed by the British Ambassador, Turkish Prime Minister became "perturbed." He remarked that Truman's proposal struck something between Lausanne and

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357 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, vol. 2, Eight Plenary Meeting, July 24, 1945, 244-99.

358 In the Soviet memorandum this part of the conclusion differs from the wording of American and British. According to the Soviet version, all three governments agreed that "each of the three governments would have direct conversations with the Turkish Government on the question." See *ibid.*, Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the Central Secretariat: Turkey and Black Sea Straits, 1439. Also for comments on this difference, see Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and US Policy*, 231.

359 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, vol. 2, Matters Relating to the Near Eastern and African Area for inclusion in the final Protocol, 1435-6.

Montreux. Nonetheless, what definitely troubled him was “possibility Turkey might be asked demilitarized Straits.” However, on July 28, the Turkish government now accepted internationalization of the Straits on “condition that neither Turkey’s sovereignty nor security were diminished” and as a consequence of such settlement Turkish-Russian relations should improve.<sup>360</sup>

### **3.3.4 Post-Potsdam Period**

In the immediate post-Potsdam period, it was easy to observe the disappointment of Turkish leaders about the American attitude toward Turkey. For them, recent events indicated a lessening American interest in Turkish affairs and even some let down in American support for Turkey.<sup>361</sup> However, there was also a good side of the situation: involvement of the US in the dispute. At that point, the determining factor seemed both for Britain and Turkey as the power of the US since American inaction would be interpreted as a “green light” by the Soviets in furthering their demands on Turkey.<sup>362</sup>

Despite these concerns of the British and Turkish governments, the American government did not initiate the procedure as agreed at Potsdam. This “inaction” on the part of Washington heightened the fears of Britain and Turkey that America was again on the way of its traditional noninvolvement.<sup>363</sup> Under these considerations, both states expressed their concerns to the State Department. In this regard, on 20 August, Ankara expressed its worries that it would await with interest for Washington’s response to “the Turkish initiative,” which had been decided upon with a view “to ascertaining as soon as possible the British and American point of

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360 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Acting Secretary of State, 1437; Ibid., Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 1238.

361 Ibid., Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, 1238.

362 *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 280-3.

363 Alvarez, 66.



view in this matter.”<sup>364</sup> A day later, First Secretary of the British Embassy, A. H. Tandy called on Lewis Jones, the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs and reminded him that the Turks, who were most anxious to have some communication from the American government, still had not received any.<sup>365</sup>

In reality, a great number of American policy makers was also dissatisfied with Truman’s proposals at Potsdam. On September 25, the Ambassador in Turkey warned the Department that in light of the development of air power since World War I, freedom of passage in the Straits for Russia could not be effectively guaranteed by international agreement or even by actual control of the Straits. Therefore, “question of Straits as raised by USSR instead of being crux of matter” it appeared merely a “façade” behind which lies Soviet objective: “to bring about change in Turkey’s internal regime.” However, this Russian objective embodied some broader implications:

In chain of countries bordering USSR on west and south from Baltic to Black Sea, Turkey is sole country which is not governed by ‘friendly’ regime. A ‘friendly’ regime in Turkey under Soviet domination would mean actual control by USSR of Straits. But more important than this it would mean termination of Turco-British alliance and end of western liberal influence in Turkey and probably ultimately in Middle East.<sup>366</sup>

On September 27, George F. Kennan sent a message to the State Department, stating his concurrence to the views expressed in Wilson’s message:

I know nothing in Soviet ideology or diplomatic practice which would justify us in hoping that Soviet aspirations with respect to Turkey would be satisfied by concessions regarding the Straits. We must expect that any concessions on this nature will be exploited to utmost in Moscow with view to eliminate of western influence in Turkey and establishment of regime ‘friendly’ to Soviet Union.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, The Chargé in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1237.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 1238-9.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1248-9.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, The Chargé in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State, 1251.

Despite these warnings, the US submitted on November 2 its response to Ankara's note of August 20 concerning the question of the Straits, in which the American government expressed its hope that problem of the control and use of the Straits could be solved in a manner that would enhance international security and give due consideration for the Black Sea states and interests of Turkey. In this note it was also declared that the Montreux Convention was subject to revision by an international conference in 1946 and the US would be pleased to participate, if invited. At the end of its note, the American government expressed its position, proposing the principle of complete freedom of passage for all merchant vessels, freedom of passage for warships of the Black Sea powers at all times, and closure to warships of non-Black Sea powers.<sup>368</sup>

Against Truman's optimism for a solution in conformity with international security, news coming from Ankara was, in a sense, confirming previous views of the Turks as well as Wilson and Kennan about ultimate Soviet aim in this issue. In his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador in Ankara, Sergei Alexandrovich Vinogradov, Wilson formed the impression that Moscow raised the Straits question merely as a façade behind which stood the Russian objective to control Turkey. Vinogradov said that the American proposal failed to offer the necessary security to the USSR and moreover, Turkey was not capable of enforcing the closure of the Straits to non-Black Sea warships which necessitated having bases in the Straits.<sup>369</sup>

On November 12, Feridun Cemal Erkin, Secretary General of Turkish Foreign Office met with Wilson in order to convey the Government's satisfaction with the American note and its interim official reply to the American note. Erkin informed Wilson officially that the Turkish government was "glad to have received

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<sup>368</sup> For American note of November 2, see *ibid.*, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey, 1265-6.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State, 1271-2.

this proposal and appreciate warmly evident concern of the US government in drafting proposal to safeguard sovereignty and independence of Turkey.” Erkin also emphasized the Government’s attitude that it would await receipt of views of the British and Soviet governments before giving a more detailed reply to Washington.<sup>370</sup>

In the meantime, upon request of Ankara, the Whitehall informed the Turkish government on November 21 of its concurrence with American principles with minor changes. Following this, on December 5, the Turkish Prime Minister, in a press conference, stated that his government accepted American proposals as a basis for discussion.<sup>371</sup> On the other side, the Soviet government made it known that it did not have any intention of making a new proposal of its own but contemplated its position stated in June 7 and later at Potsdam.<sup>372</sup>

### **3.3.5 The Soviet Notes of August and September, 1946**

Due to the Soviet insistence of not making any new proposals other than referring to its demands of June 7 and Potsdam, there occurred no development in the question of the Straits until August 7, 1946. At that time the Soviet government notified Turkey and other signatories that the present regime of the Straits no longer provided sufficient guarantee of the security of Black Sea states, and proposed a new regime. In this note, without reference to Kars and Ardahan, Ankara was also held responsible for malfeasance in the regime of the Straits during the Second World

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370 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary o State, 1275-6.

371 Despite the Prime Minister's statement, the American government was informed about Ankara's decision to revert to its original decision not to make a written reply for the time being to the American note of November 2 and leave the matter on basis verbal interim reply of November 12. For P.M.'s statement see *ibid.*, The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary o State, 1282-3; for the Government's decision, see *ibid.*, 1283.

372 Ibid., The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary o State, 1279.

War.<sup>373</sup> Five proposals were put forward for the new regime, three of which were not different from the American proposals of November 2, 1945 and accepted by Turkish government as a basis of discussion. However, the last two proposals- the first being about a new regime of the Straits elaborated by Black Sea powers only, and the second being the joint defense of the Straits by Turkey and the Soviet Union,- brought about disagreements between the principal powers.

The first response to this note came from the US on 19 August, 1946. It reiterated its position of November 2, 1945 and rejected the last two proposals of the Soviets. The Americans rejected the fourth proposal expressing that a new regime could not be the concern of the Black Sea powers only. They also held that Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits and put the prospect of an attack on the Straits in the basket of the UN Security Council. The British and Turkish governments did not act differently and followed the American view in rejecting the last two Soviet proposals.<sup>374</sup>

The Kremlin replied to the Turkish note on 24 September, in which, it reiterated the charges concerning the violations of the Straits regime during the war and its previous five proposals. Moreover, Moscow warned the Turkish government that if Ankara rejected the joint defense of the Straits with the Soviets or took some military measures in the Straits with some non-Black Sea powers, such an action would be regarded as contrary to the security of the Black Sea.<sup>375</sup> In reply to the second note the three governments followed the same suit and repeated their

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373 For text, see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 285-7. For convenience about the question of passage of Axis ships during the Second World War see Süleyman Seydi and Steven Morewood, "Turkey's Application of the Montreux Convention in the Second World War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (January 2005): 79-101; Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl*, 139-41.

374 *FRUS*, 1946, vol. 7, The Acting Secretary of State to the Soviet Chargé, 847-8;. For Turkish detailed response see *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 287-95.

375 See *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları*, 300-1.

previous stand that they, while they accept the first three proposals as a basis of discussion, rejected the last two proposals.

The last Turkish note received no answer from the Soviet government. The Soviet Union could follow suit in accordance with the Montreux Convention and ask for a revision of the Montreux by an international Conference. However, in October the Soviet government preferred not to further the question any more and informed London that it deemed it “premature” to call a conference on the Straits.<sup>376</sup> Indeed, by this last Soviet move it became obvious that what the Soviets dreamed of was the more than a revision in the Montreux Convention that would, as they argued, guarantee the security of the Black Sea coast.<sup>377</sup> But it was the strengthening of their position in the Middle East.

### **3.3.6 Development of American Position**

On March 12, 1947, President Truman recommended assistance to Greece and Turkey. He explained the grave situation in these countries and argued that the American government should help Turkey (and Greece) in order to help it to maintain its integrity in the face of Soviet threats. Because “that integrity is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East” and hence “to the security of the US.” He specified, as the major factor occasioning his proposal, the attempted “subjugation of peoples by armed minorities and outside powers using coercion and infiltration.”

But it was plain that Truman did not make the whole story utterly clear. Truman in his message did not give adequate information on the total situation in the Middle East and America’s entire relationship with Russia that called forth the

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<sup>376</sup> Harris, *Troubled Alliance*, 22.

<sup>377</sup> Criss, “U.S. Forces,” 340.

Truman Doctrine. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg as the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, emphasized that at no point did Truman “bring hazard home to the US as an American hazard in any aspect” but rather “left it in the ideological field, of interests in freedom.” Then he asked whether the contemplated aid to Greece and Turkey “come back to the United States and its own intelligent self-interests in very realist fashion.”<sup>378</sup> While at that moment the discussion was “off the record,” a sincere answer came later from the American Ambassador in Turkey, Edwin C. Wilson: “what are we doing here is not because we like the color of the eyes of the Turks or the Greeks or anything of that sort. We are doing it because it is in our own interests, and we would do it regardless of what regime was in Turkey...” But details were again “off the record.”<sup>379</sup>

However it was quite open that American aid was extended to Turkey for American “own self-interests” in order to “build a maginot line out there in the Dardanelles area, stop Russia line.” Therefore, it was the place of Turkey at the map of Europe, positioned at the “underbelly of Russian Empire,” that necessitated an American support to the Turks rather than expecting an imminent Soviet attack on Turkey.<sup>380</sup>

Nonetheless, it took time for American strategic planners to reach those conclusions about the place of Turkey in American national interests. It can be recalled that on 23 July, 1945, the US government made it known that Soviet Union’s desire to revise the Montreux Convention, to establish bases in the Straits area and acquire eastern part of Turkey on June 7 was only subject of “a preliminary

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378 U.S. Senate, *Legislative Origins of Truman Doctrine: Hearings held in Executive Session before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, 89th Congress, First Session on a Bill to Provide for Assistance to Greece and Turkey* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), Executive Session, March 13, 1947, “US interests,” 21.

379 Ibid, 57, 61.

380 Ibid, Executive Session, March 28, 65-68; Executive Session, April 1, “Exclusion of Turkey from the Bill” 105. See also Leffler, “Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War,” 807-25.

exchange of views.” Indeed this attitude of the Truman government was reminiscent of Roosevelt policy toward the Soviets, based on cooperation with them in establishing peace in the world. Thus still in November 1945 that part of the world was assumed to be the most suitable region in which Washington and the Kremlin’s policies could “be made to dovetail with minimum friction.”<sup>381</sup> In other words, the area was seen primarily as the political and military responsibilities of Great Britain, and logically Turkey could only be “an area of diplomatic, economic and military conflict between the USSR and Great Britain.”<sup>382</sup>

However, starting with early 1946, American attitude towards Turkey changed. It was mostly because of the evolving place of Turkey in emerging American strategic concept for the postwar era. In this strategic concept, Turkey attracted attention of the American war planners with its proximity to Soviet’s vital areas in the Caucasus and in southerly territorial border.<sup>383</sup> As a sign of this evolving Turkish importance, on April 5, 1946, *U.S.S. Missouri* was sent to Turkey. In later months, other strategic plans confirmed this importance and moreover heightened the importance of Turkey as an indispensable part of Middle East security.

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381 *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 8, Conference of Chiefs of Missions in the Near East with President Truman on November 10, 1945, 10-14.

382 *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin*, 1945, vol. 1, Briefing Book Paper: United States Policy toward Turkey, 1016.

383 Leffler, “Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War,” 813.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

Orthodox cold war historiography tends to view the origins of the cold war in the Middle East in general and Turkey in particular on a continuum extending from the denunciation of Turkish-Soviet treaty of neutrality and friendship to the Truman Doctrine. This view suggests that Soviet policy of expansionism reemerged following the end of the Second World War and in consequence, other great powers sought to contain it. Indeed, apart from Moscow's bullying of its western neighbors and Iran in the immediate post war years, Soviet vocal claims on eastern part of Turkey as well as formal demands of bases in the Straits lend strong credence to this view. However, in view of the long history of interests and influence in the Middle East, on the part of principal powers, notably British, the Russians, as well Americans, in some cases going back several centuries involving the Black Sea Straits, it will be imprecise to interpret great powers contest in this region in terms of the Cold War alone. Yet it must be recognized that the traditional policies were reoriented in light of a global struggle between the two emerging camps and it is in terms of this contest that the salient features of great powers policies over Turkey can best be understood.

In that light, as far as the Turkish question in British-Soviet relations is concerned, it can be said that many problems in regard to Turkey since the end of the Second World War or indeed since during the war had already involved



considerations of a more permanent strategic nature and required more far-reaching policy decisions on the part of Britain and the USSR. In some respects, these considerations and policies recalled the classical Eastern Question, which was assumed to have been solved after the First World War. For its own, the Soviet Union endeavored to obtain a foothold at the Straits whereby it would secure the unique warm water approach to the Black Sea and acquire a strategic place to project its power in the Mediterranean; and, in broader context, to undermine Britain's position in the northernmost part of the Middle East. As history demonstrates, Great Britain, mindful of its imperial interests, had opposed Russian ambitions over the Straits and Dardanelles to protect the Mediterranean route to India and to expand its influence southward in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when London preferred the status quo. Therefore, it was hard to suggest that Great Britain could remain indifferent in post-Second World War era to Soviet's thrust toward Turkey, the country which still continued to be of vital importance, by virtue of its geographical position for the British Commonwealth of Nations. Nevertheless, when the classical story of Russia's southward expansion resumed specifically on June 7, 1945, the Eastern Question presented itself in a new light, owing to aroused American interests in this part of the world. Russia henceforth had to confront not only the opposition of the Turks along with their traditional ally Britain but also the power of the US, who emerged during the Second World War as principal world power and leader of the "free world."

As a newcomer to this strategic picture, Washington's attitude was to be shaped by postwar circumstances. The Soviet aggressive activities toward Iran and Turkey, if not in Greece, helped Washington to shape its role in that part of the world. However, realization of the US of the repercussions of the decline in British

power, to the extent that American strategic interests in the Middle East could no longer be protected by Britain as had been done heretofore, became the most effective factor in this process. In other words, Britain's inability to control the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East brought about the possibility of elimination of the last bulwark between American interests in the Middle East and the traditional Russian expansion.

Amidst all these great power rivalries, Turkey had three commonly accepted foreign policy alternatives. These were to try to maintain neutrality, to submit to the strong influence stemming from its northern neighbor, or to turn its face to the west, where it spiritually regarded itself as an integral part. In this dichotomous world, Ankara's sense of isolation dominated Turkey's foreign policies. Nonetheless, until the second half of 1945, Turkish policymakers seemed confused about how they would overcome their isolation. Initially, they pursued a dual foreign policy. On the one hand, Ankara approached Britain under the guise of consultation. On the other hand, Ankara sought, behind closed doors, to relive its postwar isolation by forming an alliance with the USSR.

Nonetheless, when Ankara was confronted with the fact during Moscow meetings of June that the price of this alliance would be too much, the Turks retorted by referring to Russian menace. Nevertheless, with an idiosyncratic reading of the "lessons of history," we realize that there has not been any structural change in the attitude of the Russians towards Turkey except for the relatively weak times of the Soviets after the 1917 revolution, when the Soviet Union showed traditional state behavior of seeking peace until completing its nation building phase, through "homo Sovieticus." Therefore, to assume that alignment with the West in the post war era was, as widely accepted, the natural consequence of Soviet pressure since 1939 and

the hope in policy makers' minds that this alignment's support does not seem plausible as the sole factor in motivating Turkey's attachment to the Western world.

After June 1945, Turkish government, having lost its prewar internal and external popularity during the wartime period, sought to veil its fear of isolation by the determination to resist the immediate, but indeed exaggerated threats regarding Soviet motives and dangers to Turkish independence and integrity. Although the characteristic Soviet threat to Turkey was not new in the postwar period, now the Turks changed their previous attitude and were inclined to capitalize on the Soviet threat in order to accomplish both some domestic political purposes and more especially find itself a place in the postwar emerging international equilibrium.

The main objective of Turkish foreign policy was thus to obtain western political support for Turkey's internal and external problems. In order to attain this objective, Ankara launched a campaign. The İnönü government, after securing its rule in consequence of the first free democratic elections of the Turkish Republic in 1946, stepped up its consultations with the US, attempting to dramatize the Soviet threat, arguing that the Kremlin would be deterred not by concessions but by firmness.

Nevertheless, Ankara remained alone, at least for a while, in its uneasiness regarding Soviet menacing policy. In addition to Britain's inability to stand alone against the Soviet Union, the US was still an ally of the Soviet Union and American policymakers still had the ideal that world peace and security could be accomplished through three power cooperation. Therefore, the US was reluctant to believe that Soviet behavior of aggressive expansionism formed a pattern that was dangerous to American national security. The US did not want to take the risk of waging another war by provoking the Soviets, and hesitated to make any commitments to Turkey's

defense such as ensuring the security of Turkish Straits because it did not feel primarily responsible for the Middle East and considered the Middle East to lie within Britain's sphere of influence. In this respect one can argue that because of American hesitation to take diplomatic action against the Soviets and lack of understanding their post war intentions, was Stalin able to go forward in his demands over Turkey.

The arrival of the battleship U.S.S. Missouri on April 5, 1946 into the harbor of Istanbul, coincided with a period of international tension in the Near East, was received as an evidence of U.S. willingness to take a firm diplomatic stand against the threat of Soviet encroachment. On the Turkish side, the arrival of Missouri was commonly accepted as the beginning of metaphoric "love affair" between Turkey and the US. However, it was not just the beginning of a new attitude solely towards Turkey but from a larger viewpoint it was, moreover, the beginning of important adjustments in the premises and objectives of American foreign policy towards the Middle East since the geostrategic position of this region happened to be seen very critical to the strategic security interests of the US.

On the other hand, this new stance of the US against the Soviets was unclear both for the Soviets and for the US itself since demands of the Soviets over the Straits and perception of the US in this issue happened to remain with little change. So the fundamental change in American mood came after the British Government encouraged the US to step in and assume the responsibilities for sustaining Turkey and Greece against internal and external threats with a note on 21 February 1947. It was just the beginning of a significant deviation from the historical trend of the US which had been preoccupation with their own affairs to the exclusion of foreign affairs. Britain's abandoning its role as Turkey's principal backer since the 1940s,

could also be interpreted as handing over the responsibility of world leadership, with all its burdens and glory, to the United States ‘the sole remaining superpower’ in the post war era. But from a liberal internationalist outlook, this unprecedented involvement abroad has been taken as the beginning of the US to move unilaterally in dealing with the world affairs by bypassing the United Nations. Washington also put aside the possibility of negotiating with the Soviets about the questions outstanding from World War II at the time that the four powers were still trying to solve those questions.

Just nineteen days later after the British note, President Truman went to both houses of Congress on 12 March, 1947 and asked for approval of funds to enable Greece and Turkey to defend their national integrity. Ankara was included in this American assistance program which has been known as Truman Doctrine due to Turkey’s importance for the US that lied in the preservation of its independence and the maintenance of its present status as a buffer against expansion of the Soviet Union into the Middle East. Indeed, it carried the meaning of more than a mere gesture of American power, showing Turkey that the US would not leave it alone against Soviet pressure. More importantly, there was relief in Ankara because its historical fear of isolation might be ending. Bearing in mind that US support to Turkey was the result not of American charitable impulses, but of Washington’s strategic interest in encouraging Turkey that was stable and Western aligned, one can easily grasp the core characteristics of the emerging alliance between a regional and a global power which had different interests in scope and geography. The US, ultimately, began to move into the power vacuum left by the decline of the British Empire in the Middle East and “support the free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

It was obvious to any observer of the postwar Turkish-Russian relations that the only remedy for Turkish position vis-à-vis the Soviets was to obtain great power support, notably of the US and Great Britain. Although the Turkish leaders most likely realized that alliance with London was the only one which could assure wholehearted support for their isolated country, they apparently were not fully convinced that London alone was able to provide it. They, therefore, fostered a rather extensive supplementary support from Washington.

At this juncture Turkey's contribution happened to be a catalyst in the deterioration of the pragmatist wartime partnership between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. Turkish policy makers stressed the power and inevitability of Russian attack in the event of lack of British and American opposition.

In all of it, it can be said that during the subject period, in the Middle East the danger to the security of the free world did arise not so much from the threat of direct Soviet military aggression. It mainly aroused from continuation of the unfavorable historical trends. Therefore, imperial rivalries and dynastic ambitions suffice to explain most part of the postwar situation in the Middle East and thereby gave enough clue for the origins of the Cold War in that part of the world.

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