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TURKISH-AMERICAN AND TURKISH-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE YEARS 1945-1952. SELECTED ASPECTS²

Stosunki turecko-amerykańskie i turecko-radzieckie w latach 1945-1952.

Wybrane zagadnienia

Abstract

When analyzing Turkish-American and Turkish-Soviet relations after the end of WW2, one should take their mutual influence into consideration. Researchers usually look at Turkish-US relations in isolation from Turkish-Soviet relations. However, only by analyzing them in their entirety can Turkey's complicated situation in the period from the end of the war to Turkey's accession to NATO be understood. In this text, the author analyzes the three most important events in the history of Turkey in the period in question: the issue of the Black Sea Straits, the aid under the Marshall Plan and the issue of Turkey's accession to NATO.

Keywords: Turkey, Cold War, Soviet Union, United States, rivalry

Abstrakt

Analizując stosunki turecko-amerykańskie i turecko-sowieckie po zakończeniu II wojny światowej, należy wziąć pod uwagę ich wzajemny wpływ. Badacze zazwyczaj patrzą na stosunki turecko-amerykańskie w oderwaniu od stosunków turecko-sowieckich. Jednak dopiero ich całościowa analiza pozwala zrozumieć skomplikowaną sytuację Turcji w okresie od zakończenia wojny do przystąpienia Turcji do NATO. W niniejszym tekście autorka analizuje trzy najważniejsze wydarzenia w historii Turcji omawianego okresu: kwestię Cieśnin Czarnomorskich, pomoc w ramach Planu Marshalla oraz kwestię przystąpienia Turcji do NATO.

Słowa kluczowe: Turcja, zimna wojna, Związek Radziecki, Stany Zjednoczone, rywalizacja

In the American-Soviet rivalry in the Middle East, two types of policies converged. One used financial aid and equipment supplies as incentives, the other used the threat of force

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as pressure. As a country of great geographical importance, Turkey was an important point in this rivalry. Had Turkey been subjugated by the USSR, the entire eastern Mediterranean and Arab countries, including the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, would have been open to further expansion.

Turkish-American and Turkish-Soviet relations after the end of World War II should be analyzed in light of their interrelatedness. Researchers usually look at Turkish-US relations in isolation from Turkish-Soviet relations and vice versa. However, only by analyzing them in their entirety can Turkey's complicated situation in the period from the end of the war to Turkey's accession to NATO be understood. At the time, Turkey's membership in NATO's sphere of influence was not yet certain. Everything depended on Ankara's relations with Washington and Moscow. In this text, the author analyzes the three most important events in the history of Turkey in the period in question: the issue of the Black Sea Straits, the aid under the Marshall Plan, and the issue of Turkey's accession to NATO. This analysis is to answer the question of the extent to which Turkish-American and Turkish-Soviet relations influenced each other and whether Turkey would have chosen the Western sphere of influence if not for the Soviet threat.

Introduction

In the period in question, approximately 60 percent of global oil resources and approximately 40 percent of natural gas resources were located in the Middle East. Zbigniew Brzezinski said that the United States would be a superpower as long as it did not allow other countries to achieve a similar position.³ To maintain the *status quo*, it was necessary to maintain control over oil deposits and its international supply routes.

It was important, however, that the Americans recognized at the time that they had to acquire Turkey as a base for allied operations in the event of a war with the USSR.⁴ Taking control of the Straits would have allowed the USSR to continue its offensive towards Europe and the Middle East.⁵ But from the region of the Middle East, it was possible to attack the Soviet industry and the oil-bearing areas of the Caucasus and Romania. This has even been included in NATO's strategy.⁶

1. The Black Sea Straits in Washington-Ankara-Moscow relations

During the Cold War, the Black Sea became the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Moscow wanted to have complete control over this region, because the borders of the Black Sea coast of the USSR, which stretched for 2,000 km (1 242,7 mile), and the borders

³ Z. Brzezinski, *Büyük Satranç Tahtası: Amerika'nın Önceliği ve Bunun Jeostratejik Gereklere*, Sabah Kitapları, İstanbul 1998, pp. 5-6.

⁴ A.A. Holmes, *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and German since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016, p. 47; North Atlantic Treaty Organization Archives (hitherto: NATO Archives), Military Committee (hitherto: 3)/SGM-2150-51, *Command Structure in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East*, month unknown, December 26, 1951, p. 4.

⁵ NATO Archives, 03/SG20/2, *Estimate of Enemy Capabilities and Possible Coups of Action*, month unknown, March 13, 1950, p. 26.

⁶ NATO Archives, 03/SG.20/3, *Estimate of Enemy Capabilities and Possible Coups of Action*, month unknown, March 11, 1950, p. 18.

of the Black Sea countries in the Eastern Bloc, could only be attacked from the Black Sea. Access to it was limited to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. In addition, Turkey's land border with the USSR spanned only approximately 600 km from one of the most industrialized regions of the Soviet Union – the Donetsk Basin. It is not surprising, then, that Moscow was keenly interested in the issue of the Straits. The USSR also tried to take advantage of their high negotiating position at the end of World War II and the dissatisfaction of the Allied leaders with Turkey's neutral and balancing stance. The issue of the Straits was raised at the Yalta Peace Conference. The Turks were convinced that during this conference, President Roosevelt, in private and secret talks with Stalin, had promised to treat their demands for the Straits favorably.⁷ Uncertainties about this were followed by an escalation of tensions on the part of the Soviet Union. The Turkish ambassador in Moscow, Selim Sarper, was summoned by Minister Molotov. During the meeting, he learned that the Soviet side had denounced their Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of December 17, 1925.

In response to Turkish efforts to revive the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, the USSR government indicated on June 7, 1945 that its content could be negotiated after Turkey met specific conditions. These included the revision of the Montreux Straits Treaty and the surrender of the provinces of Kars and Ardahan to the USSR.⁸ Britain, faced with the expanding demands of the Soviet Union, began to fear for its interests in the Middle East. As early as June 18, 1945, London called on Washington to make a firm statement recalling that Moscow had committed itself at Yalta to respect Turkey's territorial integrity. The establishment of USSR bases in the area of the Black Sea straits would give Moscow an opportunity to interfere with British interests in the Mediterranean, including those regarding Suez and Gibraltar. At that time, the United States did not explicitly want to join the British position, despite the fact that the US ambassador in Ankara Edwin C. Wilson reported a serious threat from the Soviet Union. In response to pressure from London, the State Department stated that the Turkish-Soviet talks were conducted in a friendly atmosphere, and mutual Anglo-American pressure could only create an "unfavorable background" before the Potsdam conference.⁹ In June 1945, the US position was that it would be best for Turkey to agree to keep the Straits under neutral control.¹⁰ However, we should remember that at that time Washington was as much disturbed by the British territorial ambitions as by the Soviet ones in terms of threats to its own interests. From the perspective of US interests, it was preferable for Turkey to have an alliance with both London and Moscow, or with neither. Then, Washington could play both powers in this region by giving its support. However, it is worth noting that since the end of World War II, the United States has become more interested in the Mediterranean Sea region (and therefore the Black Sea and the Straits). This was related to the increased penetration of American capital in the Middle East. For a genuine

⁷ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland (henceforth: MFA), Political Department 1945-1948 (hitherto: 6)/ Political reports of the Polish Embassy in Turkey 1948 (hitherto: 101/1590), *The current Russo-Turkish dispute*, location unknown, date unknown, p. 1.

⁸ The National Archives in London (hitherto: NA), Records of the Prime Minister's Office (hitherto: PREM), Turkey-Soviet relations (hitherto: 3/447/4A), *Telegram no. 52*, Istanbul June 13, 1945, p. 1.

⁹ E. Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943-1945. Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1973, p. 317.

¹⁰ NA, Air Ministry (hitherto: AIR 20)/Assistance to Turkey 1942-1945 (hitherto: 2464), *Telegram no. 229*, month unknown, June 25, 1945, p. 1.

and long-term opposition to the USSR, Turkey needed the support of the USA. However, it could not be counted on, because Washington still believed in peaceful relations between Turkey and Moscow at the time. The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union flared up only at Potsdam.

The Potsdam Conference of the Big Three (July 17 – August 2, 1945) agreed that the Montreux Convention should be amended as a result of bilateral agreements between Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and Turkey.¹¹ Of course, Moscow, Washington and London had different visions of possible changes. The Soviet Union wanted to be the sole policymaker regarding the Straits, without the participation of the Western powers.¹² But at the Potsdam Conference, President Truman stated that Europe's inland waterways, such as the Danube, the Rhine, the Kiel Canal and the Black Sea Straits, should come under international control.¹³ It is very interesting that in the final text of the Potsdam Conference the paragraphs concerning the Straits differ in the Russian and English versions. The former one includes a provision that the future of the Straits will be negotiated with Turkey by each of the countries concerned,¹⁴ and the latter – that it will be discussed between the countries concerned and Turkey.¹⁵ The difference was fundamental, because the former assumed that the status of the Straits would be changed by pressuring Ankara, and the latter, rather by presenting Turkey with proposals, to which the country could agree or not.

At the end of 1945, the main American objective in relation to the Straits was to preserve the freedom of commercial shipping. This, in fact, was what all sides wanted, since the disputes concerned the warships, not merchant ships.¹⁶

By the end of 1946, the US acted more as a peacemaker, trying to negotiate changes that would be profitable for American policy. On November 2, 1945, the United States presented the Soviet government with a note proposing the following:¹⁷

1. The straits were always to be open to merchant ships of all nations.
2. The straits were always to be open to the transit of warships belonging to Black Sea basin countries.
3. The warships of powers outside the Black Sea could not pass through the Straits except with the explicit consent of the Black Sea Powers or for operations authorized by the United Nations. This would be allowed only in peacetime and provided that displacement limits were agreed on.

¹¹ NA, War Cabinet and Cabinet Office (hitherto: CAB), British Joint Staff Mission and British Joint Services Mission: Washington Office Records, Turkey 1944-1945 (hitherto: 122/977), *Copy of a telegram from Washington to the Foreign Office*, Washington, October 24, 1945, p. 3.

¹² *Советский Союз на международных конференциях периода Великой Отечественной войны 1941-1945 гг.: Сборник документов*, Том 6, Политиздат, Москва 1984, pp. 326-327.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 348.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 444.

¹⁵ Yale Law School, *The Berlin (Potsdam) Conference, July 17-August 2, 1945 (a) Protocol of the Proceedings, August 1, 1945*, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decade17.asp (accessed on: December 25, 2022).

¹⁶ NA, Foreign Office (hitherto: FO), Turkey 1946 (hitherto: 181/1023/22), *Anglo-Soviet Conversation 1941-1946*, Moscow, June 4, 1946, p. 6

¹⁷ The Foreign Relations of the United States (henceforth: FRUS), The Near East, South Asia, and Africa 1950 (hitherto: 1950/V), *Policy Review Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs* Washington, January 22, 1951, p. 1104; ON, CAB, 122/977, *Copy of a telegram from Washington to the Foreign Office*, Washington, October 24, 1945, p. 3.

4. Some changes to modernize the Montreux Convention were permissible, e.g., replacing the League of Nations with the United Nations and eliminating Japan as a signatory.¹⁸

The US proposed a conference regarding the Straits in 1946. Such an initiative could be taken (under the Treaty of Montreux) by any signatory state.¹⁹ It is worth remembering however, that the United States did not belong to this group, so it could not formally convene the conference. The State Department said that if the Americans were invited to join it, they were willing to send a representative.²⁰ The Soviet Union decided that these points bear no significance.

Even in June 1946, the Turkish government did not officially confirm that it had received the Soviet demands a year earlier. In a confidential conversation with the US ambassador in Ankara, Wilson, Turkish prime minister Şükrü Saracoğlu stated that the Turkish side acted in such a way as to give the Soviet Union the opportunity to “save face.”²¹ On the other hand, in a conversation with the USSR ambassador in Ankara, Vinogradov, Wilson suggested that he pressured his government to give up its claims against Turkey. The USSR ambassador stated that if Ankara agreed to bases in the Straits and a revision of the Montreux Treaty, Moscow would be willing to abandon its claims to the eastern provinces.²²

Ultimately, Moscow decided to take an official stance on the future of the Straits and the disputed territories. On August 7, 1946, citing the findings of the Potsdam Conference and violations of the Montreux Convention,²³ *chargé d'affaires* of the Soviet Embassy in Ankara, Aleksandr Andreevich Lavrishchev, handed over a note to the Turkish government, which emphasized that the then-formed provisions of the Montreux Convention did not adequately protect the interests of all Black Sea states.²⁴

Turkish government asked the Americans to present their position on the Straits. The United States, however, decided to respond directly to the Soviet Union, providing Ankara only with a copy of their note. In this way, the US intended to show Moscow that the issue of the Straits concerned not only the Black Sea countries, and that they treated it as its vital interest. The American response showed that the US wanted Turkey to maintain its independence, but it was believed highly unlikely that Ankara would be able to maintain its unequivocally negative stance on Soviet claims without the support from Washington.²⁵

In all official replies, the US referred to its note of November 2, 1945, and to the role the UN should play in the debate on the Straits. According to the American response to the Soviet Union, in the event of an attack on the Straits that would pose a threat to international

¹⁸ FRUS, The Near East and Africa 1951 (henceforth: 1951/V), *Policy Review Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs*, Washington, January 22, 1951, p. 1104.

¹⁹ FRUS, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa 1946 (hitherto: 1946/VII), *The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson)*, Washington, January 10, 1946, p. 808.

²⁰ FRUS, 1946/VII, *Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State*, Washington, December 19, 1945, p. 804.

²¹ FRUS, 1946/VII, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, Ankara, June 26, 1946, p. 826.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ See: K. W. Olszowska, *The significance of the Black Sea in Turko-Soviet relations in 1939-1946*, “Folia Historica Cracoviensia”, no. 27/2021, pp. 43-61.

²⁴ MFA, 6/Political Reports of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Turkey 1947 (hitherto: 100/1588), *Report of Counselor T. Filip on the Black Sea Straits for the Minister*, place of issue unknown, May 24, 1947, p. 4.

²⁵ FRUS, 1946/VII, *The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at Paris*, Washington August 15, 1946, p. 841.

security, the resolution of the conflict should be dealt with by the United Nations Security Council.²⁶ However, Moscow was not interested in such a solution, and Turkey, still not sure of actual support in the event of a conflict, had to keep playing for time and negotiate with the Soviet Union. Regardless of American actions, Ankara could not leave the Soviet note unanswered. Turkey responded to it on August 22, 1946, emphasizing in particular that the Soviet note violated Turkey's sovereignty, and that Moscow's security was to depend not on the control over the Straits, but on establishing closer relations with a strong Ankara.²⁷ Most likely, this answer was previously consulted with the Western countries, the more so that before handing it over to the Soviets, the ambassadors of Great Britain and the United States came from Istanbul to Ankara for a few days, where they stayed for a holiday.²⁸ At the same time, on August 20, 1946, Washington unequivocally objected that only the Black Sea countries had an impact on the status of the Straits, and informed that other countries, including the United States, were keenly interested in this issue.

Then, the Anglo-Saxon camp waited in anticipation of how the situation would develop. Turkey felt more confident after gaining British-American support²⁹ but was far from a sense of security. In early 1947, American *chargé d'affaires* in the USSR, George Kennan, argued that in the event of an attack, Moscow would direct its first actions towards Turkey and Iran.³⁰

After midnight on September 24, 1946, the Soviet *chargé d'affaires* presented the Turkish foreign minister with a second note on the Straits. According to the Turks themselves, the tone of the 12-page message was softer than the previous one.³¹ It seems that this was related to Turkey's emergence from political isolation, as well as to diplomatic support from the US, which also had its demands regarding the future course of the issue of the Straits.

The US government was ready to participate in a joint conference of all countries interested in revising the Montreux Treaty but stressed that Turkey should be responsible for the security of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.³² The above telegram remained secret for two days, until October 7, when its content was accepted by the Secretary of State and the President of the United States. The American side also held talks with the British Foreign Minister at that time.

Earlier, the Turkish side was only informed that the American position on the Straits remained unchanged.³³ On October 9, 1946, the governments of Turkey, Great Britain and the United States expressed their willingness to participate in a conference aimed at reaching an agreement on the Straits. The Soviet Union refused to participate in it and in the fall

²⁶ FRUS, 1946/VII, *The Acting Secretary of State to the Soviet Chargé (Orekhov)*, Washington, August 19, 1946, p. 848.

²⁷ MSZ, 6/Political Reports of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ankara (hitherto: 100/1587), *Secret Telegram of Ignacy Zlotowski to Minister Berman*, Ankara, August 26, 1946, Polish Institute of International Affairs, *A collection of documents*, no. 1-2 (16-17)/1947, *Contents of the Turkish note on the Straits of August 22, 1946*, Ankara August 22, 1946, p. 51-67.

²⁸ MFA, 6/100/1587, *Sośnicki's secret note to Minister J. Olszewski*, Ankara, September 1, 1946, p. 2.

²⁹ E. Athanassopoulou, *Turkey. Anglo-American Security Interests 1945-1952. The First Enlargement of NATO*, Routledge, London–Portland 2012, p. 51.

³⁰ B. Steil, *Plan Marshalla postawić świat na nogi*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2020, p. 51.

³¹ FRUS, 1946/VII, *The Chargé in Turkey (Bursley) to the Secretary of State*, Ankara, September 26, 1946, p. 860.

³² FRUS, 1946/VII, *Telegram, The Acting Secretary of State to the Chargé in Turkey (Bursley)*, Washington, October 5, 1946, p. 873.

³³ *Ibidem*.

of 1946 ended the public discussion on the subject. On October 18, the Turkish government responded as before, expressing no objection to the first three points. "The government of Turkey thanked the Soviets for the kindness shown with regard to the Straits,"³⁴ however, it refused the proposal to place the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles under the common jurisdiction of the Black Sea states. Due to its location at the Mediterranean, and at the same time being the guardian of the narrow passage to the Black Sea, Isthmus, Turkey treated the issue of the Straits as a vital interest of countries not only of the Black Sea.³⁵

2. American financial aid

Turkey remained neutral in World War II; its economy did not suffer as a result of military actions, but it was left depleted to such an extent that without outside help the country would become increasingly backward compared to Western countries. Turkey was backward, lacking infrastructure and industry, and Turkish goods were not competitive in the regional market. Its deposits, e.g., chromite, which was profitable during the war, lost in demand, and therefore in value. There was a shortage not only of capital, but also of qualified staff. The tension maintained by the Soviets was a deliberate game to weaken the Turkish economy. The republic's budget was heavily burdened with spending on armaments and maintaining its army in full readiness and the economy could not switch from wartime to peacetime production to focus on raising the standard of living of the society. The government could only hope that in the event of an economic collapse, the country would obtain a loan from the US or the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).³⁶ The total Turkish budget for 1946 amounted to 990,572,884 lira,³⁷ and expenditures for the Ministry of National Defense alone accounted for as much as 26.7 percent of the total budget. If you add to this the expenses for the gendarmerie and the General Directorate of Security, the amount accounted for 31.7 percent of the national budget.³⁸ It is worth noting that at the time Turkey was formally at peace. This state of affairs was caused by the feeling of constant threat from the Soviet Union. As the United States Ambassador to Ankara, Edwin C. Wilson, aptly pointed out, Moscow fueled this threat on purpose so that Ankara would be forced to keep a large army on standby and, consequently, face the collapse of the Turkish economy.³⁹

Budget constraints and the difficult financial situation could at any time increase social discontent. There was a shortage of goods in the Turkish domestic market. When clothing fabrics were delivered to shops in early October 1946, long lines began to form.⁴⁰ For

³⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü (hitherto: T.C. Başbakanlık), Başkanlık özel kalem Müdürlüğü (później: 30-1-0-0)/60-368-8, *TC Hükümeti, Montreux Sözleşmesi'nin muhtemel tadili meselesi hakkında 22 Ağustos tarihli Türk notasına cevap teşkil eden, Sovyet Hükümeti'nin 24 Eylül notasına dair görüş ve mülahazalar*, Ankara Eylül 1946, p. 12.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ MFA, 6/100/1587, *S. Sośnicki's secret note to the Director of the MFA Department*, Angora, September 25, 1946, p. 6.

³⁷ 990,572,884 lira = 353,776,030 US dollars (author's calculations).

³⁸ T.C. Resmi Gazete, *1946 Yılı Bütçe Kanunu*, Ankara, December 31, 1945, p. 9794.

³⁹ FRUS, 1947/V, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, Ankara, March 4, 1947, p. 91.

⁴⁰ MFA, 6/100/1587, *S. Sośnicki's secret note to the DDP of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the political situation in Turkey*, Angora, October 7, 1946, p. 4.

the government, the most important thing was to keep food prices at the current level, especially since the grain harvest had been insufficient for a long time.

The United States began to consider financial aid for Greece and Turkey only after the United Kingdom declared that it recommended such a solution but was unable to help. On February 21, 1947, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson read the "blue note," which in diplomatic language means a document of great importance, regarding the withdrawal of British financial support to Greece and Turkey. Three days later, four departments: States, War, Navy and Treasury conferred on the legitimacy of such assistance. After a positive recommendation, the matter was secretly presented to the appropriate members of Congress. However, not everyone agreed. James K. Crain, vice-chairman of the Armaments Policy Committee, believed that the United States should limit expenditure and focus on multiplying its own potential.⁴¹ US Secretary of War Robert Patterson, in turn, said that from a military point of view, the independence of Greece and Turkey was crucial to the strategic position of the US. The Department of the Navy held the same position.⁴²

On March 7, the US Ambassador requested a meeting with Turkey's Foreign Minister Hasan Saka and informed him about the talks in Washington. He also stated that Turkey must officially apply for financial aid. Minister Saka assured that the Turkish government would soon apply for a loan from the International Bank.⁴³ According to the official announcement, it was the Turkish government that requested help from the United States.⁴⁴ In fact, the talks started a few months before the official request was made. Washington wanted Ankara to make a direct request to the US for financial aid to prevent the impression that US was taking over Britain's position in the region. The Soviet Union reacted very quickly to this change by sending specialists to the USSR Embassy in Ankara and the USSR Consulate General in Istanbul in March 1947 to accurately report changes related to the Marshall Plan. The more so because the post of military attaché and naval attaché had been vacant for almost two years.

On April 23, 1947, the American Senate approved USD 100,000,000 financial aid to Turkey to strengthen their armed forces and improve road infrastructure. This support was to be provided partly in cash and partly in military equipment. However, under a law signed on May 22, 1947 by President Truman, Turkey received aid mainly in military equipment. On July 12, 1947, an agreement on American assistance to Turkey was concluded in Ankara, signed by US Ambassador Wilson and Foreign Minister Hasan Saka.⁴⁵ The first shipment of American materials began on February 1, 1948. It was thanks to this agreement that the process of modernization of the Turkish army began. Details of the assistance were published in the Turkish press, but in a very limited way. It seems that the likely

⁴¹ FRUS, 1947/V, *Minutes of the First Meeting of the Special Committee To Study Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, February 24, 1947, 3:00 p.m., Washington 24.02.1947, p. 46.

⁴² FRUS, 1947/V, *Minutes of a Meeting of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, February 26, 1947, 10:30 a.m.*, Washington 26.02.1947, p. 57.

⁴³ FRUS, 1947/V, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, Ankara, March 7, 1947, p. 102.

⁴⁴ FRUS, 1947/V, *The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Turkey*, Washington, June 4, 1947, pp. 190-192.

⁴⁵ In *History of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 1808-1975*, S.J. Shaw and E. Kural Shaw wrote that "the Marshall Plan was implemented from June 5, 1947," which would mean that it was implemented before it was formally signed by both parties. See: S.J. Shaw, E. Kural Shaw, *Historia Imperium Osmańskiego i Republiki Turcji 1808-1975*, vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Dialog, Warszawa 2012, p. 604.

reason for withholding information about the new deal with Washington was Turkey's fear of exacerbating relations with the Soviet Union. In addition, Turkish society demanded extensive financial aid in addition to military support. The United States wanted to provide it so that civil unrest in Turkey would not open the way for Soviet-Communist penetration.⁴⁶ At the same time, they also hoped to gain influence and take control over the Middle East.

However, American aid was disproportionate to the Turkish needs and thus very fragmented. No immediate effects were visible. In fact, the US mainly wanted to strengthen the Turkish army, while Turkish society expected investments in sectors that would improve their standard of living. However, the US dollar aid was also used to convince Ankara which side it should take in the Cold War conflict. In 1951, the United States decided to increase aid to Turkey (instead of terminating it) to "compensate" Ankara for its involvement in the Korean War, but also for rejecting it from NATO again, as it was feared that Ankara would adopt a neutral attitude towards the USSR. In particular, on January 9, 1951, the Turkish government issued a letter in which it committed itself to minimizing expenses and limiting investments to the minimum necessary. Following this declaration, the government expected a declaration of additional support to achieve economic stability as Turkey continued to incur heavy defense spending.⁴⁷

Moscow tried to take advantage of the dissatisfaction of the Turkish society by fuelling doubts. The "Izvestiya" newspaper wrote that Turkey was "under the banner of the dollar" as American products were flooding the Turkish market, causing Turkish workers to lose their jobs. American aid ruined the Turkish tobacco industry because it was so controlled that it did not compete with the American tobacco industry.⁴⁸ "Izvestia" also emphasized that the Americans want to lay claim to Turkish deposits of natural resources.

3. Turkey's long road to NATO

Turkey feared the Soviet response to joining the Marshall Plan. To appease Moscow, Minister Sadak stated in a speech to the Turkish parliament that Turkey does not belong to any sphere of influence and would be happy to come to an agreement with peace-loving countries.⁴⁹ However, Turkey actually tried not to provoke the USSR, bearing in mind that at that time it did not have any assurances from the US about assistance in the event of a Soviet attack. On March 17, 1948, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Treaty of Brussels to ensure their joint defense against the Soviet threat. This agreement is considered to be the foundation of NATO. In late June 1948, Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadık Sadak suggested in an interview with the New York Times that Turkey and the United States should form an official alliance.⁵⁰ It was then that a kind of game between Ankara and Washington began. The former wanted to join a formal military pact, the latter tried to avoid it, while maintaining Turkish interest in cooperation and alliance.

⁴⁶ FRUS, 1947/V, *The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Turkey*, Washington, May 15, 1947, p. 173.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ NA, FO, Soviet Turkish relations (hitherto: 371/72544), *American Expansionist in Turkey* by S. Belinkov "Izvestiya", month unknown, January 28, 1948, p. 15.

⁴⁹ AAN, 2/1633/0/2.4/510, *Sprawozdanie gospodarcze za listopad i grudzień 1947*, Ankara, February 23, 1948, p. 3.

⁵⁰ E. Athanassopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

The US wanted to include Turkey into its sphere of influence, but with no official military alliance, it did not have to directly engage in a potential conflict. At the same time, it gained a more potent leverage on Ankara. Supporting buffer states between spheres of influence, such as Ukraine in the context of Russian aggression, is the most profitable, because they can be supported with equipment or material, without sending troops, declaring wars, and engaging in a global conflict.

The Turkish ambassador to Washington, Feridun Cemal Erkin, was asked about the rumors spread in diplomatic circles that Turkey was ready to break off cooperation with the US and Great Britain, while signing a friendship pact with the Soviet Union. The diplomat, of course, denied this, asserting that Turkey's foreign policy was built on friendship with the United States.⁵¹ Finally, on April 4, 1949, twelve countries proclaimed the North Atlantic Treaty, under which a military agreement was signed on August 24. Washington, however, feared that excluding Turkey and Greece from the Pact might suggest to the Soviet Union that aggression against these countries would not provoke any serious reaction from the alliance. To prevent this, since the announcement of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Secretary of State has twice referred to Turkey's continued interest in security and the President even mentioned it in the treaty's inaugural address. The American side considered these gestures sufficient,⁵² however, in Turkey it was received quite differently.

President Truman even wrote a letter to President İnönü emphasizing that the non-admission of Turkey to NATO in no way diminished American interest in Turkey's security, and that, on the contrary, the security that NATO provided also extended to Turkey.⁵³ Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated in a conversation with the Turkish ambassador to the US that Washington's interest in the Middle East and the defense of Turkey had not diminished, despite its commitment to NATO.⁵⁴ The United States feared a situation in which an isolated Turkey would turn towards the Soviet Union. However, the government in Ankara lacked unequivocal allied declarations in the event of war. Turkey's failure to join the NATO structures further deepened this anxiety and was a major blow to its citizens.⁵⁵

Trying to appease Turkey, the US has promoted military pacts alternative to NATO, e.g., Turkish-French-British alliance under the 1939 Act. However, Turkish political circles believed that Paris and London were unable to guarantee the country's security, and since the United States was not interested in granting Turkey such guarantees, it was necessary to consider seeking an agreement with the USSR.⁵⁶ During the visit of a group of American senators headed by Brian McMahon, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs was asked what Ankara would do in the event of a Soviet invasion of Iran. In his response, the Americans

⁵¹ FRUS, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union 1948 (hitherto: 1948/IV), *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State*, Washington, September 9, 1948, p. 148.

⁵² FRUS, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa 1949 (hitherto: 1949/VI), *Department of State Policy Statement*, Washington, May 5, 1949, p. 1662.

⁵³ FRUS, 1949/VI, *President Truman to the President of Turkey (İnönü)*, Washington, April 14, 1949, pp. 1656-1657.

⁵⁴ Türkiye Cumhuriyet Cumhurbaşkanlığı Arşivi (hitherto: TCCA), Cumhurbaşkanlığı İsmet İnönü Arşivi (hitherto: 2)/13-36, *Basın Raporu*, Washington, April 5, 1949, p. 2.

⁵⁵ TCCA, 2/13-36, *Basın Raporu*, Washington, March 29, 1949, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11/36/562, *Report No. 8 of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ankara*, Ankara, August 3, 1949, p. 24.

heard that until help was guaranteed, Turkey would not do anything.⁵⁷ Such an attitude was very dangerous for Western countries, because it meant that in the event of a potential Soviet attack on Iran and the Arab states, Turkey would protect the Soviet right flank.⁵⁸ The more so that as long as Turkey was outside the alliance, there was a fear that it would allow troops inimical to NATO countries to pass through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and would not agree to the use of Turkish naval and air bases.⁵⁹

The Turkish military bases and those of other countries established on the territory of Turkey were very important to American interests. In 1950, the government in Ankara gave over their air bases to Americans under the pretext of modernizing the airports. The bases were built during the war by the British and were intended to receive jet planes and heavy bombers.⁶⁰ In the spring of 1951, the American company Matcalfe, Hamilton and Grove began construction of an air base at İncirlik near Adana. The naval base in Bartın (on the Black Sea) was intended for submarines, and the one in Gölcük (on the Sea of Marmara) was to be the American fleet's base for the Black Sea. The location of these bases so near the border with the Soviet Union was very significant in this context as it was to facilitate a potential attack on Soviet territory. At the same time, it created a kind of security buffer in the event of retaliation. The American military bases located in this area posed a great threat to Moscow, because attacks on such targets as the industrial districts in Baku and the Donetsk Basin or in southern Siberia could be carried out from there.

Turkey, which was always afraid of Soviet aggression, was very keen to join the military alliance with the USA. Therefore, despite the fact that it was not among the founding states of NATO, accession to the alliance was still a key issue in its national policy. The Americans leveraged the fact to make new demands without making specific promises. During his visit to Turkey, Senator Harry Pulliam Cain stressed that Ankara's admission to NATO would depend on Turkey's attitude towards Korea.⁶¹ So much so that Turkey feared that if it did not help in Korea, Washington would not back Turkey in the event of an attack by the USSR. The government in Ankara also realized that withdrawal from Korea would result in the withdrawal of American aid, and it could not count on any form of economic support from the Soviet Union. The only chance was to put pressure on Washington at every opportunity.

Moscow was aware that Turkey's entry into a military alliance with the US would lead to a direct threat to the Eastern Bloc. Moreover, such an alliance reduced the chances of effective pressure on Ankara. In an attempt to prevent this, on November 3, 1951, the Soviet Union handed over a note of protest against Turkey's admission to NATO through its ambassador in Ankara. It was not a surprise, because the USSR sent similar notes to all

⁵⁷ MFA, 11/Reports and Political Notes 1951 (hitherto: 39/588), *Report No. 7 for the period from July 11 to September 15, 1951*, Ankara, September 15, 1951, p. 17.

⁵⁸ FRUS, 1951/V, *Statement of Policy Proposed by the National Security Council*, Washington, date unknown, p. 1150.

⁵⁹ NATO Archives, 03/SG 80/2, *Association of Turkey and Greece with NATO military planning*, Washington November 29, 1950, p. 3.

⁶⁰ MFA, 11/Turkey. Political Reports 1950 (hitherto: 37/576), *Turkey's political and military preparations for war*, Ankara, October 30, 1950, p. 3.

⁶¹ MFA, 11/37/576, *Report No. 5 of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ankara*, Ankara, August 31, 1950, p. 27.

NATO countries.⁶² Copies of the document were handed over by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the ambassadors of France, Great Britain and the USA. The Anatolian Agency (*Anadolu Ajansı*) published the content of this note only on November 14, along with the reply, in which the Turkish government declared that the pact was not offensive, but only defensive, and therefore the Soviet Union did not have to fear an attack from Turkey. It was also emphasized that American aid and foreign specialists have been in Turkey for a long time and should not be associated with hostile intentions.⁶³

The second note on Ankara's accession to NATO was sent by the Soviet government to the Turkish government on November 30, 1951. And on the same day, an additional note was sent to the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey and France regarding the aggressive nature of the Middle East Command project. Both have been suppressed by the Turkish government.⁶⁴ They were only answered at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, when Turkish Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü announced that the answer would be identical as before, so there was no point in continuing the exchange of notes.⁶⁵

Minister Köprülü stated that Turkey would not give up its bases to anyone, especially to threaten the security of the Soviet Union. In an article for the *Akşam* daily, former foreign minister Sadak noted that the CHP supported the government's decision not to send the note to Moscow, because for this party the expressed position of the USSR was not a diplomatic act, but rather a propaganda measure. In his opinion, the Soviet Union should have had no doubts that Turkey had no aggressive intentions towards it. On the contrary, its goal was always to maintain friendly relations with its neighbor.⁶⁶ As demonstrated by the post-war years, this state of affairs was impossible to maintain if Turkey did not submit to Soviet claims, becoming a de facto satellite country of the USSR.

Finally, Turkey was admitted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in February 1952, which can be considered as the final decision of Ankara to side with the United States. After Turkey's accession to the structures of NATO, the Turkish Armed Forces defended approx. 37 percent of borders separating NATO from the Warsaw Pact. In Transcaucasia, the Turkish-Soviet border was 619 km long. Twelve NATO divisions were stationed in Anatolia, while twenty-one USSR divisions stood on the opposite side of the border in the Caucasus.⁶⁷

Conclusion

For the USSR, Turkey was a land buffer that made it difficult for Moscow to control Iraq, Syria, Greece and the Suez Canal. From its territory, all flights in the Middle East could

⁶² MFA, 11/ Turkey press reports 1951 (hitherto: 39/591), *Press reports for the period from October 20 to December 10, 1951*, Ankara 12/15/1951, p. 22.

⁶³ MFA, 11/39/588, *Report No. 9 for the period from October 28, 1951 to December 15, 1951*, Ankara, December 15, 1951, p. 37.

⁶⁴ MFA, 11/Reports and Political Notes, 1951 (hitherto: 39/588), *Report No. 2 for the period from January 15 to February 15, 1952*, Ankara, February 16, 1952, p. 20.

⁶⁵ MFA, 11/39/588, *Report No. 9 for the period from October 28, 1951 to December 15, 1951*, Ankara, December 15, 1951:36; MFA, 11/Press reports 1952 (henceforth: 40/597), *Press report for the period December 10, 1951 to February 20, 1952*, Ankara March 26, 1952, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ NATO Archives, 03/S.G.20/16, *Estimate of Enemy Capabilities and Possible Coups of Action*, location unknown, 14.06.1950, p. 10.

be controlled, all attacks of the Black Sea Fleet on the Mediterranean Sea be hindered, and Soviet ships be blocked from accessing Turkish Black Sea ports. At the same time, from the bases located in this country, sea, land, or air offensives could be launched towards any Middle Eastern country and the Black Sea ports of the USSR and its satellite countries, as well as Transcaucasia. From the territory of Turkey spy flights could be carried out over large areas of the Soviet Union. After World War II, Turkey was considered the first line of defense of the Suez Canal against aggression from the north. Similar was Iraq's function in relation to the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan was perceived as a security buffer there.

Due to its strategic location, Turkey was very important to both the United States and the Soviet Union. However, Moscow did not try to win Ankara in an alliance, but to subordinate it, following the example of other Eastern Bloc countries. At the end of WW II and shortly after, this threat was very real. After all, the Soviet Union was "paid" for the blood it shed in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe. Turkey did not share this fate, mainly because the US established important interests in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea, which could be threatened by the USSR. It was also saved because the Cold War conflict began to intensify and neither side wanted to make any more concessions.

However, when analyzing the three most important issues from the period 1945-1952 regarding relations between the USA, Turkey and the USSR, their mutual influence cannot be ignored. Ankara sought support on the issue of the Straits in Washington and London. It was with representatives of these countries that Turkey consulted each response so that it would not be left alone if Moscow increased pressure. Had it not been for the change of power in the world and the interest of the United States in this region, it was very likely that Turkey would have had to start negotiations with the Soviet Union and make significant concessions.

It was the constant threat of Soviet aggression that forced Turkey to keep a large army on standby, which significantly strained its budget. To be able to effectively defend itself, Turkey had to receive financial assistance for its modernization as well as admittance to a military alliance that would ensure its protection. On the one hand, the granted financial aid and negotiations meant that Moscow's pressure was weaker than in 1946, because it had to take into account that Ankara would gain support from the West. On the other hand, the USSR felt more and more threatened as Turkey ceased to function as a "neutral" buffer. The United States, however, was not convinced at that time that Turkey would not try to start negotiations with the Soviet Union in case of inadequate protection, or even agree to concessions to gain a secure neutrality. It was this concern that led to increased American aid after 1950, as well as Turkey's eventual admission to NATO. This clearly shows that to understand the complicated situation of Ankara after World War II and its subsequent elections, Turkey's relations with both the US and the USSR should be analyzed.

Turkey's affiliation with the Western bloc was also not clear until its admission to NATO. Had it not been for the unequivocal Soviet demands regarding the Straits and the impossibility of negotiations, it would be very likely that Turkey would have continued its World War II policy of neutrality. Not fearing attack, it would not need a military alliance. Then, the only leverage left would be to grant financial aid necessary for the Turkish economy. Ankara was able to obtain it only from the United States, but would it be enough to depart from neutrality, taking into account its insufficiency from Turkey's perspective? Of course, these questions remain in the sphere of alternative history, but it can be unequivocally asserted

that Turkey, until its accession to NATO, was not unambiguously determined to tie itself with Western countries.

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