

TURKEY'S BALANCING ACT:
THE COMPARTMENTALIZATION
OF SECURITY AND ECONOMICS,
1945-1980

A Ph.D. Dissertation

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Ankara
December 2024

ORHUN BAYRAKTAR TURKEY'S BALANCING ACT: COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF SECURITY AND ECONOMICS, 1945-1980
Bilkent University 2024

To my parents



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

by

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ANKARA

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By Orhun Bayraktar

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

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ABSTRACT

TURKEY'S BALANCING ACT: THE COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF SECURITY AND ECONOMICS, 1945-1980

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Ph. D., Department of International Relations

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December 2024

This dissertation explores Turkey's foreign policy from 1945 to 1980, focusing on its strategies for balancing relations with the superpowers during the Cold War. It challenges the conventional view of Turkey as a steadfast Western ally, instead exploring Ankara's nuanced approach to pursuing security and economic priorities. Drawing on extensive archival research, the study highlights Turkey's use of compartmentalization—separating economic and security relations with the United States and the Soviet Union—as a defining feature of its foreign policy.

The analysis is divided into three key periods. The first period (1945–1953) examines Turkey's alignment with the Western bloc in response to Soviet territorial demands and economic vulnerabilities, culminating in its integration into the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO. The second period (1953–1960) traces Turkey's efforts to diversify by balancing NATO commitments with pragmatic engagements with the Soviet Union. This chapter also addresses Turkey's embrace of regional diplomacy, including in the Baghdad Pact and the Syrian Crisis. The third

period (1960–1980) highlights Turkey’s increasing autonomy, demonstrated by the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Agreement and the 1974 Cyprus intervention, both of which reflected its capacity to navigate superpower dynamics while asserting national interests.

The dissertation argues that Turkey’s compartmentalized approach enabled it to maintain strategic flexibility, securing its sovereignty and advancing economic development amidst Cold War tensions. This analysis contributes to understanding middle-power behavior and the complex interplay of security and economics in global geopolitics.

Keywords: Turkey, Cold War, foreign policy, security, economics.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'NİN DENGİ POLİTİKASI: GÜVENLİK VE EKONOMİNİN AYRIŞTIRILMASI, 1945-1980

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Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Samuel John Hirst

Aralık 2024

Bu tez, Türkiye'nin 1945-1980 yılları arasındaki dış politikasını inceleyerek Soğuk Savaş sırasında büyük güçlerle ilişkileri dengeleme stratejilerine odaklanmaktadır. Türkiye'yi daimi bir Batı müttefiki olarak gören geleneksel bakış açısını sorgulamakta ve Ankara'nın güvenlik ve ekonomik önceliklerini takip etmedeki incelikli yaklaşımını araştırmaktadır. Kapsamlı bir arşiv araştırmasına dayanan çalışma, Türkiye'nin dış politikasında belirgin bir özellik olarak ekonomik ve güvenlik ilişkilerini ABD ve Sovyetler Birliği ile ayrı alanlarda ele almasını (compartmentalization) vurgulamaktadır.

Analiz üç ana döneme ayrılmaktadır. Birinci dönem (1945–1953), Türkiye'nin Sovyet toprak talepleri ve ekonomik kırılganlıklarına yanıt olarak Batı bloğuna yönelimini incelemektedir; bu süreç Truman Doktrini, Marshall Planı ve NATO'ya entegrasyonla sonuçlanmıştır. İkinci dönem (1953–1960), Türkiye'nin NATO taahhütlerini sürdürürken Sovyetler Birliği ile pragmatik iş birliğini dengeleme

abalarını ve Baędat Paktı ile Suriye Krizi gibi blgesel diplomasi zorluklarını ele almaktadır. Ünc dnem (1960–1980), Trkiye’nin artan zerklięini, 1967 Sovyet-Trk Anlařması ve 1974 Kıbrıs mdahalesiyle kanıtlanan, sper g dinamiklerini ynetirken ulusal ıkarlarını ne ıkaran kapasitesini vurgulamaktadır.

Tez, Trkiye’nin *compartmentalization* yaklařımının stratejik esneklik saęladığını, Soęuk Savař gerilimleri arasında egemenlięini koruyup ekonomik kalkınmasını ilerlettięini savunmaktadır. Bu analiz, orta g davranıřlarını anlamaya ve kresel jeopolitięin gvenlik ve ekonomi arasındaki karmařık etkileřimlerine katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Trkiye, Soęuk Savař, dıř politika, gvenlik, ekonomi.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

On October 29, 1957, guests who had gathered at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow to celebrate Turkish National Day, were left visibly stunned. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, accompanied by high-ranking officials including Nikolai Bulganin and Anastas Mikoyan, entered the reception with a “beaming face” and an air of cordiality.¹ Months of heightened tensions between Turkey and the Soviet Union over the Syrian Crisis had created an atmosphere of mutual distrust, making the Soviet delegation’s warm demeanor surprising.

As the reception unfolded, Khrushchev raised a toast that resonated across the room: “To Peace! To Peace! Let him be damned who wants war! Let him fight alone! But why talk about war anyway—there will be no war.”² His words startled the assembled diplomatic corps, leaving many to wonder whether this was a genuine call for peace or a ruse characteristic of Cold War diplomacy. The timing of Khrushchev’s gesture added another layer of intrigue. The reception came just two days after Turkey’s national elections. The Soviet leader’s toast and his overt friendliness seemed like an attempt to thaw relations and project goodwill at a moment of possible Turkish foreign policy recalibration.

While Turkey’s membership in NATO and the tensions of the Syrian Crisis contributed to the notable sense of surprise, the Soviet rhetoric of friendship and rapprochement towards Turkey was not new. After Stalin’s death in 1953, the Soviet Union had begun signaling a shift in its approach toward Turkey, formally

¹ Keesing’s Contemporary Archives, Volume No XI 1957 – 1958, December 21 – 28, 1957, 15920.

² Ibid.

renouncing its territorial claims over Kars and Ardahan, as well as its demands for shared control of the Turkish Straits.³ Although this gesture somewhat softened the frosty relations between the two nations, Turkish leaders remained skeptical.⁴ Even as the Soviet and Turkish states orchestrated increased economic exchange over the course of the 1950s, military tensions recurred.

This dissertation seeks to explore the various and seemingly contradictory forces on display at the Turkish embassy in Moscow in October, 1957. Khrushchev was not wrong that, despite a rattling of sabers along the Turkish-Syrian border (and ominous threats from the Kremlin), Ankara would be receptive to rapprochement. A few years later, just before the Turkish prime minister was removed by a military coup, Adnan Menderes was engaged in planning a trip to Moscow in search of increased Soviet trade and investment. In between those years, however, Menderes also appealed for and received a Western bailout when his government faced a balance of payments crisis in 1958. And, just as Menderes was preparing his visit to Moscow in 1960, Turkey was drawn into the U-2 spy plane crisis. As the Turkish government negotiated the US-USSR rivalry of the Cold War, the pull of security arrangements and the push of economic pressures was ever visible. This dissertation explores the relationship between two axes that shaped Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War: US-Soviet rivalry and security-economic pressures.

The concept of “balancing” is central to this study. The dissertation understands balancing not as a state of equilibrium but as a dynamic and fluid process characterized by recurring adjustments in Turkey’s foreign policy commitments.

³ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, *Report on Dulles-Menderes Meeting*, 26 May 1953, 160.

⁴ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Sovyet Rusya ile Türkiye Münasebetleri*, 35783-141332-1, January 1, 1956.

Under the influence of the US-USSR rivalry, which encouraged scholars to think of competing geopolitical blocs, Turkey was often portrayed in broader Cold War literature as a steadfast Western ally. While this view captures elements of continuity, it overlooks the complexity and dynamism of Turkish foreign policy. It is certainly true that, from the early post-World War II period until 1952, Turkey pursued an extraordinary level of alignment with the West, culminating in its NATO membership. But, rather than passively adhering to a predetermined Western alignment, Turkey's trajectory demonstrated significant moments of change. These moments of change, in turn, were shaped by external pressures and internal needs. While we must acknowledge the exceptional nature of bipolar superpower rivalry during the Cold War, we can also recognize that Ankara retained some of its traditional inclination towards balancing relations with great powers.

The chronological scope of this dissertation encompasses the decades associated with the height of the Cold War. It begins in 1945, in the immediate post-war period, when intense Soviet-Turkish tensions compelled Ankara to seek stronger alliances with Western powers in order to counter Soviet territorial and strategic demands. This was the moment that Turkey was drawn directly into the superpower rivalry, and this point of departure is also important because it demonstrates the frequently overlapping nature of security and economic crises: 1946 saw the Turkish government take the drastic decision to devalue the lira and liberalize the economy. This first period came to an end in the mid-1950s, when Turkey engaged in its first strategic shift, as economic and political challenges led to an initial thaw in relations with the Soviet Union and the beginning of a tentative reconciliation. The second half of the 1950s saw that awkward testing of boundaries in which Khrushchev engaged at the Turkish embassy.

The 1960s marked an important evolution in Turkey's balancing act because Ankara developed competing institutional ties to the rival superpowers. Economic ties with the Soviet Union, which had shown modest improvement in the early 1960s, saw significant growth in 1965 and 1966. As trade volumes increased, both countries sought mutual benefits in areas such as industrial development, energy cooperation, and infrastructure projects. This deepening economic relationship culminated in the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Industrial Agreement, which not only enhanced Turkey's industrial capacity through Soviet-funded projects but also created a long-term and formal international relationship at odds with existing connections to the West. This economic rapprochement with the Soviet Union coincided with Ankara's reevaluation of security arrangements with the US. Key to this process was the Johnson Letter of 1964, which underscored the limitations of US support for Turkey's stated security objectives vis-à-vis Cyprus.

Although 1971 might seem a natural endpoint for this study—because of American-Soviet Détente and the Turkish military's "coup by memorandum" that year—the dissertation takes the story into the 1970s. The prominence of the Cyprus issue in that decade meant that, even as the superpower rivalry ceased to be as relevant in certain areas of world politics, Ankara still adhered to its balancing act in this decade. What is more, the balancing act of the 1970s was even more pronounced. By the time of the 1974 Cyprus intervention, Turkey had developed the capacity to act independently, raising the stakes of interactions with the US and the USSR.

The dissertation's central focus is the relationship between security threats and economic pressures at moments of change in Turkish foreign policy. In seeking to address the interplay between security and economics, it asks a basic question for

each major recalibration in Turkey's balancing act: did security threats and economic needs exert complementary or countervailing pressures? In emphasizing the agency of Ankara's "balancing," the dissertation aligns with recent approaches to middle powers during the Cold War.⁵ It argues that, when we examine the relative role of security and economic considerations in Turkish foreign policy, we find that Ankara increasingly compartmentalized these two issues. In the first period, there was little compartmentalization of security and economics; in the second period, Ankara introduced a basic compartmentalization into its relationship with the two superpowers; and in the third period, Ankara employed a sophisticated compartmentalization in its relations with each of the two superpowers. Compartmentalization, then, contributed to Ankara's increasing autonomy during the Cold War.

1.2 Literature Review

Although the dissertation's emphasis on compartmentalization is original, the above overview of the shifts in Turkish foreign policy between 1945 and 1980—from committed Western alignment in the 1950s to increased Turkish autonomy in the 1970s—is hardly controversial. As this literature review will show, scholars are generally in consensus about the overarching trend in Cold War Turkish foreign policy. Beneath that consensus, however, lie major differences over how to interpret the shift.

Perhaps the foremost division in the scholarship on Turkish Cold War foreign policy

⁵ See, for example, the chapters on the Middle East and Africa in Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24, 117–118. Salim Yaqub, in his conclusion, writes: "The great powers enhanced the ability of local powers to pursue rivalries they would have pursued anyway;" Jeffrey James Byrne, in his last paragraph, ends: "the continent was not simply a passive victim of outside interference, since postcolonial elites exploited geopolitical tensions."

is over what drove general policy: whether Turkish elites opportunistically sought to exploit possibilities created by the Cold War or whether they reacted cautiously to crises. This dissertation sides with the latter position but acknowledges that, in some sense, the two positions are both irreconcilable and not that different. After all, the scholars who differ on this major question are in dialogue with each other and their arguments are mutually constitutive of the foremost historiographic debate.

Less explicitly part of the discussion of Cold War Turkish foreign policy is the relationship between security and economic factors. Various authors emphasize one or the other factor, but, because these factors are generally part of a secondary or tertiary level of argumentation, scholars less often directly address the differences on this key subject. This dissertation reverses the hierarchy of significance. It will focus less on the overarching aims of Turkey's balancing act and more on the relationship between security and economic factors in shaping those aims. The scholarship on Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War is vast, and this literature review can only touch on a selection of works to illustrate general trends. The individual chapters will engage with more specific bodies of scholarship.

A natural point to begin in this literature review are the standard surveys of Turkish foreign policy: William Hale's *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774–2000*, and Baskın Oran's *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*.⁶ These works chart Turkey's transition from a tradition of balancing great powers during the interwar period and World War II to becoming a key Western ally in the Cold War. What is striking is that, after the onset of the Cold War, both scholars take the US-Turkish relationship as the baseline. Hale's study emphasizes

⁶ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015).

both economic and security factors in Turkey's early alignment with the West, attributing this shift to Stalin's territorial demands and the economic benefits of Marshall Plan aid. But Hale then critiques Turkey's rigid Western alignment for missed opportunities, particularly during the de-Stalinization period, and identifies crises such as the Johnson Letter (1964) as catalysts for Turkey's move toward autonomy. Baskın Oran's narrative is similar to Hale's, though it delves more into the domestic politics that shaped Turkey's Cold War foreign policy.

Both Hale and Oran underline pivotal moments of change, such as the Soviet demands from the Turks, Turkey's entry into NATO in 1952 and Ankara's subsequent participation in regional security arrangements like the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Both authors highlight Turkey's rapprochement with the Soviet Union and its increased engagement with the Middle East as key developments during this period. These shifts are framed as pragmatic responses to the nature of the Western alliance, reflecting Turkey's efforts to balance its security needs with its economic and political aspirations as it engaged with the West. In other words, Turkey's increasing frustration with the West is seen as a result of the extremes of the 1945 alignment rather than as a return to an earlier tradition of balancing. True, they diverge in their emphasis: Hale is more critical of the effects of Turkey's dependency on Western support; Oran explores the rise of nationalism and skepticism toward Western hegemony that challenged the US-Turkish relationship.

Works that have focused more narrowly on the Cold War have brought the particular dynamics of Turkish foreign policy during this period into greater relief. Bruce R. Kuniholm, for example, has told the story of Turkey's early pro-Western alignment and later disillusionment as one of great power security rivalry. In *the Origins of the*

Cold War in the Near East, he provides a detailed account of how Turkey's inclusion in the Truman Doctrine and NATO was part of broader US containment policies.⁷ Although he acknowledges that Ankara made a calculated decision to secure economic aid, he frames Turkey's early Cold War policies as a strategic necessity in light of US regional strategies and the rivalry with the USSR. Events like the Johnson Letter, which exposed the asymmetry in Turkish-American relations, then become crucial in explaining Ankara's disillusionment with Ankara and the emergence of Soviet ties during the détente period.

Melvyn Leffler, in his seminal article, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War," places greater emphasis on the benefits that accrued to Turkey through alignment with the US. Leffler underscores that this partnership was mutually beneficial for both Turkey and the United States—Turkey gained protection and economic aid, while the US secured a strategic partner to counter Soviet expansionism in the Near East. And he emphasizes the role of American aid in stabilizing Turkey's post-war economy, pointing out that Ankara capitalized on the geopolitical value of Turkey's strategic location. Leffler notes that American aid under the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan supported Turkey's efforts to modernize its infrastructure and economy.

One recent example of how such differences in emphasis have led to radically different conclusions can be found in two recent articles by Behlül Özkan and Onur İşçi. Examining the moment that Turkey committed to the Western alliance, Özkan finds no direct evidence that the Soviet Union made formal territorial demands on Turkey in 1945, and he concludes from this that the Turkish government

⁷ Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

opportunistically exaggerated the Soviet threat for its own benefit.⁸ İşçi, on the other hand, evaluates Turkey's alignment with the West as a more cautious and pragmatic response to a perceived Soviet threat.⁹ He traces Turkey's growing fear of vulnerability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union over the course of the war years—particularly security but economic as well—and concludes that Turkish fear in 1945 was real. Özkan's and İşçi's article are a clear example of the differing scholarly conclusions about Turkey's overarching aims in its relations with the superpowers. Because they focus on the origins of the Cold War, and unlike broader works that see Turkish disillusionment as a result of the unequal relationship with the US, Özkan and İşçi evaluate Turkish foreign policy in response to the country's circumstances, with difference emerging over how real the economic and security crises were in 1945.

Many other works on Turkey's relations with the superpowers, and in particular on Turkey's relations with the US, see the shifts in Ankara's policy as part of the internal logic of bi- or tri-lateral relations. In *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective*, George S. Harris notes that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan provided critical economic assistance, allowing Turkey to modernize its infrastructure and integrate into the Western economic system.¹⁰ He then goes on to argue that US-Turkish tension grew out of this early commitment, as dependence on foreign aid created vulnerabilities and Turkey struggled to achieve economic self-sufficiency (a similar argument can be found in the work of Kemal

⁸ Behlül Özkan, "The 1945 Turkish-Soviet Crisis," *Russia in Global Affairs* 18, 2 (2020), 156–187.

⁹ Onur İşçi, "Turkey at a Crossroads: The Soviet Threat and Postwar Realignment, 1945–1946," *Diplomatic History* 47, no. 4 (July 12, 2023): 621–46.

¹⁰ George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971* (Washington, D.C. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972).

Karpat).¹¹ These challenges influenced Ankara's foreign policy by reinforcing its reliance on the United States for both military and economic support. Harris thus effectively demonstrates why the Johnson Letter of 1964 proved so consequential, as it highlighted the asymmetry between Turkey's contributions to NATO and the limited support it received during regional crises. Harris argues that this event exposed fundamental differences in the priorities of the two countries, with Turkey feeling constrained by its alliance with the US. The letter fueled nationalist sentiment within Turkey and spurred efforts to pursue a more autonomous foreign policy. Domestically, it exacerbated existing criticisms of the government's close ties to Washington, leading to calls for a more balanced approach.

Süha Bölükbaşı's *the Superpowers and the Third World: Turkish-American Relations and Cyprus* offers a compatible interpretation.¹² Bölükbaşı complements Harris's analysis by exploring how the Cyprus crisis catalyzed nationalist sentiment within Turkey, fueling demands for a more independent foreign policy. The Cyprus crisis of the 1960s, and particularly the Johnson Letter of 1964, exposed the limits of NATO's support for Turkey's regional ambitions and highlighted underlying tensions in Turkish-American relations. Bölükbaşı argues that this event was a turning point in Turkey's foreign policy, leading to a reassessment of its reliance on the United States and NATO. This shift was also influenced by growing dissatisfaction among Turkish leaders with the perceived asymmetry in the alliance, where Turkey's strategic contributions were not always reciprocated with adequate support for its regional needs. Both Harris and Bölükbaşı highlight the broader implications of the Johnson Letter, emphasizing that Turkey's balancing act grew out

¹¹ Kemal H. Karpat, John C. Campbell et al. *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition, 1950–1974*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1975).

¹² Süha Bölükbaşı, "The Cyprus Dispute and the U.N.: Peaceful Non-Settlement Between 1954–1998," *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (1998): 411–434.

of problems in Turkey's relations with the US.

It should be noted that one line of reasoning on Turkey's foreign policy during the Cold War emphasizes the role of domestic political struggles. This is visible in Harris and Bölükbaşı's attention to the rise of nationalist sentiment, but it plays an even more central role in, for example, Fahir Armaoğlu's *Türk Siyasi Tarihi*, Armaoğlu highlights domestic consensus supporting Turkey's early alignment with the West, driven by the Democrat Party's popular vision of modernization and Western integration.¹³ He then examines how domestic political shifts, including the rise of leftist and nationalist movements, influenced Turkey's foreign policy recalibrations during the 1960s and 1970s and led to rapprochement with the Soviet Union and efforts to strengthen economic ties with non-aligned nations. Taking domestic political conflict as a driver of Turkey's balancing act deepens our understanding of Turkey's balancing act, but for considerations of length this dissertation will pay only limited attention to Turkey's domestic political divisions.

More relevant for this dissertation are works that have emphasized the ways that policy towards the Middle East came to function as a distinct arena in Ankara's sense of security and economics. Ayla Göl's *Turkey Facing East: Islam, Modernity and Foreign Policy* emphasizes the importance of trade and energy partnerships in Turkey's increasing engagement with Middle Eastern countries.¹⁴ The 1960s and early 1970s saw Turkey pursuing closer economic ties with neighboring states, partly as a response to the inadequacy of Western aid in addressing its developmental needs. Domestically, rising nationalist and leftist critiques of Western dependency reinforced the shift toward a more balanced foreign policy that included a focus on

¹³ Fahir Armaoğlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017).

¹⁴ Ayla Göl, *Turkey Facing East: Islam, Modernity and Foreign Policy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

Turkey's eastern neighbors. Göl eventually concludes that economic pressures, combined with disillusionment over the limits of U.S. support, drove Turkey to explore partnerships in the Middle East.

Recent works offer updated and more nuanced versions of these general narratives. Mustafa Aydın, in an influential article on “the determinants of Turkish foreign policy,” places greater emphasis on the security imperatives that drove Ankara into early Western alliance and towards later recalibration.¹⁵ Şaban Halis Çalış, in his recent book, *Turkey's Cold War: Foreign Policy and Western Alignment in the Modern Republic*, tends closer to the tradition that has seen Ankara seeking economic gain from the Western alliance. Çalış begins dramatically: “Turkey benefited from the Cold War much more than any other country.”¹⁶

In their recent article, Eliza Gheorghe, Murat İplikçi, and Fatih Tokatlı argue that, between the 1950s and the 1970s, Ankara evolved from being America's “client” to a “junior partner.” They focus on Turkey's nuclear alliance with the US and show that, the Turkish push to recalibrate the alliance was already growing by the mid-1950s, in response to the failure of American-influenced economic policy and Washington's refusal to consult with Turkey regarding nuclear-related policies of mutual interest.¹⁷

Serhat Güvenç and Mesut Uyar's “Lost in Translation or Transformation?” shifts the focus to the military implications of US aid, exploring how it shaped Turkey's defense capabilities and strategic priorities.¹⁸ Their analysis of NATO

¹⁵ Mustafa Aydın, “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures During the Cold War,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 103–39.

¹⁶ Şaban Halis Çalış, *Turkey's Cold War: Foreign Policy and Western Alignment in the Modern Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 1.

¹⁷ Eliza Gheorghe, Murat İplikçi, and Fatih Tokatlı, “Nuclear Topsy Turvy: The Security-Economics Nexus in Turkish-American Relations,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, published online first on October 16, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2024.2410357>

¹⁸ Serhat Güvenç and Mesut Uyar, “Lost in Translation or Transformation? The Impact of American

interoperability requirements and the long-term dependencies created by American assistance highlights early and consistent tension. Their work stands out for its emphasis on domestic repercussions, particularly the growing influence of the military in Turkish politics during the Democrat Party era, and on the early strain that emerged from US-Turkish military cooperation.

One work, whose approach has particularly influenced this dissertation, is Sam Hirst and Onur İşçi's article, "Smokestacks and Pipelines." Hirst and İşçi focus on the way that Turkey's approach to one of the Cold War's superpowers, the Soviet Union, sought to foster the country's economic development, but they employ a chronology that is not defined by the Cold War. By placing Turkey's Cold War foreign policy in relation to the period that came before and after, they allow us to see the way that balancing has been central to Ankara's foreign policy. This dissertation builds on Hirst and İşçi's work by broadening the focus to include both superpowers and to juxtapose economics and security.

As this review has demonstrated, the literature on Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War is far from a consensus on the relationship between security and economic issues. Some scholars place greater emphasis on the early promise of economic aid from the US and the later frustration with the US-sponsored model of growth. Others emphasize the early Western guarantee against the Soviet threat and the later disappointment with a lack of Western support for Turkish priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. No scholar would pick either economic or security as the driving factor, as they are often indistinguishable. But the literature demonstrates little consensus on whether the relationship between Ankara's security

Aid on the Turkish Military, 1947–1960," *Cold War History* 22, no. 1 (2022): 59–77.

and economic concerns changed over time, and this is what this dissertation seeks to address.

1.3 Methodology and Sources

This dissertation employs historical methodology, grounded in archival research, to analyze Turkey's foreign policy between 1945 and 1980. The study prioritizes primary sources but also uses secondary sources to identify how Turkish policy makers understood and reacted to security and economics concerns.

The archival records that form the basis for this research come from the Turkish Diplomatic Archives, the Republican Archives of the Republic of Türkiye, and Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) minutes in Ankara. These archives contain essential documents related to Turkey's diplomatic engagements, security strategies, and economic initiatives during key moments of change in the concerned period. Declassified materials from the US National Archives (NARA) and the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series further enrich the analysis, offering valuable insights into American perspectives on Turkey's objectives. Where possible, documents from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) archives, the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) archives have been incorporated.

The dissertation also draws on the memoirs of key actors who played an integral role in this period. Nihat Erim's account of the Johnson Letter crisis, the accounts of diplomats Mahmut Dikerdem and Semih Günver, and journalist Ahmet Emin Yalman's recollections, for instance, offer critical views on Turkey's balancing strategies. From the American side, George W. Ball's writings provide a candid

examination of US-Turkey relations.

The research also draws extensively on contemporary newspapers to capture the public discourse and international reactions to Turkey's foreign policy decisions. The digital archives of Turkish newspapers, housed at the Turkish National Library, provide detailed coverage of domestic political developments and public opinion. English-language newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, are also used to examine third-party perceptions of Turkey's role in Cold War geopolitics.

The methodological approach focuses on event-driven analysis, examining key crises that catalyzed shifts in Turkey's foreign policy. By analyzing moments such as the Soviet territorial demands in 1945, the Peker Government's economic liberalization in 1946, the balance of payments crisis in the mid-1950s, the Johnson Letter crisis of 1964, the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Agreement, and the 1974 Cyprus Intervention, the study identifies recurring patterns in how Turkey navigated its relationships with the superpowers.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five main sections, each designed to explore Turkey's foreign policy evolution between 1945 and 1980. The structure follows a chronological progression, while thematic analyses within each chapter highlight the major turning points and contextual shifts in Turkish foreign policy.

Chapter 2 examines Turkey's initial post-war foreign policy adjustments and focuses on its alignment with the West amidst escalating Soviet pressures. The narrative begins with Stalin's territorial demands and traces Turkey's response through its integration into the Western bloc via the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and

eventual NATO membership in 1952. In addition, the chapter also deals with Turkey's post-war economic problems and examines the Peker Government's decision to devalue Turkish lira as a remedy to economic problems. The chapter analyzes how security concerns, particularly the Soviet threat, and economic imperatives, such as reconstruction aid, jointly motivated this alignment. Drawing on an array of primary sources, including diplomatic correspondence and archival materials, this chapter provides a comprehensive account of the early Cold War context that framed Turkey's strategic choices. The chapter argues that, in this early period from 1945 until 1952, there is little evidence that Turkish politicians compartmentalized their security and economic priorities.

Building on the foundation of Turkey's Western alignment, Chapter 3 focuses on the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy between 1953 and 1960. Having secured its long-term security objective with NATO membership in 1952, Turkey entered this phase with a dual focus: reinforcing its regional security role within the Western bloc and addressing domestic economic challenges through pragmatic engagement with alternative partners, including the Soviet Union. Key developments include the balance of payments crisis in the mid-1950s, a tentative rapprochement with the Soviet Union after Soviet leader Stalin's death, and regional engagements such as the Baghdad Pact and the emerging Cyprus issue. This chapter highlights Turkey's evolving strategy of balancing relations between the superpowers while grappling with domestic economic challenges. The chapter argues that Turkish foreign policy makers separated security, a field in which Turkey remained a committed Western ally and antagonistic to the Soviet Union, from economics, where Ankara increasingly tried to balance relations with both superpowers.

Chapter 4 delves into the critical period between 1960 and 1980. Key developments include the 1960 military coup, which initiated a series of domestic upheavals that influenced Turkey's foreign policy outlook. In the aftermath of the coup, Turkey reaffirmed its alignment with NATO while simultaneously beginning to explore pragmatic relations with the Soviet Union. The 1967 Soviet-Turkish industrial agreement represented a landmark moment in this effort, showcasing Turkey's ability to leverage economic cooperation with the Soviet Union to address domestic developmental needs while maintaining its security commitments to the West. This agreement reflected the deepening trade ties and industrial collaboration that had steadily grown since the early 1960s, particularly following the economic and trade expansion witnessed in 1965 and 1966. Another significant theme of this chapter is the Cyprus issue. The chapter examines the fallout from the 1964 crisis, including Turkey's growing determination to act with greater autonomy in security matters. By 1974, this culminated in Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus, a bold move that demonstrated Ankara's capacity to disregard American discouragement and proceed independently. The chapter concludes by analyzing how Turkey balanced its NATO obligations with a more autonomous foreign policy approach, particularly in the context of its evolving relations with the Soviet Union and regional powers. The chapter argues that Turkey in this period was compartmentalizing relations with each superpower, as could be seen in Ankara's attempt to maintain the Cold War alliance with the US even as it embarked on autonomous policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

CHAPTER II: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS: TURKEY'S TRANSITION FROM NEUTRALITY TO ALIGNMENT

The years between 1945 and 1952 marked a pivotal phase in Turkey's foreign policy, defined by its decisive alignment with the Western bloc. Emerging from World War II with a neutral stance but facing escalating threats from its northern neighbor, the Soviet Union, Turkey stood at a critical juncture within the emerging Cold War environment. Confronted with overlapping security and economic challenges, Turkey pursued closer ties with the West as a means to safeguard its sovereignty and ensure stability.

On the security front, Turkey faced mounting pressure from the Soviet Union, which demanded territorial concessions over Kars and Ardahan as well as joint control of the Turkish Straits.¹⁹ These demands posed a grave threat to Turkey's sovereignty and highlighted the urgent need for robust alliances. In response, Turkey aligned itself with the United States, a relationship formalized through the Truman Doctrine of 1947, which provided both financial and military aid. This alignment culminated in Turkey's NATO membership in 1952, firmly establishing the country as a key ally of the West and a strategic frontline state in the Cold War. Unlike other nations that even in this early period sought to balance relations between the two superpowers, Turkey's security policy became resolutely anchored in the Western bloc.

Although greater emphasis is usually placed on the Soviet security threat, Turkey's economic straits were equally troubling. Turkey grappled with limited industrial capacity, an overreliance on agricultural exports, and, most importantly, limited foreign reserves. To address these vulnerabilities, the Recep Peker government

¹⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, February 10, 1945, 903.

introduced the September 7 Decisions in 1946, which included a devaluation of the Turkish lira and measures to liberalize trade.²⁰ While these reforms aimed to stabilize the domestic economy, Turkey simultaneously sought deeper integration into the Western-led global economic system. The Marshall Plan played a central role in this process, offering financial aid and technical expertise that facilitated Turkey's modernization but also increased its dependency on American economic support. These economic strategies underscored Turkey's broader alignment with the West and its commitment to integrating into its political, military, and economic frameworks.

This chapter argues that Turkey's foreign policy during this period was defined by a unified strategy, centered entirely on the efforts to integrate into Western political, military, and economic frameworks, rather than a compartmentalized approach. The absence of significant economic or strategic ties with the Soviet Union, and more critically, the growing estrangement between the two countries, further underscores the coherence of Turkey's Western-focused strategy.

The chapter is structured into three sections: on security, on the economy, and finally on the balancing act. The security section examines Turkey's response to Soviet threats, the impact of the Truman Doctrine, and the significance of NATO membership in solidifying its position as a Western ally. The economy section delves into the domestic economic challenges that Turkey faced in the early post-war era and its efforts to align with the Western economic order through initiatives like the September 7 Decisions and the Marshall Plan. Finally, the balancing act section analyzes how these security and economic dimensions were integrated into a

²⁰ Samuel J. Hirst and Onur İşçi, "Turkey's Rushed Liberalization: Wartime Neutrality and the Devaluation of 1946," *Turkish Studies* 25, no. 4 (March 18, 2024): 625.

coherent foreign policy strategy, demonstrating Turkey's clear orientation towards the West during this transformative period.

2.1 Facing the Soviet Threat: Turkey's Realignment in the Early Cold War

When the Yalta Conference convened at the Livadia Palace in February 1945, Turkey had yet to formally support the Declaration by the United Nations, had been left out of the Bretton Woods Conference, and, significantly, was still weighing whether to declare war on Nazi Germany and Japan.²¹ Ankara's eventual decision to declare war, made two weeks after Yalta, was a last-ditch effort to secure an invitation to the San Francisco Conference. But with large swathes of Eastern Europe under Soviet influence, it was a challenging time for Turkey to persuade British Prime Minister Winston Churchill or US President Franklin D. Roosevelt of Ankara's concerns over Soviet ambitions regarding the Turkish Straits and Eastern Anatolia. Turkish leaders, particularly those with a cautious outlook, watched Soviet expansion into neighboring regions with mounting concern and feared that the West might accommodate Soviet demands for security provisions over the Straits. With no strong counterbalance to Stalin's ambitions, Turkey was left with little choice but to address its geopolitical challenges directly with Moscow, on Soviet terms. This approach, dictated by Turkey's prolonged neutrality, came with substantial costs.²²

During the war, Turkey became acutely aware that the Soviet Union aimed to secure territorial concessions at Turkey's expense. In the covert German-Soviet negotiations

²¹ On February 23, 1945, through decision number 1452 published in the Official Gazette, Turkey declared war on Germany and Japan and simultaneously announced its accession to the United Nations Declaration of January 1, 1942. See; Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Almanya ve Japonya'ya harp ilanına ve 1 Ocak 1942 tarihli Birleşik Milletler Beyannamesine Türkiye'nin katılmasına dair karar*, 32097-126698-6, February 23, 1945.

²² Onur İsci, "Turkey at a Crossroads: The Soviet Threat and Postwar Realignment, 1945–1946," *Diplomatic History* 47, no. 4 (July 12, 2023): 621.

of November 1940, Turkey was used as a bargaining chip, representing a demand from the Soviets in exchange for joining the Berlin Pact. Later, once aligned with Western powers, the Soviets presented similar demands at the 1945 Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. With British Prime Minister Churchill's tacit approval at the Moscow Conference in October 1944, Stalin put forward the Soviet stance on the Turkish Straits at Yalta in February 1945, stating, the Soviets would not accept a situation in which "Turkey has a hand on Russia's throat."²³

Under these conditions, Turkish Ambassador Selim Sarper held a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov at the Kremlin Palace on March 19, 1945. During this encounter, Molotov informed Sarper of Moscow's decision to end the 1925 Friendship Treaty with Turkey.²⁴ In the negotiations that followed, Molotov issued thinly veiled threats, pointing to Poland as a potential model for Turkey's fate should Ankara fail to comply with two key Soviet demands, namely granting the Soviet Union naval bases for the joint defense of the Turkish Straits, and adjusting Turkey's eastern borders to include areas that historically belonged to the Russian Empire, which encompassed two major Turkish cities in Eastern Anatolia.²⁵

This concern about Soviet aims on its borders escalated on June 7, 1945, when the Soviets issued a further note demanding bases along the Turkish Straits and territorial adjustments on the Soviet-Turkish border as prerequisites for renewing the treaty.²⁶ President İnönü's response to the Grand National Assembly was resolute and impassioned, asserting that Turkey had "no obligation to surrender Turkish soil

²³ Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, February 10, 1945, 903.

²⁴ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Turkish Embassy in Moscow to the Turkish Foreign Ministry*, TSID 4983602, March 20, 1945.

²⁵ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Meeting between British and Turkish ambassadors in Moscow*, November 13, 1945, TSID 2491.

²⁶ Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures During the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 107.

or Turkish rights to anyone ... We shall live with honour and die with honour.”

Echoing this sentiment, the Assembly’s speaker firmly cautioned the Soviets, declaring that if the Russians insisted on their demand, “we shall fight to the last Turk.”²⁷

The security threat was real, and, in the face of increasing Soviet pressure, Turkey made unsuccessful attempts to involve the United States in its defense against Soviet threats and sought to align US policy on the Straits with its own minimum requirements.²⁸ However, both the United States and Great Britain refrained from taking action, still hopeful that meaningful post-war cooperation with the Soviet Union was possible. When, for instance, Turkey’s Ambassador to Stockholm visited the American Ambassador on April 19, 1945 to offer condolences on Roosevelt’s death, the American Ambassador informed him that the Soviets would demand demilitarization of the Straits and unconditional passage rights for the Russian navy. He added that the British had essentially agreed to this, while the United States, in his personal view, was not in a position to offer any guarantees regarding the security of the Straits.²⁹

Unbeknownst to them, these demands on Turkey were part of Stalin’s strategy to exploit the wartime and early post-war power vacuum by pushing for concessions near Soviet borders.³⁰ Additionally, Turkey’s wartime neutrality had left its future status undefined, unlike most European countries where post-war spheres of influence had already been established. For instance, during his 1945 discussions

²⁷ Aydin, “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy”, 106-7.

²⁸ George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945-1971* (Washington, D.C. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 17-18.

²⁹ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Boğazların dokunulmazlığı konusunda ABD’nin teminat verecek durumda olmadığını belirtmesi*, 23510-102407-1, April 19, 1945.

³⁰ Galia Golan. *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32.

with Stalin in Moscow, Churchill refrained from mentioning Turkey, while explicitly stating that Greece fell within the UK's sphere of influence.³¹ This lack of clear positioning made Turkey an attractive target as Stalin sought to guarantee the Soviet Union's absolute security. The Western reluctance to adopt a strong stance against Soviet demands reinforced Stalin's confidence in pursuing his proposals concerning Turkey.³²

During the Potsdam Conference on July 17–August 2, 1945, as the Soviets negotiated forcefully, Turkish diplomats urgently appealed to the Allies to avoid making concessions to Stalin, though they held out little hope. For Turkey's leaders, the central issue was that Soviet and Western aims at Potsdam were fundamentally at odds. Thus, they saw a clear postwar demarcation of power spheres as the only viable solution. However, it remained uncertain where Turkey would fit within this emerging power structure. The Soviets, meanwhile, aimed to secure Allied agreement that the Straits issue was solely a matter for Turkey and the Soviet Union to resolve. Although the Potsdam Conference ended without settling the issue, there was an agreement in principle to consider revising the Montreux Convention.³³

Over time, however, Western attitudes toward Turkey and the Soviet demands gradually shifted. When considered alongside Soviet activities elsewhere and following the inconclusive foreign ministers' conference in December 1945, President Truman began to interpret Soviet demands as indicative of a broader intent to subordinate Turkey and gain control over the Straits. In January 1946, Truman

³¹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London, 1954), Vol. VI, 198-204.

³² Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy", 107.

³³ Harry N. Howard, *The Problem of the Turkish Straits* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1947), 47.

expressed certainty that the Soviets planned to attack Turkey.³⁴

On January 9, 1946, Turkish Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu discussed with the US Ambassador in Turkey his views on Soviet-Turkish relations. Saraçoğlu expressed his belief that Soviet tactics—such as broadcasts from Moscow advocating Armenian and Georgian territorial claims, along with the establishment of new Communist newspapers and propaganda efforts—were intended to destabilize the Turkish regime and pave the way for a “friendly” government. Contrary to Soviet expectations, Saraçoğlu observed that these tactics had, in fact, unified the Turkish population against Soviet demands. He suggested that the USSR was momentarily uncertain about its next move, possibly waiting until after the upcoming United Nations meeting to reconsider its approach. However, Saraçoğlu was convinced that the Soviet Union would not relinquish its objectives regarding Turkey, merely postponing action until a more favorable moment. He further commented on Turkey's growing concern and pessimism about international cooperation, particularly in light of the unresolved situation in Iran and the inability to reach an agreement on Iran at the recent Moscow conference.³⁵

After the war, the disputes that emerged and set the parties against each other were reflected in the Turkish and Soviet media, with each nation's press beginning to publish pieces targeting the opposing side.

On February 4, 1946, Acting Turkish Foreign Minister Sümer met with Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov at a reception at the British Embassy, where the Soviet

³⁴ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume I, Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955), 522.

³⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa, *Attitude of the United States toward demands of the Soviet Union for the revision of the Turkish Straits regime and other matters affecting Turkish-Soviet relations* 761.67/1–946, Telegram, Document 626, The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State, January 9, 1946.

Ambassador requested Turkey's "friendly help" in moderating the tone of Turkish press coverage regarding the USSR. Sümer noted that although the Turkish government had recently mediated to calm tensions, Moscow radio had disrupted the "truce." Yet, he responded positively, and the Turkish government promptly sent the Acting Director of the Press Bureau to Istanbul to advise leading editors to avoid negative commentary on the USSR. Consequently, the Turkish press refrained from disagreeable coverage of the USSR, and Moscow radio similarly avoided critical remarks about Turkey, marking what Sümer called "a new truce."³⁶

Vinogradov then suggested that Turkey make further efforts to improve bilateral relations. Sümer replied that Turkey was willing to work towards this goal, provided it was based on respect for Turkish sovereignty. He asked if the USSR still maintained its demands for Turkish eastern provinces and bases in the Straits. Vinogradov replied that, while the territorial issue was significant, the Straits were of "vital" importance. Upon the issue, Vinogradov told that Soviet security required "adequate guarantees" for control of the Straits. Sümer countered by suggesting that Turkey's sovereignty over the Straits, coupled with friendly relations, provided the best guarantee to the Soviets. Vinogradov disagreed, stating that Turkey's defense capabilities were inadequate, and Soviet security needs could necessitate bases. Sümer firmly responded that Soviet bases in the Straits were incompatible with Turkish sovereignty. He then proposed that, given the secondary importance of territorial issues, the USSR might withdraw its request for the eastern provinces. Vinogradov declined, stating that the Soviet constitution mandated defense of the interests of various Soviet republics, and the Armenian representative had initiated

³⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa 761.67/2-1346: Telegram, Document 637, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, February 13, 1946.

the request, preventing withdrawal. As their conversation concluded, Vinogradov remarked that the Soviet Union had waited a long time for its desired arrangement with Poland and could afford similar patience regarding Turkey. Sümer later told Ambassador Wilson that this exchange reaffirmed the USSR's unwavering stance on its territorial and strategic demands, believing that time was on their side.³⁷

On March 18, 1946, Ambassador Wilson informed Washington of Soviet military movements that suggested the USSR might soon be in a position to strike at Turkey.³⁸ Reporting on Soviet troop activities in Romania and Bulgaria, based on information from an American Control Commission member in Romania who had recently visited Istanbul, Wilson outlined a significant buildup of Soviet forces. Over the preceding two weeks, large numbers of Soviet troops, including armored units, had been moved southward by rail from Bessarabia to Dobruja and further into Bulgaria, concentrating heavily in Dobruja and northeast Bulgaria. Supporting this mobilization, the railway from Bessarabia to Ploesti had been widened to Russian gauge, with sidings and loading platforms added at Ploesti to facilitate transport to Romanian standard-gauge cars. Additionally, extensive ammunition depots had been established, particularly in Craiova and Ploesti. Wilson also reported sightings of around 20 two-engine fighter planes, initially observed near Constanza, now stationed at Plovdiv, the headquarters for Soviet air forces in Bulgaria. Furthermore, all 60 hospitals in the Bucharest area had been ordered to stock medical supplies and discharge convalescent patients by April 1.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa 761.67/3–1846: Telegram, Document 641, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, March 18, 1946.

³⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa 761.67/3–1846: Telegram, Document 641, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, March

This extensive preparation, along with reports of Soviet troop movements near the Turkish border in Iran, suggested that the USSR was actively positioning itself for potential military action against Turkey if it deemed such a move strategically beneficial. In his analysis of developments in the Near East, Bruce Kuniholm endorses Wilson's assessment of Soviet actions and intentions, underlining the significance of these maneuvers within the broader geopolitical context.⁴⁰

On March 23, 1946, Ambassador Edwin C. Wilson responded to a February 27 letter from the US Secretary of State and requested his comments. While addressing various elements of the statement, Wilson took particular issue with its portrayal of Soviet objectives regarding Turkey. He disagreed with the statement that the Soviet Union's primary aim was to revise the Straits regime to gain control over maritime passage. Wilson argued that this issue was secondary, a "façade" masking the USSR's actual goal of exerting complete dominance over Turkey. He highlighted that advances in air power during World War II had significantly reduced the Straits' strategic importance, as air bases on the Greek islands had effectively controlled them during the war. Wilson suggested that the real Soviet objective was to dismantle Turkey's independent government and replace it with a subservient or "friendly" regime. This would allow the USSR to complete its security buffer, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea, which consisted largely of states under Soviet influence. Turkey, as the only gap in this security chain, remained allied with Western democracies—a situation the Soviet Union found unacceptable. Wilson argued that the Soviet Union's overarching goal was to eliminate Western influence in Turkey and establish control over the nation.⁴¹ While Soviet dominance in Turkey

18, 1946.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa 711.00/3–

would indeed provide control over the Straits, Wilson emphasized that this was a secondary benefit rather than the primary Soviet ambition.

In March 1946, Great Britain's announcement that the 1939 Treaty of Alliance remained valid, committing the UK to assist Turkey in the event of aggression, and this signaled to Turkish leaders that their post-war isolation had come to an end.⁴² Turkey's sense of relief grew with a further sign of America's changing position: on April 15, 1946, the USS Missouri anchored in Istanbul, bringing the remains of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Münir Ertegun, who had passed away in Washington during the war.

From July 1945 to April 1946, President İsmet İnönü and his cabinet had been gripped by a profound sense of unease. This context sheds light on the elation with which Turkey's leaders welcomed the arrival of the USS Missouri, as the US Navy made a powerful statement by docking its flagship in the Bosphorus, positioning itself against the Soviet fleet in the Black Sea.⁴³ This gesture was interpreted as an indication of America's willingness to defend Turkey. In the following years, İnönü and his successors would pledge steadfast allegiance to the United States, aiming to establish Turkey as a strategic stronghold in the policy of containment.⁴⁴

Following the arrival of the Missouri in Istanbul, America's shifting stance also became evident in Paris. On May 4, 1946, the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Office informed US Ambassador to Turkey Wilson that Turkish Ambassador to Paris, Numan Menemencioğlu, had recently reported a private and

2346, Document 643, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, March 23, 1946.

⁴² Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective*, 19.

⁴³ Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 335.

⁴⁴ İsci, "Turkey at a Crossroads", 622.

encouraging interaction with US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. During a formal presentation of diplomats, Byrnes had reportedly taken Menemencioğlu aside and expressed warm sentiments, acknowledging that while the United States may not have fully understood Turkey and its challenges in the past, it was now well-informed and held a deep and sincere friendship for Turkey, along with a strong interest in its issues. According to Secretary General Erkin, the Turkish government was genuinely moved and grateful for Byrnes' remarks.⁴⁵

Although the United States had started openly backing Turkey, tensions surrounding the Turkish Straits continued through 1946. On August 7, the Soviet Union, citing Potsdam's authorization, put forward a proposal asserting that control over the Straits should be managed jointly by Turkey and other Black Sea nations, with Turkey and the Soviet Union sharing responsibility for defense.⁴⁶ The Soviets also delivered pointed criticisms of Turkey's wartime management of the Straits. This time, however, both the US and the UK strongly supported Turkey in its opposition to the Soviet demands. In response, the US took a decisive step in September by declaring its intention to maintain a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean.⁴⁷

Shortly thereafter, on September 24, the Soviet Union delivered another note to Turkey regarding the Straits.⁴⁸ This note was directed solely at the Turkish government, reasserting the arguments of the earlier note from August 7. It suggested direct discussions between Turkey and the Soviet Union before convening an international conference to revise the Montreux Convention. The Soviet note further

⁴⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa, 711.67/5–446: Telegram, Document 645, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa, The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the, Secretary of State, May 4, 1946.

⁴⁶ Jacob C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, Volume II* (Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, 1956), 268–71.

⁴⁷ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 33.

⁴⁸ Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective*, 22.

argued for excluding non-Black Sea countries from a future regime by asserting that the Black Sea was a closed sea. It referred to past treaties as precedents for this approach. The note also advocated joint defense of the Straits, citing perceived threats to Soviet security. Additionally, it referred to the 1914 passage of the German cruisers Goeben and Breslau through the Straits and claimed that transit through the Straits had supported military operations against the Soviet Union during World War II.⁴⁹

The Turkish government viewed this Soviet note as both more calculated and potentially more deceptive than the previous one. They suggested that Maksim Litvinov, recently called out of retirement, was responsible for drafting it. The emphasis on direct negotiations appeared, in Turkey's view, to be a ploy intended to sow confusion and misinterpretation.⁵⁰ The diplomatic challenges of the 1945–46 Turco-Soviet talks and the 1946 Iranian crisis had shown Turkey the risks involved. As a result, Turkey consulted with the United States and Britain, both of whom, like Turkey, were committed to a careful and non-confrontational approach.⁵¹ It was a moment when the United States had resolved to stand firm and was shaping policies for Turkey along with two other Northern Tier countries, Greece and Iran. Following these discussions, each nation sent its own note to the Soviet government, all aligned in support of Turkey's stance.⁵²

On October 9, the British and American notes restated their positions from August, while Turkey's note, delivered on October 18, reaffirmed its previous position, responding thoroughly to the Soviet claims. The Turkish note highlighted that the

⁴⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 866-875; Howard, *The Problem of the Turkish Straits*, 249-250.

⁵⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 868, 878-879.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 870-871, 874-875, 878.

⁵² Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 869-970, 893.

Montreux Convention already afforded preferential rights to Black Sea powers and rejected the notion of the Black Sea as a “closed sea.” It argued that the reference to the German cruisers in World War I was irrelevant and emphasized that the actual threat to Soviet shores in World War II came not from the Black Sea but from German occupation of Russian territory, as well as from the Rumanian and Bulgarian fleets and German and Italian ships transported to the Black Sea via rail or down the Danube.⁵³

As a result, the discussion among the US, UK, and Turkey ultimately reinforced the earlier stances of the Western Allies, preparing both the US and the UK to anticipate potential Soviet moves. This preparation encouraged even closer cooperation between them on providing support to countries in the Northern Tier. The diplomatic note exchanges concluded on October 26, when the Soviet Union notified Britain that it disagreed with Britain’s view that the direct talks envisioned at the Potsdam Conference had been fully addressed. The Soviets further argued that organizing a conference to establish a new governing framework was still premature.⁵⁴ The Soviets chose not to reply to the American note, possibly to avoid drawing the United States into the conversation.⁵⁵

By the end of October, following Turkey’s continued rejection, backed by its Western allies, the Soviets ultimately abandoned the issue.⁵⁶ The immediate crisis over Turkey had dissipated, with Soviet intentions regarding the Straits set aside

⁵³ For the American note, see; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 873-875; Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and U.S. Policy*, 250-251. For the British note, see: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 876; and Howard, 251. For the Turkish note, see: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 879-893; and Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and U.S. Policy*, 253-255.

⁵⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa: 897-898; Howard, *Turkey, the Straits and U.S. Policy*, 258-9.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective*, 22.

once more. In his memoirs, Feridun Erkin, then serving as the secretary-general of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and later as foreign minister, credits the conclusion of what he terms one of Russia's most assertive diplomatic efforts to gain control of the Straits to several factors: the resolve of the Turkish people, the credible concerns raised by the early exposure of Soviet intentions regarding the Straits, and the pivotal role played by the United States, whose influence was initially undervalued by the Soviets.⁵⁷ However, these aspirations, though momentarily dormant, still posed a potential risk. In response, the United States continued to refine its diplomatic and military policies toward Turkey, which would in half a year lead to the formalization of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947.⁵⁸

Faced with a period of concern over Soviet demands, Turkey held its first multiparty election in the summer of 1946. Initially scheduled for 1947, the general election was moved up by İnönü, advancing the timeline by a full year to 1946. The election results, especially in rural areas, overwhelmingly favored the ruling CHP. However, the new Democrat Party gained significant support among urban workers and ethnic minorities, with notable delays in releasing Istanbul's results, and the legitimacy of about 300 CHP seats contested by the opposition.⁵⁹

Scholars frequently debate whether the shift to a multi-party system was a gradual evolution of Kemalist modernization or a radical departure from interwar authoritarianism. Opinions range across CHP's republican ideals, İnönü's political pragmatism, popular discontent following wartime austerity, elite power struggles,

⁵⁷ Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Les Relations Turco-Soviétiques et la Question de Détroits* [Turkish-Soviet Relations and the Straits Question], (Ankara, 1968), 369.

⁵⁸ Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 373.

⁵⁹ Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959) 164-5.

and international influences.⁶⁰ Many historians suggest the Cold War pushed Turkey toward democratization and free-market reforms, interpreting Allied victory as a precursor to CHP's adoption of democratic practices.

As archival research has advanced, the view that Turkey's Western allies unilaterally pressured it into pro-Western reforms has been reconsidered. There is little evidence that the United States directly pressured İnönü to hold elections in 1946. Similarly, while Turkey's military engaged with US aid programs, Turkish officers often disregarded American recommendations.⁶¹ Although CHP's policies may have been influenced by Western ideals, the decisions remained Turkey's own. And this demonstrates all the more the way that Ankara did not compartmentalize at this moment.

Right after the elections, developments on the political stage continued at full speed. On November 25, 1946, the new Turkish Ambassador to Moscow Faik Zihni Akdur departed for his post. President İnönü's instructions to the Ambassador were clear: he was to focus solely on improving bilateral relations and avoid initiating any discussions regarding the Straits. If the Soviet side raised the issue, he was to simply report their statements without engaging. This cautious approach was in response to indications from the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires that the USSR expected the new Turkish Ambassador to take the initiative on the Straits issue—a move the Turkish government perceived as a potential trap and was determined to avoid.⁶² With the new ambassador assuming office in Moscow in late 1946, Soviet demands quietly

⁶⁰ Hirst and İşçi, "Turkey's Rushed Liberalization: Wartime Neutrality and the Devaluation of 1946," 643.

⁶¹ Serhat Güvenç and Mesut Uyar, "Lost in Translation or Transformation? The Impact of American Aid on the Turkish Military, 1947–1960," *Cold War History* 22, no. 1 (2022): 59–77.

⁶² Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII, The Near East and Africa 701.6761/11–2546: Telegram, Document 700, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State*, November 25, 1946.

faded into the background.

Early 1947 marked a turning point for the region. On February 21, the British government informed the United States that due to its own financial constraints, it would have to cease military and economic support to Greece and Turkey by April 1, urging the US to assume this responsibility. President Truman, along with leaders from the State, War, and Navy Departments, quickly recognized that if the US did not step in, Greece could fall to communist partisans backed by the Soviet Union, with support from communist governments in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Such a shift would leave Turkey vulnerable, despite its sizeable but outdated military, and likely lead to communist influence spreading across the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. In a powerful address to Congress on March 12, 1947, Truman called for swift and decisive support for Greece and Turkey. Following thorough hearings, Congress approved this shift in US foreign policy through legislation signed on May 22, known as Public Law 75, which formalized what became known as the Truman Doctrine. This doctrine established the commitment to aid free nations facing threats of communist expansion.⁶³

Turkey's security concerns in the wake of World War II were for the most part directed towards the threat from the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ As a response, the primary goal of the Turkish government was to integrate Turkey into the Western world and its defense framework. The Truman Doctrine played a significant role in advancing this objective in the years that followed. It established US support for Turkey along with Greece against Soviet expansion. And it was formalized through financial and

⁶³ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, 867.00/5–2747: Telegram, Document 309, *The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Turkey*, June 4, 1947.

⁶⁴ Ara Sanjian, "The Formulation of the Baghdad Pact", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.33, No. 2 (1997), 227.

military aid to be provided by the United States under the Marshall Plan, which would help to stabilize Turkey's economy and military infrastructure. Turkish leaders warmly welcomed the doctrine and the subsequent aid that they received.⁶⁵

With the Truman Doctrine laying the groundwork for US engagement in the region, the Western bloc turned its focus toward protecting Europe against the Soviet threat. The question of a North Atlantic alliance soon became a pressing matter for Turkey, which remained determined to secure membership, a goal it would finally achieve in 1952. In May 1948, Turkish officials expressed apprehension that the US might extend defense guarantees to Western European countries through NATO, potentially leaving Turkey unprotected. Such a scenario, they believed, could embolden the Soviets, giving them the impression that Turkey was left vulnerable. The State Department clarified that no final decision had yet been made on which countries would receive security commitments, especially since NATO's official formation was still over a year away, set for August 24, 1949. Until then, Turkey was reminded that it continued to benefit from military assistance under Public Law 75, which offered interim support as discussions over the alliance unfolded.⁶⁶

On January 6, 1949, after a brief visit to Ankara, US Special Representative Harriman reported to the Economic Cooperation Administration's Administrator Hoffman. During his 24-hour stay, Harriman met with President İnönü, key cabinet members, senior government administrators, and US representatives in Turkey. Harriman expressed renewed confidence in Turkey's commitment and effective use of American aid under US guidance. President İnönü conveyed his belief that war could be prevented if the United States fostered unity among free European nations,

⁶⁵ Metin Toker, *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı Yılları – Dp'nin Altın Yılları 1950-54* (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1990), 82-7.

⁶⁶ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 56.

which would require determination and maximum effort from each country, with Turkey pledging to fulfill its role. İnönü also emphasized that firm moral support from the United States was even more valuable to Turkey than material aid.⁶⁷

The years from 1947 to 1952 were a critical period for Turkey's foreign policy as it pursued alignment with the West, particularly the United States, in order to secure its defense against Soviet pressures. Since 1947, Turkey had depended heavily on American support for its security and independence, bolstered by substantial US military aid under the Truman Doctrine. However, with the creation of NATO in 1948-1949, US attention seemed to have shifted towards Western Europe, causing growing uncertainty among Turkish officials about Turkey's role in this evolving alliance structure.

Turkey's leaders feared that their exclusion from NATO would leave the country vulnerable to Soviet aggression, especially given the USSR's historical interest in the Turkish Straits. In early May 1948, Turkish diplomats had conveyed to the US government their concern that NATO might extend security guarantees only to Western Europe, leaving Turkey exposed.⁶⁸ Such an exclusion, they argued, would send a message to the Soviets that Turkey could be left undefended by the West. The State Department, however, clarified that no final decisions on the recipients of US security guarantees had been made, as NATO had not yet been formally established. Meanwhile, Turkey continued to receive US military aid under Public Law 75, which

⁶⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Document 1140, *The United States Special Representative in Europe for the Economic Cooperation Administration (Harriman) to the Administrator for the Economic Cooperation Administration* (Hoffman), January 6, 1949.

⁶⁸ Joseph C. Satterthwaite to Secretary of State, March 31, 1949, file 711.67/3-3149, Records of the Department of State; Robertson to George McGhee, July 26, 1949, box 1, Lot 484, *ibid.*; Central Intelligence Agency, *Review of the World Situation*, April 20, 1949, box 206, President's secretary's file, Truman Papers; Johnson, memorandum to Op-30, Sept. 16, 1949, A8, box 249, Strategic Plans Division; Conolly to CNO, March 9, 1950, box 6, Sherman Papers.

served as an acknowledgment of Turkey's strategic importance in the region.⁶⁹

The initial reluctance of the United States to make firm security commitments to Turkey was partially due to resource limitations. In July 1948, Undersecretary of State Robert A. Lovett had informed the Turkish ambassador that the US faced financial and military constraints and could not extend security guarantees to every country that requested them. Lovett explained that the US was already supporting Europe's recovery, arming its own military, and strengthening Western European defenses, limiting its capacity to take on additional commitments.⁷⁰ When Dean Acheson took office as Secretary of State, he reinforced this stance, stating that the US was taking on unprecedented responsibilities in Western Europe and needed to fully address those before extending further guarantees elsewhere. Throughout 1949, Acheson turned down Turkey's requests to join NATO, a decision that left Turkish officials feeling sidelined and anxious.⁷¹

This exclusion was particularly troubling for Turkish leaders given that Turkey's security concerns with the Soviet Union had grown more intense since the end of World War II. During the early years of the Cold War, Turkey had made substantial investments in maintaining a strong defense despite severe economic constraints. These efforts reflected Turkey's perception of an ever-present Soviet threat, especially over control of the Straits and territorial claims in Eastern Anatolia. Soviet propaganda fueled Turkish fears, amplifying the sense of vulnerability created by

⁶⁹ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 56.

⁷⁰ Melvyn Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952," *The Journal of American History* 71 (March 1985): 819.

⁷¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948 (9 vols., Washington, 1972-1975), HI, 197, IV, 84-85, 114-15, 148-49, 172-73, 214; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949 (9 vols., Washington, 1974-1978), IV, 120, 177-78, 234-35, 243-44, 270-71, 359-60, VI, 1647-53, 1656-57; Foreign Relations of the United States, [Document 731] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Berry), September 11, 1950.

their exclusion from NATO. Turkish officials worried that without formal membership in the alliance, Turkey's security and sovereignty might be undermined.

Despite these reassurances, the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, created new complications for Turkey. Unexpectedly, NATO included Italy and France's North African territories in the pact due to Italy's strategic location and internal communist threats.⁷² Turkish leaders felt blindsided, as US and UK officials had previously told them that the pact would be limited geographically to the North Atlantic. Foreign Minister Necmeddin Sadak, during an April 12 visit to Washington, voiced Turkey's dismay to US Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Sadak explained that Turkey felt increasingly isolated, especially under the sustained pressure from Soviet demands. The final agreement had contradicted what Turkey had been told and led to confusion in the Turkish National Assembly, where officials had been informed that NATO would be strictly limited to the North Atlantic.⁷³ This unexpected inclusion of Italy and North African territories stoked public unease in Turkey, where leaders and citizens had hoped for a similar security arrangement to address Turkey's Mediterranean concerns.⁷⁴

Sadak further conveyed that Turkey's position as the most exposed European nation to Soviet pressure made its exclusion from NATO's security guarantees particularly alarming. Turkey had invested heavily in defense since 1945 to resist Soviet demands, placing a considerable burden on its economy. However, NATO's exclusion led to suspicions that the US had deprioritized Turkey's security, a fear that Soviet propaganda swiftly exploited. In response, Acheson reassured Sadak that

⁷² Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949 Volume VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Document 1146, *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State*, Washington, April 12, 1949.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 59-60.

the United States still recognized Turkey's importance. He pointed to past American commitments, including the Truman Doctrine, which demonstrated consistent support for Turkish independence.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, these assurances did not dispel Turkish fears about their exclusion from NATO's security framework.⁷⁶

Soon after, President Truman wrote to President İnönü. On April 26, 1949, Truman reassured President İnönü that the United States' commitment to Turkey's independence and security remained strong and undiminished, despite recent changes in American foreign policy. Truman addressed Turkey's concern regarding the newly signed North Atlantic Treaty, affirming that the treaty's purpose of strengthening the collective security of the Atlantic area did not detract from America's support for Turkey and other free nations outside this region. On the contrary, Truman emphasized that this pact, by reinforcing stability among NATO countries, indirectly enhanced Turkey's security as well.⁷⁷

This period of heightened engagement in foreign policy was paralleled by significant shifts in Turkey's domestic political landscape. In the elections held on May 14, 1950, the long-standing ruling Republican People's Party (CHP) was replaced by the Democratic Party (DP). The DP's rise to power coincided with a period when Turkey was deepening its relations with the West. The DP, upon assuming power in 1950, developed a foreign policy that was framed within the context of these perceived Soviet threats and a commitment to Westernization, as had been the case during the CHP era. In an era characterized by a global reconfiguration in many aspects, the

⁷⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Document 1146, *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State*, Washington, April 12, 1949.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949 Volume VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Document 1149, *President Truman to the President of Turkey*, Washington, April 26, 1949.

formulation of Turkish foreign policy was centered on themes such as economic and military security, along with the pursuit of international partnerships. Factors like the formation of international blocs, the escalation of arms races, and internal political and economic challenges steered the DP towards an alignment with Western, particularly American, strategic interests. This orientation was not merely a reaction to the external pressures of the time but also a deliberate strategy that defined the direction of Turkey's foreign policy during this historical phase to attain its domestic objectives of economic growth and stabilization.

A pivotal moment in this pursuit occurred with the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950. The United Nations' appeal on June 27, 1950, for its members to resist the incursion in Korea and to reestablish regional peace and security, received a proactive response from DP, which deployed a force of 4,500 soldiers to Korea in the initial phase. Turkey's participation in the Korean War marked its first military engagement since the War of Independence, distinguishing itself as the first nation after the US to contribute troops to Korea. This action underscored Turkey's dedication to global military alliances and elevated its status in the international geopolitical arena.⁷⁸

When the decision to send troops to Korea was made, Menderes called journalists in and explicitly stated that he expected their support on the Korean issue in their writings.⁷⁹ Gaining public support on this issue through the newspapers would ease the government's position domestically and allow it to pursue its foreign policy without hindrance. During his first term as Prime Minister, Menderes placed

⁷⁸ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 77.

⁷⁹ Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim 1922-1971*, (İstanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1970-1971), 1536.

particular importance on the role of journalists. He used to keep these figures close to him, almost like shadows, during his domestic and international travels.⁸⁰

The Turkish government's priority since the establishment of NATO had been to join the alliance, thus securing the country against the perceived Soviet threat. The United States was to play a key role in advocating for Turkey's inclusion in NATO after the onset of the Korean War. This advocacy was largely influenced by the strategic geographical location of Turkey and the inclination of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, to see Turkey incorporated into the Atlantic Alliance, serving as a vital support on his eastern flank. During the formation of NATO, Turkey had already garnered support from the United States, a relationship reinforced through the 1947 Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. These initiatives, focused on economic assistance and security, laid the groundwork for Turkey's closer alignment with the US

Turkey's initial attempts to join NATO were met with resistance, primarily from European nations, due to various political, economic, and cultural concerns. Several countries, including the United Kingdom, along with Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium, initially expressed reservations regarding Turkey's membership in NATO. A major factor behind the UK's reluctance was its vested interests in the Middle East. With the Soviet Union's growing influence in the region seen as a considerable threat, the UK was intent on retaining its bases there and on reasserting its influence more robustly. Therefore, instead of being a part of NATO,

⁸⁰ The names of the invited journalists and the newspapers they represent are as follows: *Vatan* Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Zafer* Mümtaz Faik Fenik, *Hürriyet* Sedat Simavi, *Cumhuriyet* Cevat Fehmi Başkut, *Yeni Sabah* Safa Kılıçoğlu, *Yeni İstanbul* Habib Edip Törehan, *Akşam* Necmeddin Sadak, *Son Posta* Selim Ragıp Emeç, *Milliyet* Ali Naci Karacan, *Son Saat* Cihad Baban, *Dünya* Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Ulus* Nihat Erim, *Her Gün* Faruk Gürtunca, *İstanbul Ekspres* Mithat Perin, *Vakit* Mehmed Asım Us, *Hür Ses* Cavit Oral, *Demokrat* Adnan Düvenci, *Yeni Asır* Şevket Bilgin. See; Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim*, 1621.

the UK was in favor of Turkey coordinating with the British headquarters in the Middle East for the defense of the region.⁸¹ Under this British plan, Turkey and Greece were expected to contribute directly to the Middle Eastern defense framework rather than the European defense, thus serving as a security barrier for the West.

Turkey was not averse to assuming responsibilities in the Middle East, but this was contingent upon its NATO membership. In July 1951, Fuat Köprülü, the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Party-led government, articulated to Herbert Morrison, the British Foreign Secretary, Turkey's strategic stance in the wake of its prospective NATO membership. Köprülü asserted that following the consolidation of Turkey's security through NATO integration, the nation would be prepared to shoulder any responsibilities delineated by the United States, Great Britain, France, and Turkey concerning the Middle East.⁸² Turkey acknowledged the criticality of a robust defense framework in the Middle East and expressed its willingness to contribute to such a framework, subsequent to its accession to NATO, even to the extent of deploying forces.⁸³

It is possible to consider Köprülü sincere in this claim. He was considered “entirely an Easterner” (*Şarklı*) in terms of his upbringing, culture, and tastes.⁸⁴ With Köprülü’s transition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey's foreign policy began to show tendencies toward rapprochement and more engagement with the

⁸¹ NATO, S.G. 152, Note by the Secretaries to the Standing Group on Command in the Mediterranean and Middle East, June 26, 1951, 2-5.

⁸² Ayşegül Sever, “The Compliant Ally? Turkey and the West in the Middle East 1954-58,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 2 (1998): 73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283938>.

⁸³ NATO, M.C. 38/1, Report by the Standing Group to the North Atlantic Military Committee on Command Arrangements When Greece and Turkey Become Members of NATO, February 9, 1952, 13.

⁸⁴ Mahmut Dikerdem, *Ortadoğu’da Devrim Yılları: Bir Büyükelçinin Anıları*, (İstanbul: Yazılama Yayınevi, 1977) 17.

Arab world. Although this inclination in 1950 was merely the birth of a new Middle Eastern policy, it bore the first signs of an attitude that would eventually culminate in the Baghdad Pact. Indeed, the new Foreign Minister, in his initial meetings with representatives of Arab states in Ankara, stated that his party did not approve of the indifference shown towards Arab states during the Atatürk and İnönü periods and promised that his party “intends to correct the wrong path taken before.”⁸⁵ Köprülü had established friendships with the Arab ambassadors in Ankara even before the Democrat Party came to power and he was appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was known that almost every week a gathering was held in a house in Ankara, where traditional Turkish music was played and songs were sung, and Köprülü himself was fond of playing the oud.⁸⁶

Köprülü’s stance indicated that Turkey would voluntarily become a part of strategies directed towards the Middle East following its NATO membership; Menderes also acknowledged this. However, the government’s voluntary approach did not necessarily mean that the establishment of such a structure would be easily accepted by neighboring countries in the region. Faik Ahmet Barutçu, a Republican People’s Party (CHP) deputy during the Democrat Party government, was a figure respected by Menderes and someone with whom he could consult on various matters.⁸⁷ Barutçu articulated what the Prime Minister conveyed to him regarding the link between the Middle East Command and NATO membership as follows:

We went further than others in expressing our support for the Middle East Command because we did not want to raise doubts about Turkey’s intentions. After joining the Atlantic Pact, we did not want them to think we would distance ourselves from Middle Eastern affairs. Yet, we are not even convinced that the establishment of the Middle East Command is

⁸⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Faik Ahmet Barutçu, *Siyasi Hatıralar*, (21. Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2001) 1231.

possible. In a situation that is unlikely to succeed, we appeared overly supportive just to avoid suspicion, merely to provide reassurance.⁸⁸

In other words, Turkey pursued a policy of emphasizing on various occasions that it would be as beneficial as possible to the Western alliance during its process of joining NATO. But engagement in the Middle East was, at this time, very much seen in subordination to Turkey's broader integration into US-led Western security arrangements.

Turkey continued to press for full membership in NATO, and Turkish officials were frustrated by repeated rebuffs. Despite feeling vulnerable, they remained determined to secure a commitment from the United States. This persistence culminated in early 1951, when Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee visited Turkey. During his visit, Turkish President Celal Bayar expressed deep dissatisfaction with NATO's refusal to grant Turkey full membership, especially given Turkey's military contributions in the Korean War. Bayar asserted that Turkey sought reciprocal security guarantees from NATO and would not accept a lesser arrangement. Following this meeting, McGhee gathered feedback from US Middle East ambassadors in Istanbul between February 14 and 21, who unanimously supported a security guarantee for Turkey.⁸⁹

McGhee subsequently sent a report to the State Department, warning that, without a clear commitment to Turkey's defense, the country might adopt a neutralist stance. Given Turkey's strategic position, he cautioned that Turkish neutrality could mean that it would not automatically join the Allies in case of conflict unless directly attacked. McGhee emphasized that a US commitment was essential to ensure

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ NATO, Memorandum of conversation, Feb. 12, 1951, CD 092.3 NATO-GEN, box 243, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, V, 4-11, esp. 8, 21-27, 51-76, esp. 52, 1117-19.

Turkey's full alignment with Western security interests. Such a guarantee, he argued, would secure Turkey's growing military strength and allow the US and its allies access to Turkish bases for collective security actions. McGhee's recommendations highlighted Turkey's value as a strategic partner, stressing the importance of integrating Turkey into NATO's defense structure.⁹⁰

At a special session held in the late days of 1951, Admiral Aziz Ulusan, representing Turkey at the North Atlantic Military Committee, emphasized Turkey's strategic importance in line with the government's policy. He highlighted that geographically, Turkey was in a "unique strategic position for the defense of both Europe and the Middle East"⁹¹ and further stated that aggression against the Middle East could only come through Iran from east of the Caspian Sea or between the Caspian Sea and the Turkish frontier. No capable commander would contemplate such an operation unless the Turkish threat was first eliminated. Holding Turkey in strength was, therefore, in itself defending the Middle East.⁹²

In this era, the American press extensively praised Turkey's decision to send troops to Korea and highlighted the impressive role of the Turkish Army in the conflict. During an interview he gave on December 26, 1952, McGhee argued that Turkey was the most powerful country in the Middle East, that the successes of the Turkish troops in Korea had proved the Turkish power, and that the Turks would never give

⁹⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, [Document 731] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Berry), September 11, 1950; Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume V, The Near East and Africa State-JCS Meetings: Lot 61 D 417 [Document 7] State Department Draft Minutes of Discussions at the State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, January 30, 1951.

⁹¹ NATO, S.G. Special Meeting, Record of Special Meeting of the Standing Group North Atlantic Military Committee Held on 27 December 1951 with Admiral A. Ulusan. Representing The Turkish General Staff and Brigadier Gregory Th. Ketseas. The Greek Military Attache, December 28, 1951, 3.

⁹² Ibid., 4.

up even in the face of the most puissant powers for the defense of their country.⁹³

The Korean War also underscored the reality of regional conflicts, compelling NATO, particularly the US, to adopt more robust measures against the Soviet Union. Consequently, the strategic value of Turkey, in a way, grew in the estimation of Western powers, especially the US.

Turkey's unrelenting pursuit of NATO membership finally succeeded in February 1952.⁹⁴ This victory followed years of consistent diplomatic efforts, and it marked the end of Turkey's prolonged uncertainty about its role within Western defense structures. By securing membership in NATO, Turkey cemented its position as a frontline state in the West's containment strategy against the Soviet Union. Turkey's quest to join NATO had begun during the CHP era, and, therefore, NATO membership should be seen as a goal shared by both of the country's leading political parties. For Turkey, joining NATO represented the fruition of its post-World War II to guarantee security in response to the Soviet threat.

2.2 Rebuilding the Economy: Domestic Reforms and Western Integration

Turkey's strategic positioning in the post-World War II order was influenced by both external pressures and internal economic imperatives, and this was a period when hardly any compartmentalization can be detected. The nation's neutrality during the war had shielded it from the devastating effects suffered by other countries, but at a cost: Turkey emerged from the war economically strained and heavily dependent on key Western allies.

⁹³ Republican Archive of the Prime Ministry, *The Interview Us Ambassador to Turkey Mcghee Gave*, 30-1-0-0-102-639-15, December 26, 1952, 2-5.

⁹⁴ Haluk Ülman, "Nato ve Türkiye", *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 21/4 (1967), 143-150.

The first general elections of the multi-party era set the stage for significant economic reform. Upon CHP's 1946 victory, President İsmet İnönü appointed Recep Peker as prime minister, and the latter promptly launched an ambitious program of economic reform. Under the Peker administration, Turkey took the decisive step to enact what became known as the September 7 Decisions.⁹⁵ At the heart of these reforms was a substantial devaluation of the Turkish lira and a loosening of trade restrictions, both of which were aimed at rejuvenating a Turkish economy that was then in crisis. These economic measures were primarily a response to the dire domestic economic conditions that had developed over the course of the war and were also intended to secure Turkey's place within the emerging Western economic order. As these two areas of policy – foreign and domestic – converged, Turkey found itself navigating a difficult transition from wartime neutrality to peacetime alignment with the West.

The September 7 Decisions can be understood as the culmination of several challenges that Turkey faced in the mid-1940s. Economically, the Turkish state was under immense pressure. During World War II, the government had relied on credit expansion to fund defense and stabilize the domestic economy. Consequently, the money supply had risen dramatically, from 194 million lira in 1938 to 880 million lira by 1945, resulting in significant inflation.⁹⁶ The prices for consumer goods skyrocketed, as the government's wartime focus on military spending had come at the expense of consumer production.⁹⁷ This inflationary environment was exacerbated by Turkey's strategic resource endowments, such as chromium, which

⁹⁵ Hirst and İşçi, "Turkey's Rushed Liberalization", 625.

⁹⁶ Caner Bakır, *Merkezdeki Banka: Türkiye Cumhuriyet Merkez Bankası ve Uluslararası Bir Karşılaştırma* (The Central Bank: The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey and an International Comparison), 41-2; İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *İktisadi Politikaları ve Uygulamalarıyla İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si* (Turkey During World War II: Economic Policies and Practices) 69–81.

⁹⁷ Tekeli and İlkin, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si* (Turkey During World War II), 34–9.

was sought after by both Axis and Allied powers. Turkey's diplomatic efforts to maintain neutrality by trading selectively with both sides created strained relationships with both the United States and the United Kingdom, who pressured Turkey to curtail its exports to Axis countries.

Throughout World War II, Turkey maintained a neutral stance, though this was not easy to achieve. During the war, Turkey faced intense geopolitical strain. Initially contending with military threats from both Germany and the Soviet Union, Turkey navigated these pressures by forming a cautious alliance with the Western Allies, all the while striving to balance relations with opposing great powers. Economically reliant on Germany, an ally of the Soviet Union, but politically aligned with Germany's adversaries, Turkey's diplomatic steps were carefully measured.⁹⁸ The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 temporarily relieved Turkey's concerns over a Soviet threat, shifting focus toward Germany. However, after the pivotal Battle of Stalingrad, the power dynamics shifted again: the German threat receded, and the Soviet Union re-emerged as a significant concern. For the remainder of the war, Turkey's fears regarding Soviet intentions intensified.⁹⁹ At Allied conferences, two primary sources of Turkish apprehension were clear: the demands of the war and the longstanding rivalry between Britain and the Soviet Union in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The war had, in fact, contributed to the intertwining of Turkey's economic and security concerns. The wartime pressures on Turkey's foreign policy began just before the official outbreak of the war. In August 1939, Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu was invited to Moscow to explore a possible mutual assistance pact.

⁹⁸ Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 22.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

Arriving on September 25, after the German invasion of Poland and the start of the war, Saraçoğlu faced stringent Soviet demands: first, to amend the Montreux Convention to allow the Soviet Union shared authority with Turkey over decisions about the Straits, and second, to add a provision—at Germany’s urging—exempting the Soviet Union from defending Turkey in the event of a German attack. The Soviets might be interpreted to aim to secure the Black Sea, which they viewed as their vulnerable spot, by blocking access to powerful rivals.¹⁰⁰

Saraçoğlu found these conditions wholly unacceptable. His stance, coupled with the Soviet Union’s realignment due to its pact with Germany, led the discussions to collapse. Feridun Erkin, in his role as director general of Turkey’s Political Department, implies that the Soviets timed the invitations for the German and Turkish foreign ministers to visit Moscow together, aiming to use one against the other.¹⁰¹ Just two days after his departure from Moscow, Turkey concluded a Mutual Assistance Treaty with Britain and France on October 19, 1939, before Saraçoğlu even returned to Ankara.¹⁰² This pact pledged that if Turkey was attacked, Britain and France would come to its aid. Likewise, Turkey guaranteed to fight on the side of Britain and France if war spread to the Mediterranean. But, if this pact were to have any meaning, Turkey was convinced that Britain and France would need to help alleviate Turkey’s economic restraints.

The new treaty’s success hinged on two factors: the Allies’ ability to supply Turkey with adequate resources for defense and Turkey’s commitment, especially regarding its interpretation of Protocol No. 2, which declared that Turkey’s obligations could

¹⁰⁰ Altemur Kılıç, *Turkey and the World*, 78-79.

¹⁰¹ Erkin, *Les Relations Turco-Soviétiques et la Question de Détroits*, 177-178.

¹⁰² For provisions of the treaty, see Hurewitz, 226-228; and Türkkaya Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1939-1945*, 61-62, concerning the Special Agreement on Financial and Economic Questions. Regarding the context of these negotiations, see Ataöv, 53-65 and Erkin, 154-184.

not compel Turkey to engage in armed conflict with the Soviet Union. As events unfolded, both factors faced limitations. The Allies sought Turkey's support to help contain Hitler, with Britain also aiming to protect its critical position in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰³ However, Turkey needed guarantees in return for such a commitment, and these were not forthcoming. In 1939, Turkey accounted for 16.4 percent of the world's chromite production, the mineral used to obtain chromium, a key alloy in steel manufacturing. Throughout the war, Turkey was virtually Germany's sole supplier of chromite. Germany's interest in Turkey was compounded by the fact that, over the course of the 1930s, Turkey had become economically reliant on Germany: approximately half of Turkey's imports came from Germany. Turkey tried to lessen its dependence by signing a two-year agreement with Britain in January 1940 to supply most of its chromite production to the British.¹⁰⁴ Yet Allied shipments to Turkey remained insufficient, making it increasingly challenging for Turkey to curtail its relations with Germany. The situation intensified when Italy entered the war on June 10, 1940. Only three days later, the French and British ambassadors in Ankara, acting on instructions issued ten days prior, requested that Turkey declare war. By June 13, however, Turkey was aware that France's collapse was imminent, which destabilized the foundation of the tripartite alliance and diminished the alliance's strength and purpose. A provision in the treaty relieved Turkey from fulfilling its obligations until the promised economic and military support was provided. By June 1940, the supplies pledged under the October 19, 1939 treaty remained undelivered, and with France no longer in the war, there was little confidence that Britain, now struggling on its own, could meet these

¹⁰³ Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 23.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943-1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, 102-107. Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 68-69.

commitments.¹⁰⁵

By 1940, most of Turkey's trade routes were cut off, and with Allied supplies falling short, Germany's influence on Turkey grew stronger. To meet its needs, Turkey turned to a trade agreement with Germany. The agreement, offering Turkey significantly more economic benefit than Germany, did not affect Turkey's resolve to stay committed to the Allies, who were kept updated on the negotiations.¹⁰⁶ Given its reliance on foreign economies, Turkey found itself compelled to navigate a delicate balance between the Axis Powers and the Allies, seeing tough negotiations as essential for its survival.¹⁰⁷

Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, its large-scale invasion of the Soviet Union, on June 22, 1941. A few months later, on November 7, US President Roosevelt declared Turkey's defense essential to the security of the United States. By December 3, just days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt publicly announced that Turkey would receive lend-lease aid through British channels.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Germany, uncertain of Turkey's stance, intensified its pressure for access to Turkey's strategic resources, especially chromite. After the British and Soviet invasion of Iran, Germany exploited Turkey's fear of a potential British-Soviet alliance. This strategy, backed by Germany's significant military power, led to Turkey's October commitment to supply chromite to Germany beginning in January 1943, once its existing agreement with Britain and France expired. As always, Turkey negotiated firmly, securing less chromium for Germany than

¹⁰⁵ Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 74; Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War*, (London, 1949) 166.

¹⁰⁶ Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*, 19-20; Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

requested while obtaining essential supplies that the Allies struggled to provide.¹⁰⁹

In other words, determined to avoid the destruction of World War I, Turkish leaders faced international pressure while striving to preserve the country's neutrality.

Turkey's wartime balancing and the blockade policies of the Allies further hindered its economy, reducing the country's trade options. Imports dropped as Allied powers sought to control and restrict Turkey's access to vital goods, including industrial machinery, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. Trade bottlenecks ensued, particularly as German imports declined by more than 86 percent from 1939 to 1940. The situation was concerning for Ankara, and by the end of 1939, Turkish political circles cautioned the Allies that new supply shipments were insufficient to compensate for the trade losses.¹¹⁰ Efforts by Turkey to expand trade relations with neutral nations, like Switzerland and Sweden, were complicated by Allied interference and maritime restrictions that made importing and exporting goods difficult.¹¹¹ The collapse of trade with Germany and the resulting shift in Turkey's international commerce increased the importance of British and American markets, though these relationships came with constraints that left Turkey economically dependent and vulnerable.

Turkey's post-war economic challenges were rooted in its interwar trade policies, which alternated between periods of openness and regulated trade. In the 1930s, Turkey adjusted its policies to strengthen the economy by establishing clearing agreements that directed trade toward countries capable of providing essential items like machinery and pharmaceuticals. This was the context in which Germany had

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ "The End of German Exports", *The Economist*, November 25, 1939.

¹¹¹ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Turkish foreign ministry to Turkish economic ministry*, 540/44669/213691, March 9, 1946; Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *British embassy to Turkish foreign ministry*, 534/37074/149031, March 26, 1946.

become Turkey's top trade partner.¹¹² Turkey's focus on import-substitution industrialization increased its reliance on foreign goods for industry, a dependency that became problematic when war erupted in Europe.

Despite their best efforts, the Allied forces soon recognized the limits of their ability to meet Turkey's industrial needs. Although Germany's influence waned, Allied supplies proved inadequate, and Turkey eventually resumed trade relations with Berlin, despite Allied resistance.¹¹³ As the US joined the war and Turkey continued to trade with both Allies and Axis powers, economic tensions intensified. This led to the establishment of the Anglo-American Coordinating Committee (BACC) in Ankara, intended to manage Turkey's trade affairs.¹¹⁴ By war's end, the Allied powers had secured a degree of control over Turkish trade, but this came at a cost to Turkey's economic independence and reduced its trade volume.

As a result, Turkish industry faced shortages, production suffered, and inflation continued to rise. By 1945, Turkey's GDP was estimated to have contracted by approximately 35 percent during the war years.¹¹⁵ Economists and business leaders in Turkey began to argue that a currency devaluation was necessary to correct the imbalances that were making Turkish exports uncompetitive on the world stage and limiting Turkey's ability to earn foreign currency. Such a policy shift was controversial, particularly given Turkey's adherence to a fixed exchange rate system that had defined its economic policy for more than a decade. However, a growing number of voices in the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and among influential economists like Mekin Onaran and Fritz Neumark contended that without a

¹¹² Hirst and İşçi, "Turkey's Rushed Liberalization", 625–51.

¹¹³ W. N. Medlicott, *Economic Blockade*, Vol. 2 (London, 1952), 276–77.

¹¹⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. IV, *Steinhardt to Secretary of State*, June 10, 1942, 698.

¹¹⁵ Tekeli and İlkin, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, 417.

correction in the value of the lira, Turkey's economy would continue to deteriorate.¹¹⁶ By lowering the value of the lira, it was hoped that Turkish goods would become more attractive to foreign buyers, thus boosting exports and bringing in much-needed foreign currency to facilitate imports and reduce inflation.

In the face of this economic crisis, the government of Prime Minister Recep Peker enacted the September 7 Decisions in 1946, implementing a sudden and substantial devaluation of the lira from 1.30 to 2.80 lira to the US dollar.¹¹⁷ The devaluation was intended as a correction to align the lira's official value with its real market value, making Turkish goods more competitive internationally and thereby stimulating exports. It was also expected to address the significant trade imbalances that had emerged during the war, as well as the country's reliance on foreign imports for essential goods. Additionally, by eliminating the foreign exchange premiums that had been charged on imports and exports, the government aimed to streamline foreign trade and encourage the flow of goods into Turkey, thereby addressing the shortages and high consumer prices.

Peker's administration argued that cheaper Turkish goods would attract international interest, but this assertion was secondary to the broader objective of generating enough foreign currency to pay for imports. By adjusting the exchange rate, the government hoped to ease these trade restrictions and expand Turkey's options for foreign trade.

While the September 7 Decisions marked a turning point in Turkey's economic

¹¹⁶ Mekin Onaran; "Who's Who in the Bank," International Bank Notes 2, no. 22 (December 1, 1948); Fritz Neumark, *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar: Türkiye'ye İltica Eden Alman İlim Siyaset ve Sanat Adamları, 1933–1953*, 241–2.

¹¹⁷ İhsan Seddar Kaynar, "Turkey's First Devaluation: 7 September 1946 Decisions" in *Crisis as a Political and Economic Concept: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, edited by Ekrem Yaşar Akçay, Habip Demirhan, and Selin Demez, 113–125. (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), 115.

policy, the devaluation was met with mixed reactions both domestically and internationally. Turkish economists, journalists, and business leaders expressed frustration with the government's handling of the policy shift. The decision had been announced unexpectedly, catching business circles off guard. A sense of uncertainty was further heightened by the lack of consultation with key economic stakeholders, which led many in Istanbul's trading circles to question the rationale behind the devaluation and the feasibility of its success in addressing the economic crisis.¹¹⁸ Influential economists like Neumark argued that devaluation alone was insufficient and called for additional measures to curb inflation, such as tax reforms and spending cuts to reduce government demand in an already tight market.¹¹⁹ Without these complementary policies, critics argued, the devaluation would fail to produce long-term benefits and might exacerbate inflation by making imported goods more expensive.

Internationally, the devaluation raised questions about Turkey's economic direction. Western observers were initially surprised by the suddenness and scope of the currency adjustment, particularly given the global economic instability that followed the war.¹²⁰ Some British journalists suggested that Turkey's devaluation was premature, especially since the British themselves were grappling with post-war austerity and debt obligations to the United States, which limited their capacity to increase imports of Turkish goods even at reduced prices.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ahmet Emin Yalman, "Yeni iktisadi tedbirler mutlaka başarı temin etmelidir," *Vatan*, September 15, 1946.

¹¹⁹ Aslan Tufan Yazman, "Hayatı ucuzlatmak mes'elesi," *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, August 22, 1945; Cevat Nizami, "Paramızın yeni vaziyeti ve alınması gereken tedbirler," *Aksam*, September 12, 1946.

¹²⁰ "The Turkish Exchange," *The Financial Times*, September 10, 1946; "Turkey Devalues," *The Economist*, September 14, 1946; Mekin H. Onaran, "Devaluation of the Turkish Pound," *The Economist*, October 12, 1946, 580–582.

¹²¹ Osborne Mance, "The Future of British Trade with Turkey," *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* Volume 30, Issue 1, 5–18, 12.

While the devaluation was intended to address immediate economic concerns, it, along with the rest of the economic package, was also a strategic maneuver in Turkey's efforts to secure its place within the Western economic sphere. By liberalizing trade and devaluing the currency, Turkey signaled its willingness to align with Western economic norms, even as it sought to retain a degree of autonomy over its domestic economic policies. This was reflected in Turkey's application to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in March 1946 and its communication of the new exchange rates to the IMF just days after the devaluation.¹²² While multiple exchange rates were generally seen as incompatible with IMF membership, Turkey's decision to consolidate its rates as part of the September 7 Decisions was a clear indication of its intent to integrate into the emerging Bretton Woods economic system.¹²³

The September 7 Decisions demonstrate the ways that economic and security gambits were intertwined. The devaluation was part of a broader strategy to establish Turkey's economic stability while also positioning it as a reliable security partner for the United States and Western Europe in the face of a Soviet threat. In the following years, Turkey's alignment with the West would deepen, culminating in its entry into the European Payments Union in 1950 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. However, the immediate effects of the devaluation were mixed. While Turkey did experience a temporary boost in exports, these gains were short-lived, and the country's trade deficit widened as the government's emphasis on imports increased the demand for foreign currency.¹²⁴ Inflation remained a persistent problem, driven in part by the rising cost of imports, which offset some of the

¹²² IMF archives, Turkish Embassy to Executive Board, September 13, 1946. Accessed September 21, 2024. <https://archivescatalog.imf.org/Details/archive/125222573>.

¹²³ Barry Eichengreen, *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 98-107.

¹²⁴ "İhracat—İthalat ve İç Ticaret," *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası*, July, 1947.

benefits of the devaluation.

In retrospect, Peker Administration's economic policy highlights the challenges Turkey faced as it attempted to navigate the post-war international order. The policies underscored the limitations of economic liberalization as a standalone solution. Without significant aid to allow imports from the US, the benefits of devaluation were largely absorbed by rising prices and trade imbalances.¹²⁵ Furthermore, by prioritizing foreign trade relations over domestic stability, the government exposed Turkey to greater vulnerability in the face of global market fluctuations.

Despite these limitations, the September 7 Decisions marked an important step in Turkey's transition from a wartime economy to a peacetime economy integrated with the Western bloc. The policy reflected the committed approach of Turkey's leaders, who sought to combine economic liberalization with strategic alignment with the West. While the devaluation did not fully resolve Turkey's economic challenges, it set the stage for further reforms that would eventually culminate in Turkey's inclusion in Western economic and security alliances.

The geopolitical context of the post-war period played a decisive role in shaping Turkey's economic trajectory. With the growing threat of Soviet expansionism, the United States decided to support Turkey through the Truman Doctrine. This policy reflected the American government's recognition of Turkey's strategic importance in containing Soviet influence, providing vital financial and military assistance to bolster Turkey's independence and security.

¹²⁵ Serkan Tuna, "Cumhuriyet Ekonomisinin ilk devalüasyonu: 7 Eylül 1946," *Akdeniz İ.İ.B.F. Dergisi* 13 (2007): 110–5.

When the Greek-Turkish Assistance Act was enacted in 1947 under the Truman Doctrine, Turkey was allocating over half of its annual government revenues to national defense. This commitment to maintaining a large standing military placed significant strains on both financial and human resources. Although inflation remained minimal, the fiscal demands of Turkey's defense expenditures limited capital available for sectors like agriculture, industry, and transportation. As a result, Turkey struggled to boost agricultural exports—a sector employing around 80 percent of its 20 million citizens in 1948—and could not develop its potential exports in coal or light manufacturing. While the average daily caloric intake per person was sufficient at 2,500 calories, and unemployment remained low in 1947, per capita consumption of consumer goods was markedly below that of European nations. By the close of 1947, Turkey had to seek a \$40 million loan from the United States to offset declines in its export surplus and foreign currency reserves.¹²⁶

By 1948, living conditions had bettered modestly for many in Turkey. Land reform measures had transformed around 50,000 families into small landowners, while industrial employment grew, with around 300,000 people working in large factories and another 300,000 running small businesses. Educational opportunities also expanded at the village level, as approximately 25,000 teachers had graduated from Village Institutes, primarily aimed at improving rural education beyond rote learning. Additionally, thanks to the state-driven economic policies of Atatürk's era, products like sugar, cigarettes, shoes, and some modest luxuries had begun reaching villages.¹²⁷

Yet, for most Turks, a European standard of living remained out of reach. By 1948,

¹²⁶ George McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 44.

¹²⁷ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 45.

around 75 percent of Turkey's population still lived in rural areas, where traditional farming practices dominated. Literacy was a persistent challenge, with the official rate at 36.6 percent; some experts placed true illiteracy at closer to 80 percent. Life for many remained largely unchanged by the advances of the modern world, highlighting the persistent gap between rural Turkey and the rapidly developing European economies.¹²⁸

Following these gradual improvements in living conditions, Turkey's reliance on American support remained crucial, particularly for its defense infrastructure. Even here, by early 1948, delays in US shipments of military equipment began to stir concerns in Ankara. On January 9, 1948, the Turkish ambassador in Washington conveyed growing unease about the impact these delays were having on national morale.¹²⁹ At this point, the shipment delay had reached a full 60 days. According to the department, this lag was due to the US decision to use Turkish ships for transportation. The War Department informed the State Department that the planning phase had taken longer than expected but assured that the first shipment would be sent by February, despite Turkish ports not being fully equipped for maximum intake.¹³⁰

Later that month, as Congress prepared to review a new request for foreign aid funds, Walter Wilds—acting as aid coordinator for Greece and Turkey—updated Under-Secretary of State Lovett on Turkey's needs for a second year of support.¹³¹ Wilds emphasized that, despite the implementation of Public Law 75, Turkey's situation had changed little, and that strengthening and modernizing its armed forces was

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, vol. 6, 18-21.

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Ibid., 34-36.

unattainable without continued financial backing. He highlighted that this aid would not only sustain public morale in Turkey but also serve as a deterrent to Soviet aggression.¹³²

Wilds further reported to have concluded that the assistance provided to Turkey in 1947 had only just begun to address US security interests. Turkey's defense spending had severely burdened its economy, reducing available resources for public services and hindering productivity. Wilds cautioned that without noticeable improvements in living standards for Turkish workers and farmers, national resolve against external threats might falter, making the country more susceptible to communist influence. Although the Turkish people were notably patriotic and ready to defend their independence, Wilds pointed out that they understood their limitations and knew that resisting a full Soviet assault would be impossible without allied support.¹³³

Truman's commitments were underscored by sustained US support, with military assistance to Turkey under Public Law 75 reaching \$236 million by March 1950. This aid contributed to significant progress in equipping and training Turkish forces, which had been reduced from 500,000 to 300,000 since US assistance began. For fiscal year 1951, Turkey's military needs were estimated at \$45 million, a decrease from \$81 million in 1950, while economic aid was on the rise. In FY 1950, Turkey received \$114 million through the Economic Cooperation Administration (Marshall Plan) and the European Recovery Program (ERP), with an estimated \$76 million expected for FY 1951. These funds were allocated to promote economic development, aiming to elevate Turkey's low living standards and offset the

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 46.

significant costs of its defense budget. The US State Department viewed these objectives as successfully met and advocated for the continuation of aid to Turkey.¹³⁴

2.3 Unified Strategy: Bridging Security and Economic Objectives

Turkey's neutrality during World War II was a double-edged sword. While it allowed Turkey to avoid direct involvement in the war, it also left Turkey isolated in its aftermath. The Western powers scrutinized Turkey's wartime diplomacy, particularly its ability to maintain trade relations with Germany even as it signed an alliance agreement with the United Kingdom and France in 1939. This balancing approach showcased Turkey's skill in navigating the intense diplomatic currents of the war.

However, balancing in wartime carried risks. Turkey's efforts to maintain its relations with opposing blocs drew suspicion from both sides, leading to a degree of mistrust that persisted into the post-war period. The immediate post-war years were thus marked by heightened insecurity for Turkey, as it sought to prove its reliability as a Western ally while contending with the fallout from its wartime diplomacy.

To make the problem worse, Turkey's security policy during this period was shaped by the existential threats posed by the Soviet Union. Moscow's demands for territorial concessions and control over the Straits reinforced the necessity for Turkish leaders to align themselves with the Western states, particularly the US. This realignment was formalized through the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which provided military aid to bolster Turkey's defenses.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 69.

The decision to send troops to Korea in 1950 further cemented Turkey's standing as a reliable Cold War ally. By 1952, Turkey's accession to NATO marked the culmination of this security strategy, embedding Turkey within the Western alliance system and providing the collective security guarantees it desperately needed.

NATO membership was not merely a defensive measure but also a political statement of Turkey's commitment to the Western bloc. Unlike its wartime neutrality, which involved balancing relations with opposing powers, Turkey's early post-war security policy reflected a decisive break from balancing diplomacy. The shift toward unequivocal alignment with the United States and NATO demonstrated Turkey's recognition that its post-war security depended on integrating into the Western defense architecture.

Economically, Turkey faced a similarly precarious situation in the aftermath of the war. Inflation and problems rooted in the war years and even earlier exposed structural vulnerabilities that required urgent attention. The Peker government's September 7 Decisions was a critical step toward stabilizing the domestic economy in the post-war global economic structure.

The Marshall Plan, introduced in 1948, provided the solution for Turkey's economic predicament that Peker's measures could not. Beyond providing much-needed financial assistance, the plan allowed infrastructure development and agricultural modernization, beginning to address Turkey's structural economic vulnerabilities. As in the security realm, Turkish leaders viewed alignment with the Western bloc as essential for achieving long-term economic stability and modernization.

Overall, during the period covered in this chapter, 1945-1953, economic and security pressures pushed Turkey in a unified direction, converging into a cohesive strategy of Western alignment. This alignment with the West, driven by both economic necessity and existential security threats, underscores the unified nature of Turkey's foreign policy during this transformative period.



CHAPTER III: FROM POST-WAR ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS: TURKEY IN TRANSITION (1953–1960)

The period between 1953 and 1960 marks a defining chapter in Turkish foreign policy. During this period, Turkey maintained a strong commitment to NATO and Western-backed defense strategies while cautiously seeking economic alternatives. This included engaging with the Soviet Union, driven in part by the shortfall in anticipated aid from the United States and the subsequent emergence of economic challenges at home.

On the security front, Turkey's accession to NATO in 1952 had already fulfilled its long-term security objective and provided Turkish leadership with a sense of security against the Soviet threat. Following this achievement, Turkey actively pursued regional security initiatives in the Middle East, driven both by a desire to reinforce its strategic importance within NATO and a sense that the Cold War was bringing instability to the region. This effort culminated in the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, a collective defense mechanism aimed at countering communist influence in the region. While this pact underscored the Menderes Government's leadership role in regional security, it also placed the country at the center of rising tensions in the Middle East, thus expanding Ankara's sense of its security concerns.

The Cyprus issue, which Turkey had previously regarded as a British domestic matter, began to gain prominence in Turkish foreign policy around the same time. By the mid-1950s, it became a persistent point of contention, and its significance in Turkey's external relations continued to grow throughout the latter half of the decade. Meanwhile, relations with the Soviet Union appeared to thaw briefly after Stalin's death in 1953, as Moscow adopted a more conciliatory tone, renouncing

territorial claims over Kars and Ardahan and softening their plans over the Straits.¹³⁵

However, this fragile *détente* was disrupted by escalating tensions in the Middle East, particularly during the Syrian Crisis in 1957.

Economically, in the early 1950s, the influx of American aid had fueled Turkey's modernization efforts, bolstering its agricultural and infrastructural capacities. The mid-1950s, however, were a different story, as American aid began to decline, straining Turkey's economy and exacerbating domestic political pressures. This reduction in support led Turkish leaders to persistently seek renewed US assistance while simultaneously exploring alternative sources of economic aid. The Soviet Union, aware of Turkey's vulnerabilities, presented itself as a viable alternative. By offering trade opportunities and credit arrangements, the Soviets signaled their willingness to engage economically with Turkey, a prospect that gained traction within Turkish leadership circles. This shift culminated in Prime Minister Adnan Menderes planning a visit to Moscow in 1960, which underscored the growing economic dimension of Turkey's interactions with the Eastern bloc.¹³⁶

The third section of this chapter synthesizes these dynamics, arguing that while security concerns continued to dictate a rigid alignment with the Western bloc, economic necessities pushed Turkish leadership to explore rapprochement with the Soviet Union. In other words, this was a period when Turkey began compartmentalizing its economic and security policies.

¹³⁵ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), *Sovyet Rusya'nın Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerine Dair Deklarasyonu*, 35950-141837-16, June 12, 1953.

¹³⁶ Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 520.

3.1 Anchoring Security: NATO Membership, Regional Alliances, and Defense Priorities

The United Kingdom approached Turkey's NATO membership with the belief that Turkey would play a significant role in the defense of the Middle East, and, after its NATO accession, discussions began to explore the potential role Turkey could assume in the region. Like the British, the United States also attached importance to the creation of a defense mechanism in the region.¹³⁷ Washington attributed substantial importance to Turkey and believed that, without Turkey, the establishment of the Middle East Command would not be complete.¹³⁸ To US Ambassador to Turkey George C. McGhee, the Turks had displayed no evidence of a desire to advance their own special interests in the Middle East, unlike the British and the French. Turkey had withdrawn from the Middle East after the First World War and formally renounced any claim to territory or exclusive influence outside their present frontiers.¹³⁹ He believed that Middle Eastern countries respected and had growing confidence in Turks.¹⁴⁰

Egypt, along with Turkey, occupied an important position for the future of the Middle Eastern defense. Thus, Turkey joined the Western powers in offering the plan for Command to the Egyptians on October 6, 1952.¹⁴¹ However, the Egyptians viewed the Western-led Command as another way of imposing Western hegemony in the region and refused to take part in it. The absence of Egypt, meaning the absence of Arab support, was a serious blow, but the United States and the United Kingdom

¹³⁷ Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Turkey: Anglo-American Interests, 1945–1952, The First Enlargement of Nato* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 239. Also cited by Michael J. Cohen in *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East, 1954-1960 Defending the Northern Tier*, (Abingdon, Taylor and Francis, 2014), 73.

¹³⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, 190.

¹³⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, *The Ambassador in Turkey (McGhee) to the Department of State*, 31 March 1952, 218.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Sever, “The Compliant Ally? Turkey and the West in the Middle East 1954-58,” 74.

were not yet willing to give up their efforts. In 1952, following the failure of the Command, they brought forward the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), and Turkey was still regarded as one of the key assets.¹⁴²

According to American General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the accession of Turkey to NATO made the “outer circle” concept became more achievable on the condition that Iran did not side with the Soviets. The Turkish army backed by American and British air power, Bradley concluded, could greatly impede, if not prevent, possible Soviet penetration into the Middle East.¹⁴³

The Turks, in line with their initial policies, continued to place great importance to the defense of the Middle East. During his conversation with ambassador McGhee in July 1952, Turkish Foreign Minister Köprülü said:

The defense of the Middle East was essentially the defense of Turkey since Turkish forces constituted the bulwark of regional defense and since the Soviets would be forced to attack Turkey or neutralize it before launching an attack on Iran and Iraq. Thus... the most effective way to increase the defense capability of the Middle East was to increase the strength of Turkish forces.¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, this attempt was destined to fail as it could not attract enough support from the Arabs.¹⁴⁵ After having taking part in two impractical phases of defense planning, Turkey's substantial engagement with the defense of the Middle East came into existence in the wake of a new US defense initiative called the Northern Tier concept.¹⁴⁶ Before this US defense scheme was announced to the world, US Foreign Secretary John Foster Dulles performed a visit to the Middle East and met Turkish

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, Memorandum of Conversation by the Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of State, October 1, 1952, 291.

¹⁴⁴ McGhee, *The US-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 130.

¹⁴⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, The Secretary of State to The Department of State, June 27, 1952, 267.

¹⁴⁶ Sever, “The Compliant Ally? Turkey and the West in The Middle East 1954–58,” 74.

leaders in Ankara in May 1953.¹⁴⁷ In fact, Dulles had not initially intended to visit Turkey. According to Nüzhet Baba, the then press attaché at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, the change in the program was attributable to intervention by the White House and Eisenhower personally. Later, based on information from a credible asset, Baba alleged in his telegram to the Directorate General of Press and Tourism, that Eisenhower himself asked “how is it possible that there is no visit to Turkey!”¹⁴⁸ Subsequently, Turkey was included in the program.

Landing in Turkey, Secretary of State Dulles met with Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes on May 26, 1953. Discussing the defense of the Middle East, the Turkish Prime Minister asserted his hope of having the Arab countries accept that MEDO should be abandoned.¹⁴⁹ For Menderes, the failure to include Arab states into the previous initiatives was a source of regret; nevertheless, he continued, they should not exaggerate the importance of this and fall into despondency thereby. Turkey, he added, believed in its “holy role” in the new initiative and hence, that the backbone in the defense of the Middle East should be Turkey.¹⁵⁰

The Turkish Prime Minister was not in fact in favor of the idea of a Middle East Command, as Britain had been in the forefront in the previous alliance proposals. A US initiative was more attractive, as it could bring about more US aid to the region. Therefore, Menderes promised that Turkey would make every required effort for the creation of an organization including the regional countries.¹⁵¹ Asking for American economic aid, Menderes maintained that it was a necessity for Turkey to continue to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 74-75.

¹⁴⁸ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Telegram From Press Attaché At The Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., Nüzhet Baba To The Directorate General of Press and Tourism*, 21 January 1955, 23-24.

¹⁴⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Vol. IX, Part I, *Report on Dulles-Menderes Meeting*, 26 May 1953, 160.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

receive help so that the country could focus more on its duty as “guardian of civilization and an element of security” in the Middle East.¹⁵²

In the wake of his tour, Dulles concluded that the states of the Northern Tier, those bordering the USSR, who best understood the Soviet threat, would be most likely to do something about it and were in the best position to protect the area as a whole. The cornerstone of any such alignment could only be Turkey—the strongest state in the region and the only NATO member.¹⁵³ NATO’s absence, and in particular the absence of the US and Britain, could even encourage other Middle Eastern countries to join. As the pact developed, however, Western advisers might become involved in matters of planning and organization. Based on these observations, Washington decided to follow a more independent and responsible policy in the area vis-à-vis Britain.¹⁵⁴ This mindset convinced the Secretary that the US should help them empower the defenses of the Northern Tier countries with a view to resisting the common threat. In general, the roots of the development of the Baghdad Pact and the US role in it would be found in Dulles’s concept of the Northern Tier.

Two months before the visit of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to the Middle East, Stalin died on March 5, 1953. Shortly afterwards, on May 30, 1953, the Soviet Union issued a formal declaration regarding its relations with Turkey, which marked a notable shift in Moscow's stance towards its southern neighbor. The Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov conveyed to the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow that the USSR no longer harbored territorial claims against Turkey, particularly in reference to demands concerning the provinces of Kars and Ardahan. Furthermore, the Soviets hinted at the possibility of reaching a mutual agreement to safeguard the

¹⁵² Ibid., 162.

¹⁵³ McGhee, *The Us-Turkish-Nato Middle East Connection*, 156.

¹⁵⁴ Sanjian, “The Formulation of the Baghdad Pact,” 226–227.

security of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. It was also acknowledged that the Soviet government had revised its previous position on these issues. Although undeniably a significant rhetorical shift, the Turkish government did not perceive this declaration to have fundamentally altered Turkey's security priorities. The communication from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its embassies proclaimed that this shift was "a new manifestation of the Soviet strategy," emphasizing that while Moscow's approach had softened in rhetoric, its underlying objectives remained unchanged. Turkish officials were accordingly instructed to treat the Soviet statement with caution.¹⁵⁵

On July 18, 1953, the Turkish government formally responded to the Soviet statement by Molotov. In its response, the Turkish government expressed satisfaction with the Soviet Union's renouncement of territorial claims, noting that this declaration aligned with Turkey's "long-standing desire for the maintenance of peaceful and neighborly relations." Turkey also reaffirmed its commitment to "good neighborly relations and the preservation of peace and security," values which it insisted that it had consistently upheld.¹⁵⁶

Soviet Prime Minister Georgii Malenkov, in a lengthy speech given on the occasion of the closing of the budget negotiations in August 1953, mentioned Turkey and stated that improvement of relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union would be in the interest of both sides. Yet, to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these soothing words were "nothing more than a manifestation of the goodwill offensive" that the Soviets embarked upon immediately after Stalin's death. In fact, the Soviet

¹⁵⁵ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), Sovyet Rusya'nın Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerine Dair Deklarasyonu, 35950-141837-16, June 12, 1953.

¹⁵⁶ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA) Sovyet Rusya Dışişleri Bakanı Molotov'un Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerine Dair Beyanatına Türkiye'nin Cevabı, 35950-141837-68, July 14, 1953.

Union had yet to offer to Turks any concrete demonstration of goodwill to show that it was genuinely willing to establish constructive neighborly relations.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Turkish authorities remained skeptical of Soviet intentions, awaiting tangible evidence of goodwill.

The launch of the US-sponsored Northern Tier initiative played out in this context. By early 1954, Turkey sought to bolster alliances, notably with Pakistan, to fortify regional stability against common threats. In addition to these diplomatic and defense developments, the dialogue between Turkey and Pakistan took a significant turn following Dulles's Ankara visit. On February 19, 1954, the two nations announced their intent to strengthen collective security, marking the beginning of an enduring bilateral defense partnership.¹⁵⁸ This understanding led to a formal defense cooperation agreement on April 2, 1954, under which the United States committed to providing essential military support to Pakistan, conditional on its use solely for national defense purposes.¹⁵⁹ This agreement symbolized a pivotal step towards consolidating alliances and enhancing the defensive posture of the region.

As Turkey continued to solidify its alliances and regional defense partnerships, another issue began to rise in prominence on its security agenda: Cyprus. Although initially perceived as a peripheral concern, the geopolitical and strategic significance of Cyprus started to become more and more apparent, particularly in the context of Turkey's relationships with its NATO allies and its ongoing regional security considerations. By 1954, Cyprus had transformed from a background issue into a focal point in Turkey's foreign policy. Until the early 1950s, Turkey had maintained

¹⁵⁷ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA) Sovyet Rusya İle Türkiye Münasebetleri, 35783-141332-1, January 1, 1956.

¹⁵⁸ Harry N. Howard, "The Regional Pacts and The Eisenhower Doctrine," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 87.

¹⁵⁹ Ara Sanjian, "The Formulation of the Baghdad Pact," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 2 (1997): 231.

a position favoring the status quo, assuming that Britain, a key NATO ally, would retain control over the island as a strategic asset for Middle Eastern defense. Turkey viewed the British presence in Cyprus as a buffer against potential Soviet threats, aligning with the broader Western interest in containing Soviet influence in the region.¹⁶⁰

The early 1950s, however, witnessed increasing Greek Cypriot demands for enosis (union with Greece), which gained substantial support from mainland Greece. In 1951, Evangelos Averoff, then the Greek Foreign Minister, proposed a plan to the British, offering military bases in Greece in exchange for British approval of Cyprus's transfer to Greece. Britain rejected this offer, citing strategic concerns, as Cyprus was essential for its regional influence and for upholding the 1950 Tripartite Declaration with France and the United States to balance arms in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which also served as a mechanism to restrict Soviet access to the Middle East.¹⁶¹

In 1952, Turkey and Greece entered a period of relative rapprochement, exemplified by high-profile state visits, including a visit to Athens by Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü, followed by a visit from King Pavlos of Greece to Turkey.¹⁶² These diplomatic exchanges temporarily eased tensions and facilitated dialogue on mutual security interests. However, the Cyprus issue loomed in the background, and both governments, while aware of growing

¹⁶⁰ Christos Kassimeris, *Greece and the American Embrace: Greek Foreign Policy Towards Turkey, the US and the Western Alliance* (London: I.B. Tauris. 2014), 78.

¹⁶¹ Avi Shlaim, "Israel between East and West, 1948-1956," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36:4 (2004): 660.

¹⁶² Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006 Facts and Analyses with Documents*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015), 587.

public pressure on the topic, avoided direct discussions on the matter to preserve bilateral harmony.

By 1954, however, this cautious balance began to unravel. Greece intensified its support for the Greek Cypriots' aspirations, rekindling the Cyprus question and complicating regional dynamics. In July 1954, British Deputy Minister Henry Hopkinson's statement in the House of Commons implied that territories like Cyprus could never expect full independence, underscoring the island's strategic importance for Britain, particularly as its military position in Egypt was being re-evaluated.¹⁶³

Amidst this, Greece brought the Cyprus issue to the United Nations, seeking support for Cypriot self-determination. This move posed a diplomatic challenge for Turkey, which defended the status quo. Turkey's UN Representative, Selim Sarper, argued that Cyprus was an internal British matter, highlighting that UN intervention would violate the principle of non-interference.¹⁶⁴

Turkey's initial response to the internationalization of the Cyprus issue was shaped by both strategic considerations and allegiance to its Western allies, particularly the United States and Britain. American support for Britain in the UN vote reflected concerns about NATO unity, with US officials fearing that any endorsement of enosis could undermine Western cohesion and the collective security apparatus against Soviet encroachment.¹⁶⁵ For Turkey, British and American resistance to Greek demands in 1954 prevented a scenario where Cyprus might be transferred to

¹⁶³ Ibid., 597; Michael Kontos, N. Panayiotides, Alexandrou H., and Theodoulou S.C. *Great Power Politics in Cyprus: Foreign Interventions and Domestic Perceptions*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 13.

¹⁶⁴ Şükrü Sina Gürel, *Kıbrıs Tarihi 1878-1960: Kolonyalizm, Ulusçuluk ve Uluslararası Politika* [History of Cyprus 1878-1960: Colonialism, Nationalism and International Politics] (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1984), 71.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen George Xydis, *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954-1958*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1967), 599.

Greece—a prospect that Turkey found deeply alarming. This opposition, however, also signaled the necessity for Turkey to rethink its Cyprus policy, which had previously centered on passive support for British sovereignty over the island.

As Turkey sought to strengthen its regional alliances through a defense pact with Pakistan, the Soviet Union viewed these developments with growing concern, perceiving them as extensions of Western military ambitions in its sphere of influence. The Soviet government delivered a formal note to the Turkish Embassy in Moscow and expressed concern over the implications of the pact, suggesting that it would not only undermine regional security but also exacerbate tensions between neighboring countries. The Soviets viewed it as an extension of Western military ambitions.¹⁶⁶ They stressed that these developments came at a time when Moscow was seeking “to reduce international tensions,” and that Turkey’s involvement in such activities would inevitably strain Soviet-Turkish relations. The note concluded with a clear warning: if Turkey continued with this policy, it would “bear full responsibility for any negative consequences on bilateral relations.”¹⁶⁷

Just after the announcement of the joint Turkish-Pakistani communique in early 1954, Fuat Köprülü announced that Turkey and Pakistan were ready to welcome other friendly powers that wished to join.¹⁶⁸ While Köprülü referred mainly and generally to the Arab countries, it is highly probable that it was a message to the Iraqi leadership. For Turkey, the desire to see Iraq in a Middle East defense organization was not new. On February 28, 1953, Turkey had already invited Iraq for cooperation in a defense structure in the Middle East; however, Iraq refused because Egypt was

¹⁶⁶ TDA, *Sovyet Rusya Dışışleri Bakanlıgından Moskova Büyükelçiliğimize Tevdi Edilen Nota*, 35950-141839-1, March 18, 1954.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ara Sanjian, “The Formulation of The Baghdad Pact,” 226-232.

not there.¹⁶⁹ Yet the Iraqi needs for military equipment signaled the possibility that the Iraqi stance could change in the near future. Iraqi Minister of Defense Nuri Said told the British Ambassador in Baghdad that Iraq would not wait indefinitely for Egypt. Nuri Said declared that, in any case, Iraq wanted US funds to purchase British arms as a part of a military aid program similar to Turkey's before the latter had joined NATO. Iraqi forces, the Iraqi Minister of Defense added, could later be integrated into a Middle East defense organization.¹⁷⁰

The Turkish Government considered military cooperation necessary for establishing a united front against potential threats, with the formation of a regional defense alliance deemed crucial for security. Turkey's overall strategy toward the Arab world thus focused on a comprehensive approach, emphasizing economic, social, cultural, political, and military collaboration.

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes embarked on a Middle Eastern tour covering Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria from January 6 to January 18, 1955. The efforts to win Iraq over yielded results there, on January 13, 1955, when a communique was published in Baghdad, stating that Turkey and Iraq had decided to conclude in the immediate future a broad treaty of co-operation, to safeguard the stability and security of the Middle East and to repel any aggression committed against them either from within the region or from outside.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Bulletin, *Near East-Africa, Iraq rejects Turkish proposal to establish MEDO without Egypt*, Cia-Rdp79t00975a001100050001-3, April 3, 1953.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ During his visit to Damascus on January 14, Adnan Menderes was warmly received by the Syrian government. In official meetings, Menderes strongly advocated for the necessity of ensuring regional security and expressed his concerns about Syria's instability. When Menderes asked Syrian officials about their views on the Baghdad Pact, they avoided giving a direct response. Reflecting on the visit, Menderes remarked that it did not yield any tangible results and described the discussions as "amounting to zero." National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Department of The

The communique between Turkey and Iraq turned within a week and a half into a treaty of alliance. On 15 March, the full British Cabinet approved the UK's adherence to the new alliance, and the official documents were signed on April 4, 1955.

In order to close the Northern Tier, it remained but to consolidate the two pacts and to include Iran. At military staff talks held between the US, the UK, and Turkey in early 1955, it was agreed to secure the adherence of Iran and Pakistan to the Turkish–Iraqi Pact “in the fairly near future”, thereby completing the Northern Tier defense bloc.¹⁷² And the goal was achieved when Pakistan and Iran joined the Pact respectively in September and November.¹⁷³ At its first full meeting in November 1955, the new grouping took on the name the “Baghdad Pact.”¹⁷⁴

Despite these developments, Soviet efforts to improve relations with Turkey persisted. On March 6, 1955, the Polish Ambassador in Ankara visited the Turkish Foreign Minister to discuss Soviet-Turkish relations. The Ambassador highlighted Moscow's strong and genuine desire to improve relations with Turkey. He emphasized, on two separate occasions, that this was a priority for the Soviet Union, and that the Soviet leadership was sincere in its intentions to foster friendly ties. In response, the Turkish Foreign Minister reiterated that Turkey was indeed interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁵ He underscored, however, that just as Moscow's approach to Turkey was part of its broader global strategy, Ankara's

Army Staff Communications Office, From: Usarma Damascus Syria from Saa from Moose, To: Deptar Wash Dc for G2, Sa 660 Joint Weeka 2, 23 January 1955.

¹⁷² Michael Cohen, *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East, 1954-1960: Defending the Northern Tier*, (Routledge, 2004), 91.

¹⁷³ Andrew Mango, “Turkey in the Middle East.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 3 (1968): 234.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Cohen, *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East, 1954-1960*, 85.

¹⁷⁵ TDA, *Ankara'daki Polonya Büyükelçisinin Dışişleri Bakanı ile Görüşmesi ve Sovyet Rusya ile Türkiye İlişkileri*, 341-2641-2, March 7, 1955.

diplomatic stance toward the USSR was shaped by its commitments to NATO. He made it clear that any improvement in bilateral relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union would be contingent upon the development of relations between NATO and Moscow.¹⁷⁶ In the realm of security, this was a clear statement that Turkey was not prepared to engage in a balancing act with the rival superpowers.

Meanwhile, Turkey sought increased financial assistance from the United States to address its economic challenges. In May 1955, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Melih Esenbel traveled to the United States, primarily aiming to secure financial assistance. While this was the main objective, the meetings inevitably included political discussions. Zorlu emphasized that Turkey would not reduce its defense efforts, which were essential for its own security as well as its contributions to NATO and the Western alliance. However, he warned that the US was risking its own interests by weakening a key ally in the region. Toward the end of the meeting, it was agreed that further discussions would take place in the following days; however, the US remained firm in its stance that any potential financial assistance would depend on significant economic stabilization efforts by Turkey.¹⁷⁷

Following their talks in the US, the Turkish government convened the Middle East Ambassadors' Conference in Ankara to discuss its Middle East policy and clarify the road map. The conference was opened in June 1955 in Ankara under the chairmanship of Menderes, with Köprülü seated on his right and Zorlu on his left. Surrounding the table, in order of seniority, were Jeddah Ambassador Kemal Aziz Payman, Baghdad Ambassador Fikret Şefik Özdoğanlı, Beirut Ambassador Rıfkı Rüştü Zorlu, Amman Ambassador Kadri Rızan, Damascus Chargé d'Affaires İsmail

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, Telegram 1522, The Department Transmitted a Report on Allen's Meeting with Zorlu to the Embassy in Ankara. (/Ibid., 882.10/5—2655) May 26, 1955.

Soysan, Mahmut Dikerdem, and the Ambassador to Israel, Şefkati İstinyeli.¹⁷⁸ The meeting was a clear indication of Turkey's efforts to act systematically in its Middle East policy.

Just two months after the Ambassadors' Conference, the London Conference was held on August 29, 1955, and Orhan Eralp, among the Turkish diplomats, joined it in his capacity as “Director of the Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” This signaled the institutionalization of policy-making towards the region within the Turkish Ministry.¹⁷⁹

The London Conference itself was convened primarily in response to mounting unrest in Cyprus, where escalating tensions required immediate diplomatic engagement among Britain, Turkey, and Greece. As tensions over Cyprus intensified, Turkey began to articulate a more assertive stance, particularly in response to Greek and Greek Cypriot mobilization efforts. Greek Cypriots, under the leadership of Archbishop Makarios, shifted toward an armed struggle for self-determination, culminating in the establishment of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) in 1955, led by Colonel Grivas.¹⁸⁰ EOKA's campaign of violence, initially targeting British installations, eventually expanded to include attacks on British personnel, government officials, and even Greek Cypriot members of the AKEL party, escalating tensions on the island and placing additional strain on British authorities.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Mahmut Dikerdem, *Ortadoğu'da Devrim Yılları* (İstanbul Matbaası, 1977), 105.

¹⁷⁹ Semih Günver, *Fatin Rüştü Zorlu'nun Öyküsü Z Zorro Gibi*, (Bilgi Yayınevi, 1985), 64.

¹⁸⁰ David French, *Fighting EOKA: The British Counter-Insurgency Campaign on Cyprus, 1955-1959*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2015), 51.

¹⁸¹ Panagiotis Dimitrakis, “British Intelligence and the Cyprus Insurgency 1955-59,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence* 21, no. 2. (2008): 378.

The mounting unrest on Cyprus compelled Britain to convene a tripartite conference in London in 1955, involving Turkey and Greece. Representing Turkey at the conference, Foreign Minister Fatih Rüştü Zorlu outlined Turkey's strategic concerns, emphasizing the island's proximity to Turkish shores and its significance for national security. Zorlu argued that any change in the status quo should involve transferring control of Cyprus back to Turkey, reflecting a deepening Turkish interest in the island's future and a departure from earlier distance.¹⁸²

The London Conference marked a turning point in Turkish policy on Cyprus, as Turkey began to view itself as a key stakeholder in the island's fate. However, the notion of reclaiming Cyprus in the event of British withdrawal was short-lived. By 1956, Nihat Erim, an advisor to Prime Minister Menderes, recommended a policy shift toward partition, which later evolved into a formal stance with Turkish Cypriot leader Dr. Fazıl Küçük's advocacy for partition—a stance that would underpin Turkey's eventual military intervention in 1974.¹⁸³

Following the London Conference, Britain proposed a series of plans aimed at containing the Cyprus crisis, including the Radcliffe, Foot, and Macmillan Plans. The Macmillan Plan of 1958 envisaged a tripartite administrative structure for Cyprus, yet Greece opposed this solution, favoring full independence for the island. Archbishop Makarios's steadfast pursuit of Cypriot independence gained traction, eventually culminating in the 1959 Zurich and London Agreements, which established the Republic of Cyprus and formalized the roles of Britain, Greece, and Turkey as guarantors of the new state's security and independence.

¹⁸² Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 602.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 604.

During his administration, Menderes maintained intense contact with the senior ranks of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After meeting with diplomats, he would gather data and, as head of the government, determine the direction of foreign policy.¹⁸⁴ Menderes, particularly during the period between Köprülü's departure from the Ministry in June 1956 and Zorlu's appointment as Foreign Minister in November 1957, maintained close contact with Nuri Birgi and other senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He brought the Prime Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under one roof in the former Customs and Monopolies Ministry building. The offices of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were placed along the same corridor.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, Menderes regularly interacted with general directors and, during preparations for foreign visits, even with the career officers responsible for the regions involved.¹⁸⁶

During the period when Turkey's inclination towards the Middle East began to take concrete shape, the Soviet Union was simultaneously continuing its efforts to strengthen ties with both the region and Turkey itself. In January 1956, Soviet Ambassador to Oslo Griбанov initiated a diplomatic conversation with Turkish Ambassador to Oslo who had visited the Soviet Embassy. The Soviet Ambassador began by referring to recent cultural exchanges, notably Fenerbahçe Football Club's visit to Moscow, stating "your football players were received with great warmth and left a very positive impression in Moscow." He continued by emphasizing the importance of "friendship contacts" between nations, and raised toasts several times to peace and good relations between the two countries. In response, the Turkish

¹⁸⁴ Ercümen Yavuzalp, *Menderes'le Anılar*, (Bilgi Yayınevi, 1991), 75.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 76.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 78-9.

diplomat reiterated the universal desire for peace and the potential benefits of such exchanges.¹⁸⁷

Two days later, the Soviet Ambassador returned the visit, accompanied by his translator. During this meeting, reflecting Soviet interest in enhancing relations, he inquired about the prospects of initiating similar contacts between Turkey and the Soviet Union, to which the Turkish official replied that recent developments had created a favorable atmosphere, and if these statements were supported by actions, there would be no reason to remain pessimistic. The Soviet Ambassador echoed this sentiment, stating that “the Russian perspective aligns with this outlook” and expressing satisfaction with the Turkish diplomat’s remarks regarding the easing of international tensions. The Turkish diplomat concluded the conversation with a cautious optimism, stating that while positive rhetoric had set a constructive tone, “it is now time to see if concrete actions will follow.”¹⁸⁸

Building on this sentiment, Soviet Chargé d’Affaires Vassili Kornev, during an official visit to the Turkish Embassy in Moscow on January 9, 1956, expressed a strong interest in reviving cultural exchanges between Turkey and the Soviet Union. He highlighted the benefits of enhancing cultural relations, referring to successful exchanges with countries like France, England, America, and Switzerland through concerts, ballet performances, and other artistic exhibitions. Kornev remarked that similar exchanges had previously taken place with Turkey and proposed that the time had come to revive this practice, stating that Moscow was prepared to send a group of 15-20 distinguished artists, including pianists, ballet dancers, or acrobats, for a cultural event in March. In response, the Turkish official noted that the proposal

¹⁸⁷ TDA, *Sovyet Rusya’nın Oslo Sefiri ile Oslo Büyükelçimizin Yaptığı Görüşme*, 35874-141655-22, August 6, 1956.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

would be reviewed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and remarked on the necessity of considering the political implications of such exchanges. He emphasized:

While there is no doubt about the high quality of your artistic contributions, we must be mindful that such cultural exchanges should not be used for ideological propaganda purposes. Furthermore, we must ensure that these initiatives foster mutual goodwill between our nations without being viewed through a political lens.¹⁸⁹

Kornev passionately reassured that there would be no propaganda involved—this would be purely an artistic initiative. They would also be delighted if Turkey sent Turkish artists to Moscow or other regions in the Soviet Union. The Turkish official reiterated the need to consult with the Foreign Ministry before making any commitments.¹⁹⁰ More than a year after this proposal was made, on May 9, 1957, Adnan Menderes would meet with the Soviet ambassador and agree to send a group of prominent Turkish artists, including Leyla Gencer and Cemal Reşid Bey, to the Soviet Union, while a group of Soviet artists would visit Turkey in October of the same year.¹⁹¹ As a result, the Soviet cultural delegation was to be scheduled to depart from Moscow on October 1, 1957, to arrive in Turkey.¹⁹²

While relations with the Soviet Union advanced on a cultural level, the security realities of the Middle East continued to dominate a significant portion of Turkey's foreign policy agenda. The Iraqi-Turkish defense cooperation aggravated a sharp cleavage within the Arab World. Egypt viewed the move both as a challenge to its

¹⁸⁹ TDA, *Türkiye ile Sovyet Rusya Arasında Kültürel Mübadele Hakkında Yapılan Görüşme*, 35874-141670-11, January, 9, 1956.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ TDA, *Türkiye Başbakanı Adnan Menderes ve SSCB Ankara Büyükelçisi N. S. Rijov Arasında SSCB'ye Gönderilecek Türk Sanatçılar ve Türkiye'ye Gelecek Sovyet Sanatçılara Dair Yapılan Görüşme*, 35783-141317-9, May 18, 1957.

¹⁹² TDA, *Moskova'dan Gelerek Türkiye'de Konserler Verecek Olan Sovyet Müzisyenler*, 35922-141776-14, September 16, 1957.

leadership in the Arab League and to the concept of Arab unity.¹⁹³ On May 14, 1956, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested from its embassy in Ankara detailed and incontrovertible information to be used in anti-Baghdad Pact propaganda. In response, the Egyptian chargé d'affaires in Ankara suggested that the most effective propaganda against the Baghdad Pact would be to focus on the claim that the pact would also protect Israel in the event of an attack, thereby exposing the attempts to mislead Arab nations. To Egypt, Turkey was pursuing a duplicitous policy—on the one hand, guaranteeing Israel's security, while on the other, attempting to revive its influence in Arab countries through alignment with Western policies.¹⁹⁴

Saudi Arabia was similarly opposed to the pact, largely due to its dynastic competition with Iraq and its distrust of US-UK motives. The resulting crisis in Arab relations was intensified by Israel's mounting unease over the potential rise in Iraq's military power, and possibly that of other Arab nations. This tension was further exacerbated by French actions to preserve their "special" influence in the Levant, along with attempts by neutralist and anti-US/UK factions to hinder further advancements in regional defense.¹⁹⁵

Among the substantial issues remaining on the agenda throughout the lifetime of the Pact was whether the US itself would join it or not. For the Americans, the anti-communist purpose in the region was supposed to be accomplished without offending Egypt or Israel. Therefore, they refused full membership of the Baghdad

¹⁹³ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Soviet Union, Eastern Mediterranean, Volume XXIV, Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to The Department of State, Ankara, January 17, 1956, 666.

¹⁹⁴ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Bağdat Paktı aleyhindeki propaganda hakkında Mısır Hariciye Vekili ile Ankara Elçiliği arasındaki yazışma*, May 14, 1956.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Pact and thus brought about suspicion about their intentions which torpedoed the possible success of the organization from the outset.¹⁹⁶ There were also opposing voices in the US who did evaluate the US administration's efforts for the Baghdad Pact as nothing but a detrimental move. To Dean Acheson, the Pact was a source of provocation against the Arabs and the Soviet Union. The former Secretary of State who served in the Truman Administration criticized the Eisenhower Administration for not having recognized the merits of neutrality as long as the countries in question did not fall under the Soviet orbit.¹⁹⁷ Struggling to take cautious steps regarding the density of its relations with the Baghdad Pact, the United States became a full member of the Economic Committee and the Counter Subversive Committee in April 1956. However, what Turkey expected from the US was its accession to the military committee.¹⁹⁸

In the meantime, the crisis that ensued following the Nasser administration's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal Company on July 26, 1956, profoundly affected the regional policy of Turkey's Democratic Party (DP) government towards the Middle East.¹⁹⁹ The DP's stance of backing the United Kingdom and France, who were stakeholders in the Suez Canal, increased the critiques suggesting that Turkey was operating as an agent for Western interests in the Middle East. Despite Prime Minister Menderes's anticipation of the downfall of Nasser following the Anglo-French operation, the scenario did not unfold as expected. Nasser emerged politically victorious from a situation of military defeat, particularly after American intervention

¹⁹⁶ Andrew Mango, "Turkey in the Middle East," 234.

¹⁹⁷ Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953-71* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992), 41-42.

¹⁹⁸ NATO Archives, *The Soviet Threat to The South Eastern Flank of Nato in The Middle East*, No 114 P. 12, C-M (56)139, December 11, 1956.

¹⁹⁹ T.B.M.M., Minutes of Proceedings, Twenty-Second Session, Term: X, Volume: 15, Meeting: 3, Second Sitting, December 28, 1956, 325-331.

led to the cessation of the occupation in the Suez region. In this period, Turkey had recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv, a move designed to mitigate Arab hostility and curb anti-Turkish propaganda that accused Turkey of secret alliances with Israel and the west.²⁰⁰ Yet, Turkish leadership never ceased to condemn Egypt's deliberate provocations that, they thought, had led to the Israeli, British, and French military actions during the Suez Crisis.²⁰¹

Amidst these regional tensions, the Soviet Union renewed its efforts to improve relations with Turkey. On August 8, 1956, a significant diplomatic exchange took place between the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Soviet Ambassador, reflecting the evolving dynamics of Soviet-Turkish relations during the Cold War. During the meeting with the Turkish Minister, the ambassador delivered an official invitation from the Soviet government for a Turkish naval unit to visit the port of Odesa, suggesting the visit take place in August or September 1956. The ambassador emphasized that the Turkish officers and crew would be "warmly received" in a manner befitting a neighboring country that wishes to maintain very good and friendly relations with Turkey.²⁰² In response, the Turkish Foreign Minister expressed his thanks, assuring the ambassador that the proposal would be discussed with the relevant authorities, and that a response would be provided as soon as possible.²⁰³

Despite signals of rapprochement from the Soviet Union, Turkey remained deeply apprehensive about Soviet policies and presence in the Middle East. Particularly

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ UK Foreign Office (FO), 424, General Correspondence, Rk 1022/1, No. 1, Review of Turkish Foreign Policy in The Turkish National Assembly, Sir James Bowker to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd (No. 1. Confidential), January 2, 1957, 1.

²⁰² TDA, *Sovyet Rusya Büyükelçisi ile Yapılan Görüşme*, 35874-141654-4, August 8, 1956.

²⁰³ Ibid.

following the Suez Crisis of 1956, Turkey's concerns over Soviet influence in the Middle East intensified, particularly as Syria appeared to be falling into the Soviet orbit. On November 10, 1956, President Celâl Bayar informed Prime Minister Adnan Menderes of reports indicating Soviet military activities in the region, including the transportation of Soviet forces to Syria and the passage of Soviet vessels through the Turkish Straits. These actions, coupled with the promise of Soviet military aid to Egypt, signaled to Turkish leadership that Syria was becoming a Soviet base of operations. Bayar recommended that the Turkish government act swiftly, consulting with its allies to address the emerging threat.²⁰⁴

Menderes responded by acknowledging the severity of the situation and highlighted three critical issues: the potential violation of Turkish airspace by Soviet aircraft, Soviet military activities in Syria, and the risk of Soviet aggression against Iran. He suggested that Turkey coordinate closely with its Western allies, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, rather than addressing these issues solely through NATO channels. Menderes stressed the importance of direct communication and swift, decisive action to prevent further Soviet encroachment in the region.²⁰⁵

In a memorandum to US and British diplomats on November 14, Menderes reiterated Turkey's concerns, citing intelligence reports that Soviet military supplies were being delivered to Syria and that Soviet MiG aircraft had violated Turkish airspace.²⁰⁶ He emphasized Turkey's readiness to resist further Soviet provocations and sought US support in managing the growing crisis. Menderes also mentioned that Turkey was in

²⁰⁴ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Correspondence Between President Celâl Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Bayar to Menderes* 030_01_00_00_111_701_7_1, November 10, 1956.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States, *Telegram from The Embassy in Turkey to The Department of State*, November 14, 1956, 695.

close consultation with Iraq and Pakistan, both key members of the Baghdad Pact, regarding the broader implications for regional security.

Menderes expressed his government's frustration with the situation, which he described as part of a broader effort to encircle Turkey and weaken NATO's southeastern flank. Turkey viewed Syria as the key point of Soviet expansion in the Middle East, posing a direct threat to Turkish security and the stability of the region as a whole. Menderes warned that the Soviet presence in Syria represented a definite encirclement of Turkey and required urgent and coordinated action from Turkey's Western allies.²⁰⁷ Addressing the North Atlantic Council in Paris on November 28, 1956, Menderes expanded on these concerns, warning that the crisis was no longer limited to regional disputes but had grown into a global issue due to Soviet ambitions. He criticized those who had been misled by Soviet overtures of peace, emphasizing that recent events, including the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, demonstrated the continuing threat posed by "Russian imperialism".²⁰⁸

The Suez War was a significant catalyst for the development of the Eisenhower Doctrine. President Eisenhower feared that military action against Egypt could harm Western interests across the Third World, so he employed a range of political and economic pressures to force the attacking nations to pull back. Before they did so, however, the Soviet Union threatened to intervene in support of Egypt, momentarily heightening the risk of a global conflict. The crisis subsided only when the coalition

²⁰⁷ NATO Archives, North Atlantic Council, Summary Record of a Meeting of The Council with The Standing Group at The Palais De Chaillot, Paris Xvie, On Wednesday, 28th November 1956, 13-17.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

forces ceased their attacks, paving the way for the establishment of the Eisenhower Doctrine.²⁰⁹

In January 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower introduced a new foreign policy, which Congress approved on March 9 of the same year. The Eisenhower Doctrine was aimed at countering what Eisenhower perceived as the persistent Soviet ambition to dominate the Middle East, with Soviet leaders ready to exploit any opportunity to further their objectives.²¹⁰ Under this policy, the United States was authorized to work with and support any Middle Eastern nation or coalition seeking to build economic resilience in defense of their national independence. The Doctrine also empowered the US administration to implement military aid programs in the region for countries requesting assistance. Additionally, it enabled the deployment of US armed forces to protect the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of nations facing overt armed threats from any state aligned with international communism.²¹¹

President Eisenhower saw the Suez Crisis as having created a power vacuum in the Middle East, largely due to the diminishing influence of Great Britain and France. He was concerned that this shift had empowered Nasser to promote his pan-Arab policies and form strategic alliances with Jordan and Syria, thus increasing the region's vulnerability to Soviet influence. Eisenhower firmly believed that the most effective way to counter this risk was to demonstrate the United States' commitment to openly and actively supporting its allies in the Middle East.²¹² The assurance

²⁰⁹ Peter L. Hahn, "Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006): 39.

²¹⁰ The Department of State Bulletin, *Eisenhower's address to Congress*, Xxxv1, No. 917, January 21, 1957, 83-87.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

provided by the Eisenhower Doctrine was particularly well-received within Turkish government circles, reinforcing Turkey's confidence that its security concerns in the Middle East were addressed by its alliance with the United States.

Simultaneously, the Soviet Union sought to maintain a facade of goodwill in its relations with Turkey. On February 12, 1957, Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov addressed the Supreme Council, delivering a speech on Soviet foreign policy and international relations. His remarks touched on various geopolitical issues, including relations with China, the Soviet Union's growing friendship with communist countries, and the Eisenhower Doctrine and concerns over the rearmament of West Germany. In his speech, Shepilov turned to Soviet-Turkish relations and affirmed that the Soviet Union sought to establish and maintain "good relations with Turkey."²¹³

At the same, in February 1957, tensions between Turkey and Syria escalated further with the announcement that seven individuals, including Adnan Atasi, the son of former Syrian President Hashim al-Atasi, had been sentenced to death for allegedly conspiring with foreign powers to promote Syria's entry into the Baghdad Pact. The Turkish government, alarmed by the potential for further destabilization in the region, made an urgent appeal to the United States to intervene diplomatically. Prime Minister Menderes and President Bayar, both of whom were personally acquainted with Atasi, were deeply disturbed by the severity of the sentences, fearing that carrying out the executions would inflame tensions across the Middle East.²¹⁴

²¹³ TDA, *Sovyet Rusya Dışışleri Bakanının Dış Politika, Uluslararası Durum ve Türkiye-Sovyet Rusya İlişkilerine Dair Beyanatu*, 35874-141655-3, February 12, 1957.

²¹⁴ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED / NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / Syria 1955-59 / 59 – 3745, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File From: 783.00/1-555 To: 783.00/2657 Box No: 3745, Incoming Telegram Department of State, From: Ankara, To: Secretary of State, No: 1989, February 27, 7 P. M., Rec'd:

Turkey's request that the US approach the Syrian government to halt the executions underscores Ankara's broader concerns about the growing anti-Western sentiment in Syria and its implications for regional stability. The Turkish government feared that the imposition of the death sentences would serve as a rallying point for anti-imperialist propaganda, strengthening the Soviet foothold in the Middle East.²¹⁵

By the late 1950s, the Turkish government's increasing concerns over the growing Soviet presence in Syria and the broader Middle East were far from unfounded. Soviet influence in the region had expanded rapidly, particularly in Syria and Egypt, as the Soviet Union capitalized on economic vulnerabilities and the absence of Western defense alliances in certain countries. The rise in trade agreements between the Soviet bloc and Middle Eastern nations reflected this growing influence, with the number of agreements surging from a handful in the early 1950s to over 30 by the mid-decade. This marked a significant shift in regional trade dynamics, especially in countries facing balance of payments crises and lacking oil revenues, like Egypt and Syria.²¹⁶ Syria, in particular, experienced a dramatic increase in its economic and political ties with the Soviet Union. Prior to 1955, Syria's trade with the Soviet bloc was minimal, with only 1% of exports and 5% of imports involving the bloc. However, by the end of that year, trade agreements with eight Soviet bloc countries had been signed, signaling a new phase in Syrian-Soviet relations. By 1956, a substantial portion of Syria's cotton crop—around 20%—was being sold to the Soviet bloc, likely in exchange for military equipment, including arms. These developments reflected a growing dependency on the Soviet Union, particularly as Syria faced increasing economic and political isolation from the West.

February 28, 1957.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ NATO, Committee on Soviet Economic Policy Soviet Moves Vis-A-Vis the Outside World, Palais De Chaillot, Paris, Xvie, Secret Document Ac/89-D/14, March 4, 1957, 17.

In addition to these trade agreements, Soviet-led infrastructure and industrial projects began to take root in Syria. Proposals for the construction of key facilities such as oil refineries, sugar factories, cement plants, and textile mills were introduced by Soviet-aligned nations like Czechoslovakia and East Germany. These projects not only solidified the Soviet Union's economic foothold in Syria but also provided tangible evidence of the Soviets' long-term strategic ambitions in the Middle East. Furthermore, diplomatic efforts mirrored these economic engagements, with Soviet missions and high-level visits to Syria increasing throughout 1956.²¹⁷

Only three days after the approval of the Eisenhower Doctrine, on March 12, 1957, the US President sent his Special Assistant Ambassador James P. Richards to the region to visit fifteen countries.²¹⁸ Aiming to explain the doctrine to the Middle East leaders, Richards arrived in Ankara. He informed Menderes on March 21 of the American intention to join Military Committee of Baghdad Pact if invited to do so by Ministerial Council. Richards, however, stressed importance the Americans attached to keeping the matter from public knowledge at present.²¹⁹

The lack of explicit American support for the Pact brought about discontent and distrust among the existing members, including Turkey, towards the US. In an informal meeting of all Baghdad Pact members except the UK in Karachi on 24 March, Menderes stated that Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey agreed that the United States and Britain were to be blamed for the crisis in the Middle East. Turkish Premier said these four countries were losing confidence in their western allies

²¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

²¹⁸ Kristen Blake, *The U.S.-Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945-1962: A Case in The Annals of The Cold War*, (Lanham, University Press of America, 2009), 109.

²¹⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Volume XXIV, Soviet Union, Eastern, Mediterranean, 354. Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, March 22, 1957, 1195.

because of hesitation in supporting the pact. He charged that “events are surpassing US capacities and the US seems to be getting dizzy,” and said that “the USSR is dynamic and working very hard and the US does not know what to do.”²²⁰ At this point, it could not be said that the US and the UK were dictating Turkey’s security concerns in the Middle East.

Similar to Acheson, Dulles who inspired and initially backed up the Baghdad Pact, decided against the US adhering to the Pact, due principally to the doubt that the pro-Israeli lobby in the Congress would insist on a quid pro quo for Israel, in the form of a security guarantee. For such a move could have impaired the US relations with the Arab world.²²¹

During the talks with Richards, on recent Soviet campaign of threats against certain NATO countries, Nuri Birgi said that Turkey had received rather favorable treatment. The only approach made by the Soviet Union had consisted in an enquiry as to whether the reports in newspapers that Turkey was proposing to grant bases for United States nuclear forces were well founded. There had been certain minor demonstrations; for example, mixed flotillas of fishing boats and gunboats had appeared off the Turkish ports on the Black Sea, outside territorial waters but plainly visible to the naked eye. In the same category he would place the arrival of the new Soviet Ambassador to Turkey in a very modern Soviet jet aircraft and the attempts to surround this event with publicity.²²²

²²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency. *Middle East Defense Problems and Prospects*. Cia-Rdp79t00975a002500100001-2. April 4, 1956, 3.

²²¹ Michael Cohen, “Suez-Sinai, 1956: The International, Strategic and Military Aspect,” *Israel Studies Forum* 17, no. 1 (2001): 72.

²²² NATO Archives, Summary Record of a Meeting of The Council Held at Bonn, No: 373 C-R (57) 27, May 7, 1957, 10.

While geopolitical tensions between Turkey and the Soviet Union escalated due to the Syrian crisis and Moscow's growing influence in the Middle East, Moscow maintained a careful diplomatic and cultural exchange with Turkey. An illustrative example of this diplomatic balancing act is a cultural invitation extended by the Soviet Ambassador to Prime Minister Adnan Menderes on April 22, 1957. The Soviet Ambassador in Ankara invited Menderes and his spouse to attend a violin recital by Prof. David Oistrakh, a celebrated Soviet violinist, at the Ankara Opera House. The timing of this invitation, at the height of tensions over Soviet support for Syria, highlights the complex interplay between diplomacy and culture. This cultural gesture from the Soviets reflected their strategic interest in keeping diplomatic channels open with Turkey, despite the volatile regional environment.²²³

The Turkish Embassy in Moscow conveyed significant developments in Soviet-Iranian relations to the Turkish Foreign Ministry through a confidential report dated April 20, 1957. The report focused on the diplomatic visit of Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov to Tehran. The visit was officially for the signing of final documents related to the border delineation between the Soviet Union, Iran, and Afghanistan, as agreed upon in the Soviet-Iranian treaty of December 2, 1954.²²⁴ However, the Turkish Embassy emphasized the strategic importance of sending Kuznetsov—a highly skilled and experienced diplomat—indicating that the visit went beyond mere technical border adjustments. The Embassy underscored that Soviet attempts to shift Iran's political alignment were not new, but Kuznetsov's involvement pointed to an intensification of these efforts. The report further highlighted that, within Iran, there existed a faction favorable to Soviet interests, and

²²³ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Sovyet Büyükelçiliğinin Adnan Menderes ve eşini Rus sanatçılarının resitaline daveti*, 030-0-001-000-000-126-812-9-2, April 22, 1957.

²²⁴ TDA, *Sovyet Rusya ile İran Münasebetleri ve Kuznetsov'un Şah ile Görüşmeleri*, 35976-141355-2, April 20, 1957.

Kuznetsov's discussions with the Shah of Iran suggested a deeper Soviet push to solidify this influence.²²⁵

During the mid-1950s, Soviet influence in the Middle East significantly expanded, particularly through arms deals with Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. In March and August 1955, the Soviet Union first offered arms to Egypt, culminating in a major agreement with Czechoslovakia in September of that year. The first shipment of arms arrived in Egypt by October 1955, and Syria, inspired by Egypt's success, negotiated a similar arms deal with Czechoslovakia in early 1956. Yemen followed suit in June 1956. By the end of October 1956, Egypt had signed contracts estimated at £120-150 million, while Syria's contracts approached £20 million. These contracts supplied a wide range of military equipment, including naval vessels, aircraft, armor, artillery, and small arms.²²⁶

The bulk of the initial orders for Egypt and Syria had been delivered by late 1956. Although Czechoslovakia acted as the intermediary in these deals, the Soviet Union was the primary force behind them. Following the Suez Crisis, Egypt and Syria resumed negotiations for further arms supplies, and additional agreements were made in late 1956. By early 1957, new shipments, possibly including aircraft, had resumed. Soviet influence extended into the navies of Egypt and Syria, as these countries became increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union for the maintenance of their military equipment.²²⁷ Both countries had re-equipped their land and air forces with Soviet-made weaponry, creating a reliance on the Soviet Bloc for spare parts, replacements, and training. Soviet military advisors accompanied these shipments,

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ NATO Archives, The Threat to NATO's Southern Flank Arising from Soviet Military Penetration of The Middle East, Memorandum for The Steering Committee, Item Sgwm-463-57, August 2, 1957, 5.

²²⁷ Ibid.

and Soviet personnel were stationed in both countries as trainers and technical experts. This strategic military support allowed the Soviet Union to solidify its foothold in the region, particularly through control over military development and maintenance in Egypt and Syria.

The Soviet presence in Syria was unquestionably viewed by the Turkish government as a security threat. For Bulgaria in the west and the Soviets in the north already shared a border with Turkey. If communists came to power in Syria, this would mean that Turkey would be surrounded on three sides by communist states. The appointment of an officer with a communist mindset as Chief of General Staff to the Syrian army and the agreement confirming the continuation of the delivery of Soviet arms to Syria worried not only Turkey but also the United States. On August 24, the US Deputy Secretary of State and Middle East expert Loy H. Henderson flew to Istanbul to address these developments. The deployment of Turkish troops was recorded on the Syrian border following the negotiations.²²⁸

Around the same time, reports from the Syrian newspaper Rai al-Am noted increased Turkish military activity in the Kara Khan region, where approximately 3,000 Turkish soldiers, along with 50 tanks and armored cars, were stationed near the frontier. Despite this buildup, Soviet sources downplayed the likelihood of Turkey engaging in direct aggression against Syria. Nonetheless, the heightened military presence reflected Turkey's growing unease over the Soviet-backed developments in Syria.²²⁹

²²⁸ Hüseyin Bağcı, *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Dış Politikası* [The Foreign Policy of The Democrat Party], (Ankara: İmge Press, 1990), 211.

²²⁹ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File From: 783.00(W)/1-656 To: 783.5MSP/12-1159 Box No: 3748 Desp. No

Amidst the rising tensions of 1957, the Syrian government made multiple formal protests to Turkey regarding Turkish military maneuvers near the border. According to an American Foreign Service dispatch from Damascus, between May 9 and May 18, the Syrian government lodged at least three oral complaints with Turkish officials, citing concerns about the mobilization of Turkish forces along the Syrian border. The Syrian press, echoing official rhetoric, portrayed these maneuvers as part of an imperialist American policy aimed at isolating Syria and Egypt from the broader Arab world.²³⁰

While Syria viewed these actions as provocative, the Turkish side offered a more pragmatic interpretation. The Turkish Minister in Damascus informed the American Ambassador, Moose, that he believed the border maneuvers might serve as a useful pressure tactic to encourage the Syrian government to negotiate over various bilateral issues.

The Turkish troop mobilization, extensively covered in the Syrian press on May 14, was framed by Damascus as part of a broader American strategy, allegedly in coordination with the American Sixth Fleet, to exert military, political, and economic pressure on Syria and Egypt. Despite the serious nature of the accusations, Syrian officials reportedly maintained a calm stance, claiming to manage the situation with composure.²³¹

68, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Turkish Troops Reported on Syrian Frontier, August 10, 1957, 2.

²³⁰ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00(W)/1-656, To: 783.5MSP/12-1159, Box No: 3748, Desp. No 452, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Washington, May 18, 1957, 1.

²³¹ Ibid., 3.

During a visit to Istanbul in June 1957, US Charge d' Affaires Robert C. Strong received key insights into Turkish and Iraqi perspectives on the escalating situation in Syria, as conveyed by Mikhail Ilyan, an exiled leader of Syria's Nationalist Party. Ilyan, sentenced to death in absentia, reportedly revealed details of conversations with Iraqi Crown Prince Abdul Ilah, highlighting Iraq's and Turkey's interest in potential intervention in Syria to prevent the country from falling under communist influence.²³²

Ilyan emphasized that a solution to the Syrian crisis could only come from external intervention, specifically advocating for Iraqi military involvement. He explained that Iraqi troops could be seen as “saviors” rather than invaders, especially since significant portions of the Syrian army and political figures were reportedly awaiting such a move. Ilyan also pointed to the need for US support or tacit approval, suggesting that Iraq should proceed with the intervention without waiting for explicit American consent. Crown Prince Abdul Ilah, however, expressed caution, seeking prior US approval and being mindful of the potential risks to Iraq's monarchy, particularly the position of King Faisal. Abdul Ilah acknowledged Turkey's encouragement of Iraqi action in Syria but remained hesitant without American endorsement.²³³

Upon returning to Damascus, the US Charge d' Affaires informed the Turkish Minister to Syria, Adnan Kural, about these discussions. Kural indicated that Turkey preferred an independent and friendly Syria, but in the event that such an outcome

²³² National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED / NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / Syria 1955-59 / 59 – 3745, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00/1-555, To: 783.00/2657, Box No: 3745, Incoming Telegram Department of State, From: Amembassy, Damascus, To: The Department of State, Ref: None, Date: July 8, 1957, Subject: Turkish and Iraqi Views Regarding Syria.

²³³ Ibid.

was impossible, Turkey would accept a Syrian-Iraqi state to prevent Syria from falling under communist control. However, Kural expressed reservations about the stability of Iraq itself, noting that incorporating Syria could destabilize Iraq's fragile political landscape. Kural also hinted at an Iraqi plan involving Syrian tribes, with some already having been approached for discussions in Baghdad. However, the premature actions of these tribal leaders had caused tensions, leading to Syrian accusations against Iraq. Kural acknowledged Iraq's poor handling of these tribal affairs but concurred with Ilyan's view that many Syrian military officers and political leaders would welcome Iraqi intervention. In conclusion, while Ilyan's advocacy for Syrian-Iraqi unification reflected longstanding political ambitions, his increasing isolation from Syrian events cast some doubt on the reliability of his insights. Nonetheless, the conversation highlighted Turkey's and Iraq's shared concerns about Syria's potential communist alignment and their strategic considerations regarding intervention.²³⁴

Politically, relations with the Soviets were suffering due to Syria. Prime Minister Menderes expressed serious concerns about the deteriorating circumstances in Syria, indicating that Turkish troops had been withdrawn from the Syrian border 15 to 20 days earlier but could be redeployed within a few days if necessary. He also mentioned that during a recent soirée hosted by President Celal Bayar, Iraqi leaders, including King Faisal and the Crown Prince, voiced significant concerns over the situation in Syria and urged for a conference to address it.²³⁵

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED / NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / Syria 1955-59 / 59 – 3746, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00/8-257, To: 783.00/9-3057, Box No: 3746 Incoming Telegram Department of State, From: Ankara to: Secretary of State, No: 416, August 17, 5 P. M., Rec'd: August 18, 1957, 1-2.

This reflects the growing anxiety in Turkey about Syria's alignment with the Soviet Union, particularly the stockpiling of Soviet materiel in Syria. In response, Turkish troop dispositions came from the US Consul in Iskenderun and other sources, indicating that while Turkish forces were present near the Syrian border, their deployment was limited. This included a few battalions stationed in key border areas like Kirikhan, Islahiye, and Kilis, with a gendarmerie regiment spread across the region.²³⁶

On September 10, 1957, Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin sent a letter to Turkish Prime Minister Menderes.²³⁷ Bulganin blamed the US for placing a huge responsibility on Turkey for a military attack against Syria. The Soviet Prime Minister bluntly warned the Turks that in case a military attack was carried out against Syria, “it would in no case influence only that region.”²³⁸ And he added, “for such an armed battle which Turkey may take part in, the development to be required by geographic circumstances should be taken into account.”²³⁹ That is, Bulganin briefly warned Turkey that in case of an attack on Syria, the Soviets would directly intervene in Turkey, which the Turks had most feared in the post-Second World War period.

In the face of Turkish maneuvers and deployment across the border, the Syrian Army Chief of Staff Bizri claimed that Syria was not increasing its border guards. The Egyptian Counselor to Syria informed an embassy officer that Bizri's recent criticism of the United States stemmed from his genuine belief that the US was encouraging

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Nasuh Uslu, *The Turkish-American Relationship Between 1947 And 2003: The History Of A Distinctive Alliance* (New York: Nova Science), 130.

²³⁸ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Bulganin'in Menderes'e Gönderdiği Mektubun Metni*, 30-1-0-0-68-431-6, September 14, 1957. 27.

²³⁹ Ibid., 28.

Turkey's military posturing. However, the Egyptians believed that US diplomat Loy Henderson had been sent to calm the Turks and had communicated this to the Syrians.²⁴⁰

In the meantime, on September 16, 1957, the American Consulate in Istanbul sent a report to the Department of State about a survey on Istanbul residents' views on the Syrian crisis. The informal poll gathered opinions from a diverse range of individuals, including laborers, students, retired military officers, and writers, offering insight into public opinion on the matter. Although the poll was not a scientifically rigorous measure, it confirmed impressions from other sources that the Turkish public was divided on how to interpret recent events in Syria but generally agreed that some form of action, particularly the isolation of Syria, was necessary. The largest group interviewed saw the crisis as a result of Anglo-American rivalry for Middle Eastern oil. About half attributed the situation to a competition between the US and the Soviet Union for dominance in the region, while a few blamed the US for allowing the crisis to unfold. Conversely, others believed it was an opportunity for the US to assert its power. Some interviewees interpreted the events in local terms, with one suggesting that Syrian nationalism sought assistance from any source, while another pointed to Syria's attraction to the Soviet Union due to its large Armenian population. Approximately one-fifth of respondents felt the crisis was exaggerated, citing American propaganda as inflating the situation. Regarding potential action, most respondents believed external intervention was necessary, with a majority looking to the US to take decisive action. Some advocated for

²⁴⁰ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00(W)/1-656, To: 783.5MSP/12-1159, Box No: 3748 Foreign Service Despatch, Desp. No 151, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Washington, Subject Joint Weeka No. 26, September 27, 1957, 2.

strengthening the Baghdad Pact, while others suggested greater unity among neighboring nations. A significant portion of the respondents believed Turkey should isolate Syria, whether through military, political, or economic means, in collaboration with the US. A retired army officer suggested that Turkish military action would be justified only in the case of intolerable border incidents, predicting that a single Turkish division could easily reach the Gulf of Aqaba. Another respondent proposed that Turkey should use the situation as an opportunity to seize Cyprus.²⁴¹

In the broader media landscape, Syrian press and radio continued to emphasize Turkish “provocations” along the border, with editorial warnings to Turkey against following US instructions. Soviet Premier Khrushchev's statement to *The New York Times*, alleging that the United States had urged Turkey to attack Syria, dominated Syrian news coverage on October 11 in the USSR. The US Embassy calculated that despite the heavy focus on Turkish maneuvers in Syrian propaganda, there was no evidence of an actual Turkish threat requiring a Syrian military response. The Syrian regime appeared to be amplifying the situation for political leverage.²⁴²

On October 8, the Secretary General of the Syrian Foreign Office, Tarazi, handed the Turkish Chargé d’Affaires a formal note of protest. This note raised concerns over Turkish troop concentrations, violations of Syrian airspace, provocative firing incidents, and Turkish Prime Minister Menderes' remarks labeling Syria as a

²⁴¹ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) DECLASSIFIED / NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / Syria 1955-59 / 59 – 3746, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00/8-257, To: 783.00/9-3057, Box No: 3746, Foreign Service Despatch, Desp. No 140, From: American Consulate, İstanbul, To the Department of State. Washington, Subject: Istanbul Public Opinion in Syrian Situation, September 16, 1957.

²⁴² National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00(W)/1-656, To: 783.5MSP/12-1159, Box No: 3748, Desp. No 186, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Syro-Turkish Relations, Washington Subject Joint Weeka No. 28., October 12, 1957.

subversive base and arms depot.²⁴³ During their meeting, Turkish Chargé Birden suggested that Syria could ease Turkish anxieties by providing a list of Soviet arms received by Syria. However, Tarazi responded that civilians were unaware of the specifics and could not provide such information. Following this, Syrian Foreign Minister Bitar was instructed by his government to raise the issue of Turkish troop concentrations with the United Nations Secretary-General.²⁴⁴

Afterwards, on October 15, Syrian Acting Foreign Minister Kallas urgently summoned a US Embassy representative, expressing Syria's deep concern over what they believed to be an impending large-scale armored attack by Turkish forces. Kallas claimed that ten Turkish divisions were positioned as close as five kilometers from the Syrian border, with Turkish media and officials seemingly working to justify the attack. He also mentioned Syria's intention to file an official complaint with the United Nations and propose the formation of an international commission to inspect both sides of the border. Kallas further emphasized that neither Syrian nor Egyptian troops had been sent to the border and had no plans to do so. The Syrian Foreign Office had already raised the issue with the Soviet Charge and was informing other diplomatic missions in Damascus about the Turkish threat. In the meantime, the Syro-Egyptian Joint Command announced the arrival of Egyptian troops in Latakia on October 13, accompanied by Egyptian naval vessels and aircraft.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File From: 783.00(W)/1-656, To: 783.5MSP/12-1159 Box No: 3748, Desp. No 204, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Syria-Turkish Relations, Washington, Subject Joint Weeka No. 29, October 19, 1957.

On October 17, 1957, Soviet Leader Nikita Khrushchev addressed a letter to the Central Committee of the Norwegian Labour Party. This letter, later shared through NATO channels, accused Turkish leaders of harboring expansionist ambitions to restore their former influence over Arab nations. Khrushchev explicitly mentioned that “reactionary Syrian emigrants” were gathering in Istanbul, under Turkish protection, with the aim of forming a “Syrian puppet government” backed by foreign intervention.²⁴⁶ This, he argued, was a direct threat to Syria and the actions of the US and Turkey could drag countries like Norway, which were far removed from the conflict, into a military confrontation against their will. He referred to earlier fears raised by Western European countries when Turkey joined NATO, pointing out that these fears were now being realized as Turkey’s policies risked involving Western European nations in a larger-scale conflict.²⁴⁷ Two weeks later, during the Turkish National Day reception at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow on October 29, Soviet Premier Khrushchev would claim to Turkish Ambassador Kavur that the USSR possessed “documents” implicating the United States and Turkey in a plot against Syria.²⁴⁸

On November 2, 1957, the US Embassy in Damascus reported on growing tension between Syria and Turkey. Syrian authorities continued to emphasize external threats, particularly from Turkey, during NATO maneuvers scheduled for October 31 and early November. Reports of Turkish provocations, including border incidents

²⁴⁶ NATO Unclassified Po/57/1294, 17th October 1957, to: Permanent Representatives From: Secretary General, Letter from The Central Committee of The Communist Party of The Soviet Union to The Central Committee of The Norwegian Labour Party, P.5 - Translation of The Norwegian (Unofficial) Translation Supplied by The Russian Embassy in Oslo Together with The Original Letter in Russian (Written by First Secretary of The Central Committee of The CPSU N. Khrushchev).

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) DECLASSIFIED / NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / Syria 1955-59 / 59 – 3746, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00/8-257, To: 783.00/9-3057, Box No: 3746, Incoming Telegram Department of State, November 1, 1957 2:13 P.M., From: Ankara, To: Secretary of State, No: 1292, November 1, 1957.

involving livestock and Syrian civilians, were used to sustain the narrative of external threats.²⁴⁹

The Soviet-Syrian economic agreement of 28 October indicated the Soviet Union's determination firmly to consolidate its position in Syria. Although the Soviet leaders probably desired to avoid any direct obligations which might involve them in hostilities in the Middle East, Soviet prestige as the avowed champion of Arab nationalism against the West was heavily committed in the area.²⁵⁰

At the North Atlantic Council Meeting on December 17, 1957, Zorlu shared Turkey's concerns about Soviet expansion in the Middle East. He described Moscow's efforts over the past two years to extend its influence, particularly in Syria, where true democratic freedoms were absent under a facade of governance. He highlighted that Egypt had aligned with Soviet aims, seeking external support for regional dominance. Zorlu noted that the Soviet agenda extended beyond Egypt and Syria, reaching places like Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and North Africa, potentially isolating NATO from key resources. Anti-Western sentiment, driven by past grievances and attitudes toward Israel, had created fertile ground for Soviet propaganda, which capitalized on socio-economic disparities in the region, with religious differences posing little deterrent to Communist infiltration.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) DECLASSIFIED - NND 897424 / RG ENTRY BOX / SYRIA 1955-59 / 59 – 3748, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State 1955-9 Central Decimal File, From: 783.00(W)/1-656, To: 783.5MSP/12-1159, Box No: 3748, Desp. No 220, November 2, 1957, From American Embassy, Damascus, To the Department of State. Syro-Soviet Economic Agreement, Washington, Subject Joint Weeka No. 31.

²⁵⁰ NATO Archives, Document C-M (57)140, 29 November 1957, *Trends of Soviet Policy*, Report by The Committee of Political Advisers, 14.

²⁵¹ NATO Archives, C-R (57)83, Summary Record of a Meeting of The Council Held at The Palais De Chaillot, Paris, Xvie., December 17, 1957, 16.

In early 1958, the Syrian crisis was succeeded by the unification of Egypt and Syria.²⁵² Initially, Turkish officials, particularly Prime Minister Menderes and Foreign Minister Zorlu, viewed the proposed Syrian-Egyptian union with concern and saw it as a serious development. They believed that the primary pressure for the union came from Syria, driven by Syrian Communists and the Soviet Union, and saw it as an effort to undermine the Baghdad Pact. Menderes also saw Egypt's willingness to join the union as a sign that Egypt was collaborating with Communists, thus further escalating the perceived threat. While Zorlu publicly maintained a neutral stance, suggesting that Turkey would welcome Arab cooperation if it meant Syria distancing itself from the Soviet orbit, the Turkish leadership privately expressed deep unease, suspecting that the union was part of a Communist plot.²⁵³

Within a brief period, the Turkish stance towards the union changed drastically. In his speech on February 25, 1958, Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu expressed his views on the union between Egypt and Syria, emphasizing that Turkey would welcome the union if it could successfully curb communist influence in Syria. Speaking at a press conference ahead of the Baghdad Pact Conference in Ankara, Zorlu noted that if this union managed to eliminate communist control in Syria, Turkey would be pleased with the development. Further elaborating on the subject, Zorlu voiced Turkey's hope that Egypt, along with patriotic Syrians, would play a positive role in preventing communist infiltration in Syria, just as Egypt had protected itself from such influence. He emphasized Turkey's sincere wish that the union would serve as a means to shield

²⁵² Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and The Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2004), 181.

²⁵³ Foreign Relations of the United States, 303. Memorandum Of Conversation, Ankara, January 26, 1958.

Syria from communist encroachment and steer its policies away from communist dominance.²⁵⁴

On February 25, 1958, during a session of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu addressed the concerns about Nasser's influence in the Arab world. He clarified that Turkey had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Arab nations, either before or after joining the Baghdad Pact. Turkey's policy, Zorlu affirmed, was not to sow discord but to live in brotherly peace with these nations. He shared details of his two-and-a-half-hour meeting with Nasser in Bandung, during which he had sought to understand Nasser's perspective, and he made it clear that there was no reason for competition or disagreement between Turkey and Egypt. Despite Iraq being a Baghdad Pact ally, Turkey maintained friendly relations with Egypt, and Zorlu underscored that no hostility or dispute existed between the two countries. He argued that interpreting Turkey's close cooperation with Iraq as hostility toward Nasser was a misguided political stance.²⁵⁵

The unification of Egypt and Syria was succeeded by the Lebanese Crisis that emerged in the first half of 1958.²⁵⁶ However, the real blow to the Baghdad Pact would come with the coup d'état of July 14 in Iraq, in which King Faisal and Prime Minister Nuri al Said were to be killed.²⁵⁷ And several months later, on March 24,

²⁵⁴ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Forty-Sixth Session, Term: XI, Volume: 2, Meeting: 1, February 25, 1958, 608-610.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 643.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 205.

²⁵⁷ Hüseyin Bağcı, *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Dış Politikası*, 96.

1959, the new Iraqi administration would announce that Iraq was to withdraw from the Pact.²⁵⁸

Following Iraq's withdrawal, the Baghdad Pact transitioned into the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959. This shift restructured the alliance, leaving Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom as key members. In the same year, the United States joined as an associate member, the organization was renamed CENTO, and Turkish capital Ankara became the new headquarters.

By early 1960, domestically, the Menderes government faced mounting opposition, fueled by economic difficulties and growing authoritarianism. The government's repressive measures, including curbing political dissent and placing restrictions on opposition parties, heightened political tensions. The April 1960 imposition of martial law further alienated the political opposition, sparking mass student protests in Ankara and Istanbul. This unrest, combined with growing dissatisfaction within the military, especially among junior officers, intensified the political crisis.²⁵⁹

May stands as one of the most pivotal months not only of 1960 but also in Turkey's modern history. On May 1, a U-2 spy plane piloted by Gary Powers was shot down over Soviet territory shortly after departing from its base in Turkey. The very next day, US Secretary of State Christian Herter arrived in Istanbul for the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held from May 2 to May 4. At this time, the US was finalizing arrangements to deploy Jupiter nuclear missiles in Turkey.²⁶⁰ This deployment stemmed from US concerns over the Soviet Union's advancements in ballistic

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 99.

²⁵⁹ George S. Harris, The Causes of the 1960 Revolution in Turkey. *Middle East Journal*, (1970): 441-453.

²⁶⁰ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 80.

missile technology, which had created a perceived missile gap in 1957. Seeking to reinforce NATO's defense posture, President Eisenhower proposed placing intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) in NATO countries. Although most NATO members declined the offer due to fears of provoking the Soviet Union or domestic opposition, Turkey, along with the United Kingdom and Italy, accepted.

Returning to May 1960, domestically, the Turkish military, which viewed itself as the guardian of Kemalist principles, had long been dissatisfied with the Menderes government's handling of economic and social issues. Economic mismanagement, combined with Menderes' increasing authoritarianism, created an environment ripe for intervention. On May 27, 1960, in response to escalating unrest and fearing further erosion of Turkey's political stability, a group of military officers carried out a coup d'état, ousting the Menderes government.

Ultimately, what Menderes feared most came to pass. Nearly three years before the coup, the UK's Ambassador to Ankara, Sir James Bowker, offered an assessment of Adnan Menderes' leadership style and character. Bowker described Menderes as increasingly isolated, surrounding himself with like-minded advisors, drawing a parallel to Sultan Abdul Hamid II's historical paranoia about assassination, though in Menderes' case, it was a political fear of being ousted from power.²⁶¹ The coup marked the end of the DP's decade-long rule, with the military framing their actions as necessary to restore order and protect the republic from political collapse.²⁶²

²⁶¹ FO 424, E 2032, 297, Further Correspondence Respecting Turkey, PART II, January to December 1957, Rk 1015/21, No. 13, *Prospects of A General Election in Turkey*, Sir James Bowker to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received July 22), (No. 129. Confidential) Istanbul / July 19, 1957, 40.

²⁶² George S. Harris, "The Causes of the 1960 Revolution in Turkey," *Middle East Journal*, 454.

3.2 The Decline of Western Aid and Soviet Opportunities

Although the Soviet Union and Soviet involvement in the Middle East remained a constant part of Turkey's security landscape during this period, what is interesting is the way that economic ties between the Soviet Union and Turkey nonetheless grew. One reason was that, by the mid-1950s, the aid received from the United States was failing to cover Turkey's needs. As a result, from the mid-1950s onwards, economic issues began to gain increasing prominence on Turkey's agenda. By 1955, Turkey's economy was at a critical juncture. The foreign trade data from the early 1950s paints a clear picture of a country increasingly dependent on imports, with a widening trade deficit that highlighted structural weaknesses in its economy. While imports steadily grew to meet the country's modernization and industrialization efforts, exports failed to keep pace. This imbalance was particularly evident in 1955 when the trade deficit reached its peak, indicating that Turkey was importing far more than it could afford through export revenues. Turkey's export sector, which largely depended on agricultural products, was constrained by fluctuating commodity prices and limited industrial diversification. On the other hand, the country's import needs, driven by a focus on modernization and infrastructure development, outstripped its capacity to generate the necessary foreign exchange through exports.²⁶³ This created a situation where Turkey had to increasingly rely on foreign loans and aid to cover the gap, making the economy vulnerable to external shocks and international market conditions. The figures regarding the first half of the 1950s are as follows:²⁶⁴

²⁶³ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Fortieth Session, Term: XI, Volume: 2, Meeting: 1, February 19, 1958, 351.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Table 1. Turkey's Foreign Trade Statistics (1950–1955)

Years	Import (000 000) Lira	Export (000 000) Lira	Deficit (000 000) Lira
1950	799 859	737 587	-62 272
1951	1 125 840	879 429	-246 411
1952	1 556 575	1 016 158	-540 417
1953	1 491 093	1 108 971	-382 122
1954	1 339 404	937 787	-401 617
1955	1 393 384	877 370	-516 014

The US aid figures illustrate the extent to which Turkey's economic development and military buildup were underpinned by foreign assistance. From 1948 to 1955, Turkey received substantial financial aid from the United States as part of broader Cold War strategy, amounting to over \$600 million, as seen in details below.²⁶⁵

Table 2. US Financial Aid to Turkey (1948–1955)

Years	Million Dollars
1948 - 1949	49,0
1949 - 1950	132,1
1950 - 1951	100,4
1951 - 1952	70,8
1952 - 1953	69,1
1953 - 1954	78,9
1954 - 1955	101,1

A significant portion was directed towards defense-related expenditures. Thus, despite large inflows of capital, the overall economic growth was uneven, with inflationary pressures building and the balance of payments situation worsening.

By 1955, Turkey's attempts to stimulate economic growth and investment were hampered by its rising foreign debt and the mismatch between its developmental ambitions and its limited economic resources. The government's reliance on imports, coupled with an underperforming export sector, aggravated these challenges. The need for continued foreign aid, particularly from the United States, became

²⁶⁵ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Fortieth Session, Term: XI, Volume: 2, Meeting: 1, 25. Milletlerarası İktisadi İşbirliği Teşkilâtı, February 19, 1958, 178.

increasingly evident as Turkey sought to maintain its military commitments and support its ambitious development projects.²⁶⁶

On April 21, 1955, the US Ambassador met Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. During the discussion, Menderes expressed deep disappointment with the United States' approach to economic aid for Turkey. He emphasized that, despite the strong and enduring friendship between Turkey and the United States, which would persist even without aid, the US was the only country unwilling to extend credit to Turkey. In contrast, countries like the UK, Germany, France, and even economically weaker nations such as Yugoslavia, Austria, and Greece were providing support.²⁶⁷ Menderes highlighted that, since taking office, he had faced continuous criticism from American officials regarding inflation risks in Turkey, although he firmly believed that there was no significant inflation threat. He noted that if Turkey had not experienced a poor crop the previous year, the country would not be in its current financial situation, nor would it need to seek assistance from the US. He questioned why the US expected Turkey to halt productive projects that were already almost entirely funded, suggesting that finding the remaining resources elsewhere was a feasible option.²⁶⁸

The Prime Minister expressed his concern that the US approach implied a desire to change Turkey's government if it did not align with American expectations, warning that this could lead to instability, potentially making Turkey more vulnerable, similar to the situation in Syria. He concluded by asserting that Turkey would be able to manage on its own and prove the US predictions wrong. However, he warned that

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 178.

²⁶⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to The Department of State, Ankara, April 21, 1955.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

the US decision to deny aid during this critical period would be a lasting regret for American policymakers.²⁶⁹

In May, 1955, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Melih Esenbel visited the US to seek financial assistance. Zorlu indicated in the meeting that his primary purpose in visiting the United States was to discuss the possibility of a loan.²⁷⁰ Assistant Secretary of State George Allen responded by expressing concerns about Turkey's failure to implement sufficient measures to stabilize its economy and control inflation. During subsequent discussions, Zorlu reiterated Turkey's need for \$300 million, emphasizing that a smaller loan would be insufficient to address the country's pressing economic challenges. He acknowledged inflationary pressures in Turkey and assured the US that corrective actions would be taken but insisted that receiving the loan was a fundamental component of the solution.²⁷¹ The US government remained unconvinced that Turkey's economic difficulties were temporary and thus was hesitant to support a large cash loan. Allen further stated that the US Executive Branch was not prepared to advocate for an extraordinary loan before Congress.²⁷² He noted that any potential loan would be contingent upon a US evaluation of Turkey's economic reform plans.

At a follow-up meeting with US officials, Zorlu addressed specific concerns, such as the lifting of credit restrictions in response to a wheat shortage that had created a substantial financial imbalance. In response to criticisms that Turkey's ambitious and extensive investments were placing a burden on the economy, he defended Turkey's application of 13% of its Gross National Product (GNP) to investment, suggesting it

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, Telegram from the Department of State to The Embassy in Turkey, May 21, 1955.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

was not excessive. In conclusion, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles commended Turkey's performance at the Bandung Conference but reiterated that a \$300 million loan was far beyond what could be considered. He stressed that any additional assistance would require assurances that Turkey's economic difficulties were not recurring. Zorlu assured the Secretary that Turkey was prepared to implement "Draconian" measures to address the crisis.²⁷³

As Turkey grappled with economic difficulties, geopolitical pressures further complicated its position. In January 1956, Turkish President Celâl Bayar had conversation with US Admiral William Fechteler. The meeting, lasting over an hour, addressed critical political, military, and economic challenges faced by Turkey. President Bayar highlighted increased Soviet pressure on Turkey, including the distribution of anti-government leaflets smuggled through Syria and Lebanon, particularly targeting Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. These leaflets, he added, criticized Turkey's alignment with the West and blamed economic difficulties on the government's foreign policy, advocating for Menderes' removal from office.²⁷⁴ Bayar explained that while Soviet efforts to undermine the Turkish government were ongoing, Moscow had simultaneously extended offers of economic aid to Turkey, purportedly "without any strings attached."²⁷⁵

The Turkish president described Turkey's economic situation as critical and expressed frustration with the arguments put forth by American officials and institutions like the World Bank, which had refused minor credit to Turkey while simultaneously committing significant financial resources to other countries, such as

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Soviet Union, Eastern Mediterranean, Volume XXIV, Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to The Department of State, Ankara, January 17, 1956, 666.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

Egypt. Bayar argued that Turkey's financial needs, stemming from its determination to build an economy capable of supporting its defense efforts, had not been fairly considered. He believed that US assessments of Turkey's needs were influenced by “bookkeepers and small-minded men,” preventing President Eisenhower from fully grasping Turkey's importance and the gravity of its economic challenges. Bayar also mentioned that Clarence Randall, who had previously visited Turkey in 1953, would be returning later that month to assess the country's economic situation. Bayar hoped that Randall's visit would lead to a better understanding between the two governments and prompt the US to view Turkey's requests for aid from a political and strategic perspective rather than purely financial and economic terms.²⁷⁶

In the meantime, the post-Stalin Soviet leadership's shift in its stance towards Turkey included a significant economic component. At the time of Stalin's death, Turkey's exports to Soviet Russia were very limited. The main exported items consisted of live animals, raw mohair, oak acorn and gall, and tobacco. According to the Turkish statistics, between 1950 and 1954, there had been no imports from Soviet Russia to Turkey—except for textiles worth 7,000 lira imported in 1951. The proportion of trade with Soviet Russia in relation to Turkey's total trade was approximately 0.5% to 1% in exports, and negligible in imports.²⁷⁷

However, in the years following 1954, this minimal economic exchange would begin to shift. Turkey's trade relationship with the Soviet bloc would soon show initial signs of growth, with total trade valued at \$100 million in 1954 and projected to rise by 60% to reach \$160 million the following year. This anticipated expansion signified a notable shift in Turkey's economic strategy, indicating that the Soviet

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA), Türkiye ile Sovyet Rusya Arasındaki Siyasi ve Ticari İlişkiler, 35784-141336-14, February 27, 1954.

bloc was poised to become a more prominent partner in the coming years. These developments suggest that Turkey's strategic adjustments, partly due to unmet expectations of support from the United States, would ultimately lead to a reorientation of foreign economic policy.²⁷⁸

Over time, the economic dimension of relations with the Soviet Union became increasingly evident. In mid-1956, significant discussions were held regarding Turkey's trade relations with the Soviet Union, particularly in the field of infrastructure development at the General Directorate of Bank of Municipalities of Turkey (*İller Bankası*). Krutikov, the Soviet trade representative, sought to engage with the General Directorate of Bank of Municipalities on issues within the Bank's mandate. With approval from the Turkish Minister of the Interior, Krutikov was received at the bank on July 26, 1956, where discussions focused on drinking water systems and thermal and hydraulic materials. Following this meeting, the Soviet representative contacted his government and, on August 3, 1956, V/O Promsryimport and V/O Mashniexport, two Soviet firms, expressed their readiness to meet in Moscow for initial negotiations concerning water pipes and hydroelectric installations. In addition, the Soviet trade representative also proposed that they could supply all the machinery and equipment for the Bendimahi (Muradiye) Hydroelectric Power Plant, indicating their capacity to support large-scale infrastructure projects in Turkey. The Bank suggested that acquiring some of the equipment for Turkey's thermal and hydroelectric power plants from the Soviets

²⁷⁸ NATO Secret Working Paper Ac/89-Wp/18, November 14, 1957, *Committee on Soviet Economic Policy Soviet Economic Penetration in the Middle East Note by the International Staff*, 9.

might be feasible, and that further investigations into these options would be pursued if a trip to the Soviet Union were to take place.²⁷⁹

Although the Soviets made multiple attempts to reconnect through telegrams and phone calls, further communication with the Bank was not permitted at that time.²⁸⁰ For Turkey, the primary source of economic support was still the West, and consequently the United States in particular. The US acknowledged the economic burden that maintaining such a large defense force placed on Turkey, noting that without external assistance, this burden could become unsustainable. To support Turkey's economic stability, the US requested \$70 million in economic aid for Turkey from Congress for the upcoming fiscal year. However, while the US was committed to providing military and economic assistance, it was “impossible for the American Government to commit to any intentions of providing military and economic support beyond the fiscal year of 1955.”²⁸¹

Turkey's economic strategy during this period showcased a dual approach: relying on Western support, particularly from the United States, while exploring alternative trade collaboration with the Soviet Union.

Gradually, Turkey's economic overtures pushed beyond this East-West balancing act. By August 1957, Turkey's economic policy towards Egypt began to show signs of change.²⁸² A key factor in this shift was the increasing influence of pro-Arab factions within the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following the departure of M. Birgi, a

²⁷⁹ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Rus Ticaret Mümessili Krutikov'un İller Bankası Genel Müdürü ile görüşmesi*, 030_01_00_00_109_689_14_1, October 2, 1956.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *American Memorandum to Turkey on Military and Economic Aid*, 030-0-001-000-000-62-381-10-1, November 3, 1956.

²⁸² FO 424, E 2032, 297, Further Correspondence Respecting Turkey, PART II, January to December 1957, Rk 10316/3, No. 15, *Turkish Rapprochement with Egypt* (1) Mr. Selwyn Llyod to Sir James Bowker (Istanbul), (No. 68. Confidential) Foreign Office / August 1, 1957, 43.

senior official who had previously aligned Turkish policy more closely with British perspectives. With Birgi's departure, Turkish ministers began expressing a more open stance towards Egypt, with public statements indicating growing economic cooperation. Turkey's Minister of Commerce, for example, spoke of expanding economic ties between the two nations, including possible credit facilities extended to Egypt.²⁸³

In October 1956, Turkey had already initiated trade negotiations with Egypt by sending a delegation to Cairo, signaling its interest in strengthening economic relations. These developments reflected Turkey's efforts to expand its diplomatic and economic engagement in the Middle East, seeking closer ties with Arab nations like Egypt, as it sought to balance its relationships with Western powers.²⁸⁴

By 1957, trade relations between Turkey and Egypt were regulated by the Trade and Payment Agreement of August 15, 1953, but the implementation of this agreement had not been entirely satisfactory due to the trade restrictions in both countries. To address these challenges, Turkey and Egypt exchanged letters on July 18, 1957, introducing new measures to facilitate trade, including raising the credit margin from \$900,000 to \$2,000,000. Additionally, provisions were made to allow balances in trade to be settled through third-country transactions, further easing trade disruptions. This arrangement, designed to strengthen economic ties, was presented for approval to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, signifying both countries' commitment to deepening their economic relationship.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Republican Archive of The Prime Ministry, *Kararname, T.C. Başvekalet Kanunlar ve Kararlar Tetkik Dairesi Karar Sayısı*, 4/8171, 030_18_01_02_144_86_19, October 1956.

²⁸⁵ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Thirty-Seventh Session, Term: XI, Volume: 2, Meeting: 1, February 12, 1958, 63.

In a meeting on August 6, 1957, Norwegian Ambassador Lunde sought information from Turkish Foreign Ministry official Kuneralp on several key issues, including relations between Syria and Jordan, and recent developments in Turkish-Soviet trade relations. During the conversation, regarding Turkish-Soviet trade relations, Kuneralp emphasized that recent contacts between the two countries were purely economic and should not be interpreted in political terms. He pointed out that, under the current conditions, all Western countries, including Turkey, saw no harm in maintaining trade relations with the Soviet Union.²⁸⁶

While Turkey engaged in economic exchanges with the Soviet Union, the domestic economic crisis revealed growing strains. In the aftermath of the election victory in October 1957, the DP was facing a severe economic crisis. The government, under Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, was determined to modernize the country rapidly, but this ambition had placed immense financial strain on the economy. Turkey's foreign debt had risen to an estimated \$1.2 billion, and a major balance of payments crisis was looming. Inflation was rampant, driven by the government's reliance on deficit spending and the excessive circulation of currency. By the end of 1957, the money supply had expanded by over 37% in just under a year, contributing to a significant devaluation of the Turkish lira. The black-market exchange rate was considerably higher than the official rate, with gold prices reflecting the lira's sharp depreciation.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ TDA, *Norveç Büyükelçisinin, Kıbrıs Meselesi, Suriye ile Ürdün Arasındaki İlişkiler, Türk-Sovyet Ticari Münasebetleri, Polonya'nın İç Durumu ve Norveç Tarafından Türkiye'ye Teslimi Yapılan Uçaklar Konularını Kapsayan Görüşme*, 328847-320835-21, August 6, 1957.

²⁸⁷ FO 424, E 2032, 297, Further Correspondence Respecting Turkey, PART II, January to December 1957 Rk 1102/1 No. 26, Turkish Economic Prospects, Sir James Bowker to Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. (Received November 18), (No. 203 E. Confidential) Ankara / November 15, 1957 P.70-72.

Despite some positive developments, such as increases in agricultural production—particularly in wheat and cotton—alongside infrastructure improvements like roads and ports, Turkey's economy remained heavily dependent on external support, primarily from the United States.²⁸⁸ However, the prospects of securing additional credit from Western countries were slim, leaving Turkey in a precarious position. Though credit from the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries was a possibility, it was limited and not expected to offer any long-term solutions. This highlighted Turkey's economic isolation, as it sought to maintain its alignment with the West while struggling with diminishing creditworthiness.

Turkey was also confronted with the idea of devaluation as a potential remedy to its economic troubles. However, it was clear that devaluation alone would not solve the crisis. With limited export prospects and ongoing inflationary pressures, devaluation would likely worsen the situation, especially without significant financial backing from Western allies, such as the United States or the International Bank, to stabilize the economy afterward. The country's economic future appeared bleak without substantial reforms, such as reducing credit, cutting back investment programs, and addressing deficit spending in state-controlled enterprises. The government's reluctance to slow its ambitious development plans, however, made meaningful economic recovery increasingly difficult.²⁸⁹

Realizing that financial aid from the West would not be easily forthcoming, the Turkish leadership advanced its economic engagement with the Soviets in response to their calls for closer cooperation. Between 1954 and 1957, Turkey's trade relations with the Soviet bloc experienced notable fluctuations. In 1954, the total trade

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

between Turkey and the Soviet bloc amounted to \$100.1 million, rising significantly to \$160 million in 1955. However, by 1956, the volume of trade decreased to \$119.3 million. The share of Turkey's trade with the Soviet bloc as a percentage of its overall trade also followed a similar pattern. It began at 12.3% in 1954, climbed to 19.8% in 1955, and then declined to 16.7% in 1956. These shifts suggest an initial surge in economic cooperation, followed by a cooling of relations the following year.²⁹⁰

Furthermore, within the broader context of Turkey's trade with the Eastern Bloc, the majority of trade (90%) was conducted with the European satellites of the USSR, with only 10% involving direct trade with the Soviet Union itself. The report indicates no notable trade between Turkey and China during this period, suggesting that Turkey's economic interactions within the bloc were concentrated in Eastern European countries rather than with the USSR or China. This pattern of trade reflects the regional focus of Turkey's economic engagements with the Soviet bloc, highlighting its closer ties with Soviet-aligned European countries.²⁹¹

Alongside their talks with the Soviets, Turkish officials continued to ask for Western support. During the North Atlantic Council Meeting on December 17, 1957, Zorlu asserted that the economic potential of the West was far in excess of that of the Soviet Union, and it would be possible in the long run to place the latter at a disadvantage. Every effort should be made to support and encourage the pro-Western

²⁹⁰ NATO Secret Working Paper Ac/89-Wp/18, 14 November 1957, Committee on Soviet Economic Policy Soviet Economic Penetration in The Middle East Note by The International Staff, 9.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

states in the Middle East so that they could recognize the advantages of Western links and impress public opinion accordingly.²⁹²

In a parliamentary session on November 15, 1957, Etem Menderes, acting as Minister of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that, when comparing Turkey's resources with those of other NATO members, the financial burdens Turkey had willingly assumed for collective security were substantial. He emphasized that economic development was crucial to sustaining a modern military, asserting that without reaching a minimum level of economic progress, maintaining a modern army would be impossible. He also expressed gratitude for the assistance Turkey had received from the United States but noted that if Turkey's significance and potential had been considered with a broader perspective, the region's situation might have been even stronger. A more economically and militarily powerful Turkey would have contributed to greater political stability in the region.²⁹³ He emphasized that economic assistance should not be strictly tied to a loan but should be seen in light of the burdens Turkey had shouldered, its potential contributions to world peace, and the collective sharing of these burdens. Finally, Menderes expressed confidence in the sincere intentions and appreciation of the United States toward Turkey, underscoring ongoing efforts to ensure that these realities were fully understood by Turkey's great ally.²⁹⁴

Turkey faced severe economic challenges due to its ambitious economic development and military programs, both of which were straining the financial stability of the country. The government's prioritization of electoral concerns ahead

²⁹² NATO Archives, C-R (57)83, Summary Record of a Meeting of The Council Held at The Palais De Chaillot, Paris, Xvie., December 17, 1957, 16.

²⁹³ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Forty-Sixth Session, Term: X, Volume: 17, Meeting: 3, 1957-*American Loan*, November 15, 1957, 217-220.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

of the 1957 elections led to an escalation of inflation and further exacerbated Turkey's internal and external financial difficulties. Price inflation and severe shortages of both imported and domestic goods were evident, worsened by foreign payment defaults that damaged Turkey's international credit. US efforts to persuade Turkey to adopt more effective financial measures—including adjusting its exchange rate—were met with resistance and caused friction between the two nations. Post-election, the Turkish government resumed price control efforts, particularly for food items. Although the government's economic stabilization program, presented in December 1957, lacked bold reforms, it included commitments to control prices, regulate bank credit, and review State Enterprise programs to ensure sustainability. However, the success of these measures depended on the government's willingness to implement politically challenging policies.²⁹⁵

By the late 1950s, Turkey faced rising inflation, substantial foreign debt, and severe shortages in foreign exchange reserves. The country's ability to meet its economic obligations and sustain growth was seriously compromised. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Turkish government sought assistance from international organizations to formulate a recovery plan.²⁹⁶ The discussions to this purpose had initially begun with Germany in 1957, and soon after, consultations were held with Turkey's ally, the United States.²⁹⁷ On May 6, 1958, during the 21st Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Copenhagen, Turkish Foreign Minister

²⁹⁵ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey - United States Government Printing Office Washington / U.S. Department of State Office of The Historian Bureau of Public Affairs / Washington, January 29, 1958. / Report On Turkey (Nsc 5708/2, Approved June 29, 1957)1 (Period Covered: From November 8, 1956 Through January 29, 1958), A Summary of Operating Progress in Relation to Major Nsc Objectives.

²⁹⁶ Anne O. Krueger, *"The Stabilization Program,"* In *Foreign Trade Regimes and Economic Development: Turkey*, Cambridge, Ma: National Bureau of Economic Research, (1974), 63-85.

²⁹⁷ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Eighty-Seventh Session, Term: XI, Volume: 4, Meeting: 1, August 21, 1958, 830-831.

Fatin Rüştü Zorlu discussed Turkey's financial difficulties with US officials, emphasizing the importance of US support in resolving the issue.²⁹⁸

During this period when the Turkish leadership sought economic support from the Western allies, they continued to pursue improved economic relations with the Soviets. In a significant meeting on April 8, 1958, President Celal Bayar received Soviet Ambassador Nikita Ryzhov at the Çankaya Presidential Palace in Ankara. The discussion focused on the state of Turkish-Soviet relations, particularly in the realms of economic cooperation. Ambassador Ryzhov highlighted the positive developments in commercial relations between the two countries, notably the agreements between Türkiye İş Bankası and the Soviet Union for credit arrangements, as well as similar agreements with Sümerbank.²⁹⁹ This collaboration was to yield tangible result in a short time; when the United States declined Türkiye's request for assistance in establishing a glass factory, Türkiye İş Bankası turned to the Soviet Union, securing around \$10 million in credits in July 1957 to establish two glass factories, with repayment structured through goods rather than currency.³⁰⁰

Likewise, President Bayar expressed a strong desire for deeper economic and commercial ties, emphasizing that the favorable financing conditions offered by the Soviets could help bolster Turkey's economic development. He stressed the importance of analyzing these opportunities to facilitate bilateral growth, showcasing his personal commitment to advancing relations. Bayar, drawing on his prior

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 835-836.

²⁹⁹ Orhan Karaoğlu and Hilal Zorba Bayraktar, "The Meeting between President Celal Bayar and Soviet Ambassador Nikita S. Ryzhov in the Context of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Perceptions Journal of International Affairs* Spring-Summer 2024 Volume XXIX Number 1 (2024), 72-89.

³⁰⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957 Volume XXIV, Soviet Union, Eastern Mediterranean 362. Memorandum from the Secretary's Special Assistant for Intelligence (Cumming) to the Secretary of State, August 7, 1957.

experience as Turkey's Minister of Economy, was well aware of the potential benefits of Soviet investment in Turkey's industries, particularly in the textile sector, where Soviet investments in factories in Nazilli and Kayseri had already made a notable impact.³⁰¹

Despite Turkey's NATO membership, which had often complicated relations with the Soviet Union, both Bayar and Ryzhov expressed a mutual desire to improve bilateral relations. Bayar underscored that Turkey's NATO membership was driven by the principle of self-defense and did not reflect a hostile stance toward other countries. Furthermore, Bayar acknowledged that despite the differences between the two countries, particularly after World War II, there was potential for a new chapter in Turkish-Soviet relations. Soviet Ambassador Ryzhov, responding to President Bayar's remarks, affirmed that Turkey's NATO membership need not hinder positive relations with Moscow.³⁰²

At a subsequent meeting on May 23, 1958, Ryzhov who had visited Moscow after their last meeting reassured Bayar that Turkey's affiliations with Western military alliances did not preclude friendly relations with the USSR, proposing that both countries could engage in political and economic cooperation. He specifically highlighted Moscow's interest in supporting Turkey's industrialization by enhancing energy and infrastructure projects, such as hydroelectric plants and heavy machinery, and affirmed that while political matters would naturally impact economic discussions, the Soviet Union remained committed to fostering relations without preconditions.³⁰³ In response, acknowledging Soviet achievements in industrial

³⁰¹ Orhan Karaoğlu and Hilal Zorba Bayraktar, "The Meeting between President Celal Bayar and Soviet Ambassador Nikita S. Ryzhov," 72-89.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

development and indicating interest in joint projects, Bayar reiterated Turkish openness to economic cooperation with Moscow.

In the meantime, Turkish President Celal Bayar wrote a letter to US President Eisenhower on May 29, 1958 and emphasized Turkey's urgent need for economic assistance from the United States. Bayar highlighted that Turkey, due to its strategic position and its proximity to the Soviet Union, had borne significant military and economic burdens since the end of World War II. While Turkey made significant strides in economic development and infrastructure, these achievements had been hampered by four consecutive years of drought and declining commodity prices, particularly affecting its exports. Bayar noted that Turkey was unable to secure long-term credits, which had exacerbated its financial difficulties, leaving the country in a precarious situation where foreign exchange reserves were being depleted to repay existing debts. As a result, the supply of essential goods such as oil, spare parts, and raw materials had been exhausted.³⁰⁴

Bayar stressed that immediate foreign aid would not only alleviate Turkey's current economic crisis but also enable the completion of critical infrastructure projects that were nearly finished, ensuring long-term economic stability. Additionally, Bayar underscored the political importance of economic aid, arguing that organizations like the OEEC and IMF, while beneficial, could not fully address Turkey's needs without the support and initiative of the US and West Germany. He called for direct bilateral negotiations between Turkey and its allies, particularly the US, to expedite the process and ensure Turkey's future economic success. Bayar concluded by

³⁰⁴ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 309. *Letter From President Bayar to President Eisenhower*, Central Files, 882.00/6–358, May 29, 1958.

reaffirming the Turkish government's commitment to sound economic development and expressed eagerness for US support in navigating this difficult period.³⁰⁵

Turkey's economic challenges were not only a domestic issue but also a matter of concern for its Western allies, especially within the context of its strategic importance in the Cold War. The United States, seeing Turkey as a key NATO ally, played a crucial role in mobilizing financial support. Accordingly, in his response to President Bayar on June 13, 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower acknowledged Turkey's economic difficulties and expressed sympathy for the Turkish government's desire to establish a strong, stable economy. Eisenhower recognized the significant burdens Turkey had borne in terms of both military and economic responsibilities, particularly due to its strategic position against the Soviet Union. While affirming the United States' commitment to aiding Turkey as a friend and ally, he emphasized that the solution to Turkey's economic problems would not solely lie in external aid. Instead, economic stabilization measures were essential for long-term success. Eisenhower commended Turkey for seeking the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), expressing hope that these international bodies would help guide Turkey toward economic recovery. He underscored the importance of Turkey presenting a coherent stabilization program and assured that the US would collaborate with other allies and international institutions to assist Turkey in implementing such a plan. However, he stressed that internal efforts, alongside external aid, were crucial for overcoming Turkey's economic challenges.³⁰⁶

In July 1958, discussions among the United States, United Kingdom, France, and

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 311. *Letter From President Eisenhower to President Bayar*, June 13, 1958.

the Federal Republic of Germany resulted in a plan to assist Turkey in addressing its economic problems through formal agreements reached in Paris on July 29, 1958, and with the IMF on July 30, 1958.³⁰⁷ The aid came in two main categories: financial assistance and debt restructuring. The total financial assistance amounted to \$359 million, with the largest portion—\$234 million—coming from the United States. This included \$25 million from the US President’s special assistance fund, \$37.5 million from the Development Loan Fund, \$37.5 million from the Export-Import Bank, \$15 million from surplus agricultural aid, and \$75 million in defense support. Additionally, \$44 million in debt repayments to the US from prior loans was deferred until 1965, effectively functioning as a new loan. In the second category, \$100 million was provided by the OEEC, with \$50 million directly from West Germany, \$10 million from the United Kingdom, and \$15 million from other member states. The IMF also contributed \$25 million, its maximum allowable amount under its statutes. Polatkan emphasized that alongside the \$359 million in financial aid, debt restructuring efforts would defer \$400 million worth of repayments until after 1961, providing Turkey with additional relief and ensuring access to \$70–80 million annually for foreign payments.³⁰⁸ The coordinated stabilization program was announced on August 4, 1958, marking significant international support for Turkey's stabilization efforts.³⁰⁹

A central feature of the Stabilization Program was the devaluation of the Turkish lira, which had been resisted by Turkish officials for years. The Menderes government had long avoided devaluation, fearing both the political backlash and the economic

³⁰⁷ T.B.M.M. Minutes of Proceedings, Eighty-Seventh Session, Term: XI, Volume: 4, Meeting: 1, August 21, 1958, 835-836.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 314. *Editorial Note*, August 25, 1958, 322–324.

instability it might cause. The pressure to devalue came not only from the worsening domestic economic situation but also from international creditors, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Turkey's Western allies. Both institutions had long recommended devaluation as a necessary step to bring the Turkish economy back into balance. The overvaluation of the lira had contributed to the accumulation of significant foreign debt, as Turkey relied heavily on foreign loans to finance its ambitious development projects and military expenditures.

By August 1958, the government finally agreed to devalue the lira, recognizing that maintaining the overvalued currency was exacerbating the balance of payments crisis and hurting export competitiveness. The official import rate was adjusted to TL 9 to \$1, while three distinct export rates were established: TL 4.90, TL 5.60, and TL 9.00 to \$1. These adjustments were designed to align Turkey's import and export prices, control inflation, and improve its ability to manage public finances.³¹⁰

The approval of the program was the lifeline the Turkish government had been seeking for some time, but the main goal was to receive the aid outlined in the program swiftly. In September 1958, discussions between US officials and Turkish leaders, including Prime Minister Menderes, Foreign Minister Zorlu, and Finance Minister Polatkan, expressed gratitude for the assistance received and reaffirmed their commitment to the stabilization plan's requirements. However, concerns were raised about delays in receiving funds from European Payments Union (EPU) countries, particularly due to the high 6% interest rate. The Turks considered this rate excessively high, especially in light of a recent 4.5% loan from France, and

³¹⁰ Ibid.

requested further US support to negotiate a more favorable 5.5% rate.³¹¹

A significant point of discussion was Turkey's ongoing trade with the Soviet Union, particularly regarding the purchase of equipment for three new textile factories, valued at approximately \$11 million. This transaction was part of broader clearing arrangements between Turkey and the Soviet Union. US officials, concerned about the potential impact on Turkey's stabilization efforts, urged Turkish leaders to ensure that such deals with the Soviets were carefully reviewed by Coordination Committees to avoid additional strain on the country's economic recovery. The Turks acknowledged these concerns and assured that they would handle the matter with caution.³¹²

In the 1958 debt settlement discussions, representatives from European nations that had contributed to the Turkish stabilization loan met with US and Turkish representatives in Paris from October 8–10 to negotiate a repayment schedule and an interest rate. During these talks, Turkish officials expressed strong objections to certain proposals, particularly a French idea to allocate a percentage of Turkish exports for debt repayment. The Turks drew invidious comparisons to the Ottoman Debt Commission, established in 1881, viewing the proposal as an infringement on national sovereignty. This historical comparison reflected Turkey's discomfort with foreign control over its economic decisions.³¹³

Alongside devaluation, Turkey continued to seek financial assistance from both

³¹¹ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 318. *Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to The Department of State*, September 29, 1958.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, *Review of Turkish Debt Conference*, Central Files, 782.00/10–1758, October 17, 1958.

Western and non-Western sources. While the majority of foreign aid came from the United States, European countries, and international institutions like the IMF and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), Turkey also explored the possibility of receiving aid from the Soviet Union, who had long tried to soften relations with Turkey, by sending a delegation to the Soviet Union in early 1958. Although the Soviet Union had previously offered assistance to Turkey, the Turkish government remained wary of Soviet intentions due to the geopolitical implications of aligning too closely with a communist power during the Cold War. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union's offer of trade and technical assistance was considered as a potential supplement to Western aid, highlighting Turkey's pragmatic approach in seeking diverse sources of support to alleviate its economic woes.³¹⁴ When the negotiations in Moscow reached an impasse, the *Economist* concluded "they (the Turks) may be beginning to realize that if they do not put their house in order, they may not get it (aid)."³¹⁵

Ultimately, the decision to devalue the lira, while painful, was a critical component of the broader Stabilization Program. It was painful as it came with significant political risks. The devaluation immediately raised the cost of living, as imported goods became more expensive, fueling public discontent. The Menderes government faced increasing opposition from political rivals and the public, who viewed the devaluation as a direct result of economic mismanagement. Despite the political backlash, the government saw it as a necessary step to stabilize the economy and regain the confidence of international creditors.

In addition to currency devaluation, the program introduced stringent fiscal austerity

³¹⁴ Anne O. Krueger, *"The Stabilization Program,"* 70.

³¹⁵ Columbia School of Law, Op. Cit., Note 14, Chap. 1, 23-4.

measures designed to reduce public spending and curb inflation. Public subsidies were cut, credit growth was restrained, and state enterprises faced tighter budgetary controls. The goal was to stabilize inflation and restore investor confidence in the Turkish economy. These measures, however, came with significant political risks, as they were deeply unpopular among the public, leading to protests and dissatisfaction.³¹⁶

In the meeting on October 7, 1959, Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu raised concerns about Turkey's severe reserve shortages and urgent need for short-term financing. Zorlu emphasized that Turkey had no financial reserves and required immediate support to create more economic flexibility. He requested that the US release additional funds, suggesting that the US could dip into the reserve fund mentioned in previous discussions. While Under Secretary Dillon expressed understanding of Turkey's situation, he explained that the US was facing its own funding limitations due to reduced congressional appropriations, making it difficult to commit additional funds right away. Zorlu then proposed that a portion of the already committed \$80 million US aid for Turkey could be released immediately to provide short-term relief. Dillon responded positively, indicating that this was a possibility, and agreed to look into it, which seemed to satisfy Zorlu for the time being. Zorlu also requested US assistance in urging Germany to provide financial support. He felt that while Germany was willing to help, it hesitated to act independently of other OEEC member countries due to political reasons. Dillon agreed to speak with the Germans through the US Embassy in Bonn to help ease Turkey's financial difficulties.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Anne O. Krueger, *"The Stabilization Program,"* 63-85.

³¹⁷ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 347. *Memorandum Of Conversation, Turkish Economic Problems*, October 7, 1959.

Despite the importance of foreign credits in addressing Turkey's immediate economic problems, they also posed certain challenges. The availability of these funds allowed the Turkish government to delay some of the more difficult economic reforms. Rather than addressing the structural issues that had led to the economic crisis, the government became reliant on external financing to cover budget deficits and maintain the status quo. This reliance on foreign aid, while necessary in the short term, meant that some of the underlying causes of Turkey's economic instability were not fully addressed, prolonging the country's dependence on external support. In the longer term, the influx of foreign credits provided temporary relief but did not solve Turkey's deeper economic problems. While the credits helped prevent an immediate economic collapse, they also increased Turkey's foreign debt, which remained a burden on the country's financial stability. The repayment of these loans and the servicing of the debt became a significant challenge, particularly as Turkey struggled to sustain economic growth and increase its foreign exchange earnings.

President Dwight Eisenhower made a state visit to Turkey in December 1959. In a meeting between President Eisenhower and Turkish leaders on December 6, 1959, Foreign Minister Zorlu expressed gratitude for US aid and the economic stabilization efforts set to continue into the following year. Despite a small cut in the special US fund, Ankara hoped these reductions might be reversed, based on conversations with US officials. Zorlu highlighted Turkey's challenge of coordinating economic assistance from Europe, particularly from Italy and Germany, which had expressed willingness to help but had yet to produce concrete results. A recent economic conference in Berne only resulted in short-term credits, and Zorlu urged the US to take a leading role in coordinating further aid. He also mentioned Turkey's desire to join the Common Market and the difficulties posed by

conservative elements within NATO, noting that if left solely to bankers, the Marshall Plan would never have been realized.³¹⁸

In these very days, the Menderes administration simultaneously tried to promote a closer relationship with the USSR. Lütü Kırdar, the Turkish Minister of Health, paid the first minister-level visit after two decades to Moscow in the second week of December 1959 to plan for Menderes and Nikita Khrushchev to exchange visits.³¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Soviet Embassy in Ankara intensified its efforts to engage Turkish authorities, institutions, and media outlets in an attempt to cultivate support among influential Turkish figures and foster closer interactions between Turkish and Soviet political leaders. These Soviet moves were seen as a direct challenge to American influence in the region. In fact, American officials voiced concerns to Iran regarding Prime Minister Menderes' planned visit to Moscow, questioning whether Turkey intended to undermine the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In response, Turkish diplomats in Iran devoted significant time and effort to reassure the Shah that the visit posed no threat to the stability or intentions of the alliance.³²⁰

Menderes sought to reassure Washington and Turkey's other allies that his government's outreach to the Soviets was simply a regional reflection of the improved atmosphere seen in recent diplomatic exchanges between Soviet and Western leaders. He emphasized that Turkey had no intention of making unilateral concessions to the Soviets that could weaken the position of the free world. This shift, he explained, was driven by a practical response to Turkey's financial needs, yet had been misunderstood by certain NATO allies as a deviation from Turkey's

³¹⁸ Foreign Relations of The United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 2, Eastern Europe; Finland; Greece; Turkey, 351. *Memorandum Of Conference with President Eisenhower*, December 6, 1959.

³¹⁹ Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 520.

³²⁰ Semih Günver, *Fatin Rüştü Zorlu'nun Öyküsü: 'Zoro' Gibi*, 138.

Western alignment.³²¹

Menderes was ousted from power by a coup before he could make this visit, leaving unanswered the question of how far the rapprochement, which extended to planning high-level visits with the Soviets, could have progressed under the DP government.

3.3 Compartmentalization: Western Security, Eastern Trade

During the period under review, Turkey departed from the path trodden during the early Cold War years. In security matters, Turkey's alignment with NATO remained unshakable and reinforced its role as a critical bulwark against Soviet expansionism in the Cold War context. But, from the mid-1950s onward, Ankara increased its economic engagements with the Soviets and the Eastern Bloc.

While Turkey maintained steadfast security ties with the West, due to worsening domestic economic conditions, its economic policies reflected a pragmatic openness to alternative partnerships, including with the Soviet Union. The influx of American aid during the early 1950s had initially fueled Turkey's economic modernization, but by the mid-1950s, the reduction in US financial assistance exacerbated domestic economic vulnerabilities. Facing rising inflation, a trade deficit, and declining foreign reserves, Turkey found itself compelled to explore supplementary sources of economic support.

As a result, Soviet economic overtures became increasingly attractive as Turkey sought solutions to its fiscal challenges. Moscow extended trade agreements and credit lines aimed at financing infrastructure projects, particularly in industrial and

³²¹ Ibid., 139-141.

energy development. Turkish leaders, while emphasizing that NATO membership was critical for the country's security, were also unhesitant in stating that economic cooperation with the Soviet Union was possible. Notably, Turkey's NATO membership did not deter the Soviets from making these offers. Menderes also emphasized that Turkey had no intention of making unilateral concessions to the Soviets that could weaken the position of the Western Bloc. This shift, he explained, was driven by a practical response to Turkey's financial needs.

One notable output of these bilateral interactions was the Turkish-Is Bank agreement with the Soviet Union, which facilitated credit arrangements for constructing glass factories. This collaboration gained momentum when the United States declined Turkey's request for assistance in establishing a glass factory. In response, Türkiye İş Bankası turned to the Soviet Union, securing approximately \$10 million in credits in July 1957 to establish two glass factories.

By 1959, Turkey found itself at a crossroads in its economic and foreign policy. Prime Minister Menderes's planned visit to Moscow marked a bold step toward diversifying economic partnerships, signaling a willingness to explore even stronger alternatives beyond the Western sphere. While this move raised eyebrows among NATO allies, it showcased Turkey's pragmatic approach to addressing its growing economic challenges. During this period, Turkey began to balance its priorities by compartmentalizing security and economic: maintaining a firm commitment to NATO and the Baghdad Pact as pillars of its security policy, while remaining open to Soviet economic proposals as a practical response to declining Western aid.

CHAPTER IV: STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN A DIVIDED WORLD: 1960 TO 1980

The period between 1960 and 1980 marked a crucial evolution in Turkish foreign policy. As Turkey navigated the pressures of new security and economy challenges, its foreign policy demonstrated an increasingly sophisticated compartmentalization: while security priorities remained influenced by NATO membership, the 1960s increasingly saw Ankara differentiate between particular issues like Cyprus and the general commitment to the treaty organization. Simultaneously, Turkish-Soviet relations expanded beyond economics into strategic diplomacy. This chapter argues that Turkey's foreign policy in this era reflects a nuanced recalibration, wherein the previously homogeneous security and economic vectors of foreign policy began to fracture and overlap in ways that reshaped Turkey's engagement with both superpowers.

On the security front, Turkey's steadfast alignment with NATO continued to anchor its defense strategy, but new realities began to test the limits of this approach. A pivotal moment came in 1964, with the delivery of the Johnson Letter, in which the US President warned Turkey against unilateral military intervention in Cyprus, citing NATO obligations. This stark intervention deeply shocked Turkish leaders, exposing the vulnerabilities of relying solely on the United States for critical national security issues.³²² The Johnson Letter marked a turning point, as Turkey recognized the necessity of diversifying its foreign policy approach even within the security domain.

In the aftermath of this diplomatic rupture, Turkey adopted a more pragmatic strategy toward the Soviet Union. While Turkish-Soviet relations during the 1950s had remained predominantly economic, by the mid-1960s they began to expand into

³²² Aylin Güney, The USA's Role in Mediating the Cyprus Conflict: A Story of Success or Failure? *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 1 (2004): 31, doi:10.1177/0967010604042534.

the political and strategic sphere. Seeking to minimize the Soviet threat while addressing critical security concerns such as Cyprus, Turkey found in Moscow a counterbalance to its traditional reliance on the West. This approach bore fruit during the 1967 Cyprus Crisis, where Turkish policymakers leveraged years of improved Soviet relations to reduce tensions and navigate the crisis with greater diplomatic autonomy. By 1974, during the Cyprus military intervention, Turkey exhibited a degree of autonomy in its security policy that was unprecedented a decade earlier, underscoring its growing ability to act independently within the Cold War framework.

Economically, Turkey continued to grapple with the limitations of Western aid, which remained insufficient to meet the country's developmental aspirations. This persistent gap drove Turkey to intensify its economic engagement with the Soviet Union, exemplified by the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Agreement—a landmark deal that significantly expanded bilateral trade and economic collaboration. This agreement went beyond industrial cooperation, incorporating strategic elements such as infrastructure development and energy projects, marking a new phase in Turkish-Soviet relations. Soviet support during this period not only provided Turkey with the means to address its domestic economic vulnerabilities but also strengthened its negotiating position vis-à-vis the West.

This chapter examines how Turkey balanced its security and economic imperatives during the two decades following the 1960 coup. The first, security-focused section explores Turkey's evolving relationship with NATO, its response to the Johnson Letter, and the impact of the Cyprus crises in shaping a more autonomous defense strategy. The second, economy-focused section highlights Turkey's deepening ties

with the Soviet Union, including the 1967 Industrial Cooperation Agreement, and its pragmatic efforts to bridge the gap left by declining Western aid. Finally, the third section synthesizes these dynamics, demonstrating how Turkey's foreign policy during this period reflects an increasingly sophisticated approach to compartmentalization and balancing, maintaining NATO commitments while simultaneously expanding its economic and political engagement with the Soviet Union.

4.1 Beyond NATO: Evolving Defense Strategies and Regional Assertions

On May 27, 1960, Turkey witnessed a significant turning point as military officers executed a coup d'état against Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his Democratic Party (DP). This coup marked the culmination of a month marked by rising political tensions and public dissatisfaction. Within hours, the military had seized control over the capital and the other big cities, leading to the arrest of the president, prime minister, cabinet members, and various prominent political figures associated with the DP.³²³ A National Unity Committee (NUC), composed of 38 officers responsible for orchestrating the coup, took charge and pledged to draft a new constitution while restoring civilian governance as swiftly as possible.³²⁴ The aftermath of this coup would lead to the execution of Adnan Menderes in 1961, marking a grim end to his decade-long leadership.

While the coup on May 27 was a dramatic event, it was not an isolated incident in the broader context of the global political dynamics. Coups d'état emerged as a frequent method of regime change across many nations, particularly in the Third

³²³ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, rev. ed. (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 253–254.

³²⁴ Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 161; and William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 129.

World during the Cold War era. Between 1945 and 1985, there were approximately 357 coup attempts, with 183 resulting in success.³²⁵ During this period, the United States was actively involved in various regime changes across Latin America and the Middle East, leading many Turkish commentators, diplomats, and historians to speculate about potential foreign influence in Menderes's downfall.³²⁶ The 1953 coup in Iran, Turkey's neighboring country, which ousted Mohammad Mosaddegh with Anglo-American backing, further solidified this narrative. Such perspectives have contributed to the historical portrayal of Menderes as a victim of Western conspiracies, a view particularly emphasized by the announcement of his planned visit to the Soviet Union in July 1960.³²⁷

Although there are widespread claims regarding the coup, investigations of American archival materials have found no proof of US involvement in the 1960 events.³²⁸ Nonetheless, these claims continue to be echoed in Turkish historical narratives.³²⁹ A detailed analysis of Soviet and Turkish archives reveals compelling inconsistencies about Menderes's diplomatic overtures to the USSR. It is important to note that Menderes's attempts were not a new phenomenon; in the mid-1950s, he had already endeavored to forge trade ties with the Eastern Bloc in response to economic difficulties and the lack of additional support from the US³³⁰ Before he made his visit to the Soviet Union public, he had dispatched a delegation to Moscow to discuss

³²⁵ Steven David, *Third World Coups d'Etat and International Security* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1–2.

³²⁶ *Yön Dergisi*. 1963. 27 Mayıs İhtilâlinde Amerikan Gizli Teşkilâtı CIA'nın Parmağı [The Involvement of the American Secret Agency CIA in the May 27 Coup], January 2; S. Genç, CIA MİT Kontr-Gerilla: Bıçağın Sırtındaki Türkiye, *Vatan Gazetesi*, November 28, 1977; A. İlhan, Acıklı Bir Yerli Film, *Dünya Gazetesi*, May 15, 1977.

³²⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, Menderes Moskova'ya gidecek, Hrutçef de Ankara'yı ziyaret edecek [Menderes will visit Moscow, and Khrushchev will visit Ankara], April 12, 1960.

³²⁸ Nicholas Danforth, *The Remaking of Republican Turkey: Memory and Modernity since the Fall of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

³²⁹ A. Yıldız, ABD ile 60 Yıl Önce, 60 Yıl Sonra. *Yeni Akit*, August 28, 2018; F. Ünlü, CIA'in 27 Mayıs'taki Rolü, *Sabah*, May 30, 2021.

³³⁰ Erel Tellal, *SSCB-Türkiye İlişkileri, 1953–1964*, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2020).

potential Soviet investments.³³¹ This situation highlights the puzzling nature of the Kremlin's apparent welcome of Menderes's removal despite the claims of US orchestration.

Soviet publications rejoiced at the fall of the Democrat Party, characterizing Menderes's administration as complicit in US aggression and a key factor in the economic decline faced by Turkey.³³² In the wake of the coup, the Soviet Union made diplomatic overtures toward the new Turkish government, highlighting a desire to strengthen bilateral trade relations. The Kremlin hoped that such engagement would encourage Ankara to reconsider its unwavering commitment to the US-led containment strategy. However, the military regime in Turkey approached these relations cautiously, initially reaffirming its loyalty to NATO. Within a span of two years, Turkey found itself entangled in significant Cold War confrontations: the May 1960 incident involving a US U-2 spy plane and the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 and some developments regarding the deployment of arms in Turkish territory.

On February 3, 1961, Soviet Ambassador to Ankara Nikita Ryzhov met Sarper to deliver a note concerning the deployment of Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in Turkey under NATO, but specifically commanded by the United States. The note conveyed Soviet disapproval, suggesting that this deployment could lead Turkey into a “dangerous adventure.” Although the note was not openly confrontational and contained no explicit threat, Sarper noted it clearly implied that the IRBMs could obstruct the potential for “good neighborly relations” with the

³³¹ In 1959, Turkey's Minister of Health, Lütfi Kırdar, visited Moscow and arranged for reciprocal visits between Menderes and Nikita Khrushchev, scheduled to follow the Washington summit between Eisenhower and Khrushchev in September of that year. Süleyman Seydi, “Turkish–American Relations and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1957–63”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46:3 (2010), 434, DOI: 10.1080/00263201003666035

³³² A. Miller, Druzhba, poleznaia dlia obeikh stran [Druzhba, beneficial for both countries], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, October 29, 1960.

Soviet Union. During their conversation, Ryzhov also mentioned the U-2 incident of May 1, 1960, when a US reconnaissance aircraft launched from a Turkish base was shot down over the Soviet Union, indicating that the incident had complicated Soviet-Turkish relations. More than half a year ago, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* had covered the Turkish coup extensively on June 3, 1960, using the U-2 incident as a point of criticism and argued that Turkey had effectively become a launch pad for US activities and expressed hope that Cemal Gürsel, the newly appointed Turkish president, might foster a shift in Soviet-Turkish relations.³³³ In light of this historical context and the ongoing tensions, Sarper felt compelled to address the concerns raised by Ryzhov. In response, he expressed that Turkish leaders would never pursue actions that could place the country in a “dangerous adventure.” He reiterated that as a NATO member, Turkey would leverage every opportunity to enhance its defensive capabilities. In addition, he highlighted Turkey’s challenging security environment, noting that the country was effectively “surrounded” by states with a full range of atomic weaponry, and to restrict its own defense in this context would be a significant compromise of Turkish sovereignty.³³⁴

During his term in Turkey, Ryzhov actively met with various cabinet members and influential figures in Turkey’s Committee of National Unity (CNU). In these meetings, he frequently outlined the Soviet Union’s economic and technological achievements and concluded with a remark on the improving US-Soviet relations under the new American administration. Ryzhov hinted that this rapprochement could eventually lead to agreements between Moscow and Washington, leaving Turkey “outside the club” if it failed to reconcile with its “powerful northern

³³³ *Izvestiia*, Data, kotoruiu ne sleduet zabyt [Data that should not be forgotten], June 3, 1960.

³³⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963 Volume XVI Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey Document 359. Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, February 5, 1961.

neighbor” that had shown it could solve economic challenges similar to those Turkey faced.³³⁵ In this context of offering economic support and deeper ties, the approach of a significant anniversary became particularly relevant. On the 40th anniversary of the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, signed in March 1921, Turkey’s Ambassador to Moscow, Fahri Korutürk, was invited to deliver a speech on Moscow Television.³³⁶ Similarly, to commemorate this occasion, the Soviet Union’s Deputy Ambassador in Ankara, M.V. Likhatchev, expressed a desire to speak on Ankara Radio.³³⁷

Ye Turkey’s security concerns toward the Soviet Union continued. On May 12, 1961, Turkish Foreign Minister Sarper, under direction from General Gürsel, held a two-hour discussion with General Norstad at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). During their conversation, Sarper introduced a critical topic, highlighting it as “most important of all.” Sarper referred to the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which had granted the Soviet Union a free hand in the Persian Gulf region and Eastern Turkey. He noted these as longstanding Russian ambitions that, according to Turkish perceptions, remained in place. Sarper then expressed the Turkish Government’s anxiety regarding the “new US strategic concept” and its implications for NATO’s resistance to potential Soviet incursions in this region. He questioned how NATO would respond if the Soviet Union, for instance, moved into Turkey’s Kars Province and halted, thereby confronting the West with a fait accompli. Norstad responded by affirming the unequivocal NATO commitment as

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Turkish Diplomatic Archives, Türk-Sovyet Dostluk Anlaşması’nın 40ncı yıldönümü münasebetiyle Moskova Büyükelçimize, Moskova Televizyonunda konuşma yapma daveti, 67713-296651-72, March 10, 1961.

³³⁷ Turkish Diplomatic Archives, Türk-Sovyet Dostluk Anlaşması’nın 40ncı yıldönümü münasebetiyle SSCB Büyükelçiliği Müsteşarı M.V. Likhatchev’in Ankara Radyosunda yapmak istediği konuşma, 67713-296651-67, March 16, 1961.

outlined in Article 5 of the NATO Charter, emphasizing that NATO members would act, either individually or collectively, to resist any attack on a member nation and to restore its territorial integrity, including the use of force if necessary. Norstad conveyed his confidence that NATO would uphold this commitment to Turkey and reminded Sarper of previous assurances given by the US, underscoring that American forces stationed in Europe were capable of intervening in Turkey's defense if required.³³⁸

On April 17, 1961, the US carried out the Bay of Pigs invasion, a failed military operation aimed at overthrowing Cuban leader Fidel Castro. This CIA-sponsored effort involved a group of Cuban exiles who landed at the Bay of Pigs but encountered strong resistance from Castro's forces. Afterwards, during a high-level meeting in Vienna on June 3, 1961, between US President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, this issue arose. Khrushchev criticized the US for its decision to launch an operation in Cuba, and expressed skepticism about the US claim that Cuba, with its relatively small population, posed a real security threat to the United States. Khrushchev argued that the US intervention in Cuba set a precedent for international interference and questioned whether the USSR should apply the same logic to other nations close to Soviet interests, specifically mentioning Turkey where the US maintained bases and missiles.³³⁹

Following the relatively contained repercussions of the U-2 incident and the Bay of Pigs invasion on Turkey, the Cuban Missile Crisis emerged in October 1962. The crisis was managed through intense diplomatic negotiations between President John

³³⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963 Volume XVI Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey Document 364. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State, May 14, 1961.

³³⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963 Volume V Soviet Union 85. Memorandum of Conversation, Vienna Meeting Between the US President and Chairman Khrushchev, June 3, 1961.

F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, leading to a resolution where the Soviet Union agreed to dismantle its Cuban missile sites in exchange for the US publicly declaring not to invade Cuba and secretly agreeing to withdraw its Jupiter missiles from Turkey. The US decision to remove these missiles without prior consultation with Turkish authorities undermined Turkey's strategic role within the NATO alliance and prompted Turkish officials to question the reliability of American support in future crises or conflicts.³⁴⁰

During a significant meeting on November 29, 1962, Soviet First Deputy Chairman Anastas Mikoyan visited Washington, where he engaged in a lengthy discussion with President John F. Kennedy that spanned over three hours. The dialogue primarily revolved around the situation in Cuba, which was still fresh in the minds of both leaders following the recent crisis. Mikoyan highlighted the presence of US missiles in Turkey, situated perilously close to the Soviet Union, yet he expressed a sense of security among Soviet citizens, attributing this feeling to his trust in President Kennedy. He articulated that, despite the proximity of these missiles, their control by the United States alleviated concerns. In response, President Kennedy acknowledged his longstanding belief that the American missile installations, including those in Turkey, were illogical. He noted that several of these bases had been deactivated and that the US government had been actively working for the past twenty months to deactivate additional missile sites.³⁴¹

The United States' disregard for Turkey during the Cuban Missile Crisis led to a substantial erosion of trust in security matters among the Turkish leadership. In 1963,

³⁴⁰ Nur Bilge Criss, "Strategic nuclear missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter affair, 1959–1963", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20:3 (1997): 116, DOI: 10.1080/01402399708437689.

³⁴¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963 Volume V Soviet Union, 270. Editorial Note, 981.

Turkey took a bold step to reduce its reliance on the US, coinciding with a significant development in Soviet-Iranian relations.³⁴² Following Turkey's signing of an association treaty with the European Economic Community, Senate President Suat Hayri Ürgüplü announced his intent to lead a multi-party parliamentary delegation to Moscow. This inclusive delegation, representing all Turkish political factions, signaled a bipartisan commitment to enhancing ties with the Soviet Union. Ürgüplü, the highest-ranking Turkish official to visit Moscow since 1939, used the occasion to engage the Soviet leadership on a range of issues, notably Cyprus, leveraging the momentum from strengthened trade relations. The strict compartmentalization of security and economics that had characterized Soviet-Turkish relations in the 1950s was disappearing.

The Soviet Union extended a warm welcome to its Turkish guests, similar to its reception of other delegations from the Global South, showcasing its capacity to influence global development. The Turkish delegation toured Volgograd, Baku, and Tashkent, offering insights into Soviet accomplishments. However, the visit did not immediately create an atmosphere of trust; many Turkish representatives remained cautious because of the recent history of Soviet-Turkish tension.³⁴³

In a 1963 interview, *Izvestiia* referenced a Khrushchev remark that framed the Black Sea as a connector rather than a divider between Turkey and the Soviet Union.³⁴⁴ Senate President Suat Hayri Ürgüplü responded by affirming his mission's aim to foster a friendship grounded in economic collaboration and cultural exchange rather

³⁴² Roham Alvandi, "The Shah's Détente with Khrushchev: Iran's 1962 Missile Base Pledge to the Soviet Union," *Cold War History*, 14, no. 3 (2014), 423–444.

³⁴³ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Reports on the Turkish Parliamentary Delegation's visit from Volgograd, Baku, and Tashkent, F. 5, op. 50, d. 508, ll. 59–75, June 5, 1963.

³⁴⁴ N. S. Khrushchev, Kemal Atatürk i sovetsko-turetskie otnosheniia [Kemal Atatürk and Soviet-Turkish relations], *Izvestiia*, November 13, 1963.

than political discord. However, Soviet reports on Ürgüplü's delegation's visits to Volgograd, Baku, and Tashkent highlight mixed reactions among the Turkish representatives. During discussions on geopolitical topics, some Turkish delegates emphasized that Turkey would not engage in NATO-led aggression against the Soviet Union and attributed Turkey's alliance with the US to Molotov's 1945 declaration. In contrast, other members were openly critical, expressing dissatisfaction with what they observed in the Soviet Union, particularly in Volgograd and Moscow.³⁴⁵ Delegates frequently referenced the tense Soviet-Turkish relations of 1945–47, voicing disappointment that no Soviet officials acknowledged responsibility for the post-war estrangement. Some opposition parliamentarians highlighted Turkey's resistance to Nazi movements toward Batumi, noting Turkey's quiet support for the Soviet Union in 1942.³⁴⁶ Some others further pressed the Soviets with pointed questions regarding the rights of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to participate in international trade.

The Turkish delegation included members from two political factions: one from the CHP and another representing opposition parties. The Soviets perceived the CHP representatives (with some exceptions) as generally more favorable towards Moscow compared to the opposition group. Khrushchev specifically thought that Ürgüplü himself held a positive stance toward the Soviet Union. Illustrating this view, he recounted an incident where a Turkish senator commented on unexpectedly high prices in the USSR, prompting Ürgüplü's wife to counter by noting the free healthcare and education in the Soviet Union, in contrast to the \$500 fee for an

³⁴⁵ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), F. 5, op. 50, d. 508, ll. 63–69. Report on Turkish Delegation in Volgograd, June 5, 1963.

³⁴⁶ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), F. 5, op. 50, d. 508, ll. 70–75. Report on Turkish Delegation in Tashkent, June 6, 1963.

appendectomy in the United States.³⁴⁷ Soviet media offered favorable coverage of the visit, suggesting that after Adnan Menderes had steered Turkey away from Atatürk's principles, the current Turkish leadership was now striving to bring Turkey back to a Kemalist orientation, which included restoring amicable relations with Moscow.³⁴⁸

Turkey's diplomatic efforts towards Moscow continued into 1964 with a visit from Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin, who aimed to expand trade and indirectly assess the Soviet stance on the escalating Cyprus issue.³⁴⁹ Concurrently, tensions in Cyprus were approaching a critical level. To fully understand the significance of Turkey's diplomatic maneuvers during this period, it is essential to revisit the events surrounding the Cyprus issue from its independence in 1960.

The establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 was formalized through the Zurich and London Agreements, which were negotiated by representatives from Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The agreements provided for a bi-communal government, with a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice president, reflecting the island's ethnic composition. Archbishop Makarios III was elected as the first president, while Dr. Fazıl Küçük became the vice president. The new constitution aimed to ensure political representation for both communities. While the independence of Cyprus in 1960 initially appeared to satisfy all parties, the agreement soon proved inadequate. In 1963, Makarios proposed constitutional amendments that would abolish the Turkish vice president's veto, effectively dismantling the island's federal structure. Turkey opposed these changes, warning

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ N. Bragin, Pust' chernoe more ne raz'ediniat, a soediniat nas [Let the Black Sea unite us, not divide us], *Pravda*, October 29, 1963. N. S. Khrushchev, Kemal' Atatiurk i sovetsko-turetskie otnosheniia [Kemal Atatürk and Soviet-Turkish relations], *Izvestiia*, November 13, 1963. L. Alekseev, Dobrye traditsii [Good tradition], *Pravda*, November 10, 1963.

³⁴⁹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Feridun Cemal Erkin and the Turkish Delegation's Trip to the Soviet Union, 030.018.01/181.66.9, October 27, 1964.

that as a guarantor power, it held the legal right to intervene to protect Turkish Cypriot rights. Fearing the violence could escalate, the British sought US assistance. President Lyndon Johnson proposed deploying NATO forces to Cyprus to ensure peace, yet Makarios rejected this idea. Instead, UN Peacekeeping Forces were deployed.³⁵⁰ Yet this did not put an end to the tension in the island.

Cypriot forces escalated attacks against Turkish Cypriots, spurring a swift reaction from Turkey. President Cemal Gürsel appealed to US President Lyndon Johnson, urging American intervention to halt the bloodshed. Although Johnson expressed concern, his response fell short of Turkish expectations, likely influenced by domestic political concerns and a reluctance to entangle the US in the conflict.³⁵¹ Consequently, Turkish leaders felt the need to underscore their seriousness by conducting a warning flight over Cyprus on December 25, a move that catalyzed international concern and prompted a conference in London, held under British auspices in January 1964.

In line with Cold War politics, both the United States and Britain viewed the Cyprus situation through the lens of NATO's strategic interests. Britain was wary of losing its military bases in Cyprus, while the US feared that a conflict could destabilize the entire eastern Mediterranean. Britain proposed establishing a NATO peacekeeping force on the island, inviting the US to share in its peacekeeping responsibilities. This marked a shift in American involvement, as Britain sought US backing to prevent the escalation of violence between Turkey and Greece, two crucial NATO allies.³⁵²

British and American leaders hoped that sharing this responsibility would ensure

³⁵⁰ Christos Kassimeris, *Greece and the American Embrace: Greek Foreign Policy Towards Turkey, the US and the Western Alliance*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 82.

³⁵¹ Fahir Armaoğlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2017), 264-265.

³⁵² Faruk Sönmezoglu, *ABD'nin Türkiye Politikası (1964-1980)*, (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1995), 144.

NATO's stability in the region, but the proposal faced resistance from Greek Cypriot leader Makarios and the Soviet Union, each of whom preferred a UN peacekeeping solution that could potentially counterbalance NATO influence.

The Soviet Union initially monitored the conflict closely, interpreting NATO intervention in Cyprus as a threat to Soviet interests. They publicly criticized NATO's presence in Cyprus, emphasizing that the London and Zurich Agreements of 1959 had compromised Cypriot sovereignty by allowing NATO states to interfere.³⁵³ Makarios's stance against NATO intervention, combined with Soviet support for Cyprus's independence, positioned the Soviet Union as a counterforce to Western influence on the island, demonstrating the complex dynamics of Cold War alliances.

As the talks in London failed to produce a viable solution in the following months, Turkish leaders grew increasingly anxious about the ongoing violence against Turkish Cypriots. Prime Minister İsmet İnönü expressed Turkey's determination to protect its compatriots and warned that Turkey might be compelled to take military action. The rising urgency prompted the US to press for a rapid diplomatic resolution, fearing that an unchecked conflict could fracture NATO's southern flank.³⁵⁴ A series of urgent communications from US officials to their Turkish counterparts underscored the gravity with which the US viewed the possibility of Turkish military intervention, as Washington sought to prevent a potential clash between two NATO members. For US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the

³⁵³ Melek M. Fırat, *1960-71 Arası Türk Dış Politikası ve Kıbrıs Sorunu*, (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1997), 142.

³⁵⁴ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, (New York: Norton, 1982), 341.

stakes were clear: an unstable Cyprus could jeopardize NATO's southeast wing and grant the Soviets a strategic advantage in the Mediterranean.³⁵⁵

In February 1964, American officials engaged in discussions with Turkish leaders, including Foreign Minister Erkin and Prime Minister İnönü, regarding the escalating situation in Cyprus. During these meetings, they articulated the US interest in the Cyprus issue, expressing concern over the potential dangers it posed and reaffirming support for peacekeeping and mediation efforts. Erkin acknowledged the risks associated with potential Turkish intervention, warning that such actions could lead to a withdrawal of British forces and provoke Greek intervention against Turkey. He also inquired about the US response to a Soviet note, indicating that the Turkish government was considering its own position on the matter. Additionally, Erkin noted that recent articles from TASS criticizing Turkey's stance were particularly bothersome, especially given the Soviet Ambassador's earlier assurance of support for Turkey.³⁵⁶

In the months that followed, tensions in Cyprus escalated as violence broke out between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, further heightening the risk of intervention. Turkey continued to contemplate military action, prompting increased diplomatic efforts from the US to mediate the crisis and prevent a direct conflict. By June 1964, with the situation on the ground becoming more precarious, Johnson's infamous letter to İnönü, designed to prevent Turkish intervention, became a defining moment in US-Turkish relations. While Turkey prepared for possible intervention in Cyprus, Johnson's letter underscored US opposition to any unilateral action and implied that

³⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, Cyprus: Threat of Renewed Violence and Turkish Intervention, RDP79R00967A000900010017-4, January 22, 1964.

³⁵⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey 10. Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, Ankara, February 11, 1964.

NATO might not defend Turkey if a Turkish operation provoked Soviet intervention.³⁵⁷ In his own words, the US president warned Turkey that “your NATO Allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO Allies.”³⁵⁸

The unprecedentedly blunt warning contained in Johnson’s letter sowed doubt among Turkish leaders about the reliability of NATO’s security guarantees, implying that US strategic interests might take precedence over NATO’s obligations. This letter effectively halted Ankara’s plans for a military intervention in Cyprus, compelling Turkish leaders to abandon their strategy.³⁵⁹ While the letter achieved its intended purpose, it faced criticism for its harshness; notable figures like George Ball described it as “the most brutal diplomatic note” he had ever seen.³⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, the “Johnson Letter,” where President Lyndon B. Johnson applied significant diplomatic pressure to dissuade Ankara from intervening, played a crucial role in fostering Soviet-Turkish rapprochement.³⁶¹

The letter, in other words, accelerated a reevaluation of Turkey’s foreign policy, prompting Ankara to explore alternative sources of support. Observing the growing rift between Turkey and the US, the USSR sought to capitalize on the situation by extending diplomatic overtures. The Soviets emphasized their solidarity with Turkey’s position by offering economic assistance, including a proposal for the

³⁵⁷ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 349.

³⁵⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Document 54, Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey, June 5, 1964.

³⁵⁹ Aylin Güney, The USA’s Role in Mediating the Cyprus Conflict, 31.

³⁶⁰ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 350.

³⁶¹ George S. Harris, “The View from Ankara,” *The Wilson Quarterly*, 6, no. 5 (1982): 126–135.

construction of an oil refinery in İzmir.³⁶²

Following the Washington negotiations, former US Secretary of State Dean Acheson was appointed as mediator for the Cyprus Issue. Under Acheson's mediation, delegations from Turkey, Greece, and the UK convened under the guidance of UN mediator Tuomioja at the Geneva Conference on July 9, 1964. Although the Greek Cypriot leader was invited, he declined to participate. Due to Greek objections, the delegations did not meet directly, so Acheson held separate discussions with each party, relaying proposals back and forth. Ultimately, on July 14, 1964, the “Acheson Plan” was introduced. This plan included proposals to address both “taksim” (partition of the island) and “enosis” (union with Greece), which aimed to alleviate Turkey’s security concerns, place Cyprus under indirect NATO control, and secure Western interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, it did not account for the rising influence of Cyprus in Greek politics and the strong stance of Archbishop Makarios, who was increasingly unwilling to accept any solution that he did not himself orchestrate. Viewing the plan as a covert partition, Makarios formally rejected it on August 12, 1964, prompting Greece to respond similarly.³⁶³

Meanwhile, as the Geneva Conference proceeded, tensions escalated in Cyprus. On August 6, 1964, Greek Cypriot forces, led by General Grivas, launched a major offensive against the Turkish-controlled Erenköy-Mansura area, intending to sever the vital supply route that connected Erenköy to the port and facilitated Turkish Cypriots' link to Türkiye. The Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT) forces had to retreat to Erenköy, and Greek Cypriot forces besieged the area, putting the TMT

³⁶² Martin Edmonds & John Skitt, “Current Soviet Maritime Strategy and NATO,” *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 45, no. 1 (1969): 41, doi:10.2307/2612619.

³⁶³ Melek M. Fırat, 1960-1980 *Yunanistan’la İlişkiler*, in B. Oran (Eds.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 727.

fighters' lives in jeopardy.

Upon learning of the situation, Turkish representative Nihat Erim returned to Ankara on August 7. In deliberations with Prime Minister İnönü, Erim conveyed his sense that limited intervention might be tolerated by the US based on insights gathered from meetings with Acheson.³⁶⁴ Yet, Erim expressed concerns that bombarding Greek forces might provoke greater retaliatory actions against Turkish Cypriots. He suggested it might be more prudent to seek US mediation once again, highlighting that continued diplomatic efforts might yield better results.³⁶⁵

In response, Türkiye initiated diplomatic actions within the UN and NATO, and on August 7, Turkish warplanes conducted a warning flight over Cyprus, sanctioned by the Turkish government. By August 8, Turkey's jets launched targeted bombings on the Greek National Guard positions under Grivas' command, following Turkey's failed efforts to de-escalate the conflict through diplomatic channels.³⁶⁶ Turkish jets made 34 sorties, striking the Greek-owned Phaethon patrol vessel, resulting in six Greek Cypriot casualties and injuring six others.³⁶⁷ This marked Turkey's first limited military engagement in Cyprus.

During the tense August 1964 period, Turkey's airstrikes in Cyprus, including the use of napalm and heavy bombing, became a focal point of diplomatic concern. In Washington, Under Secretary George W. Ball reported to President Johnson about Turkey's resumed air offensive, indicating that the strikes, which began early that morning, were intense and included high-impact weaponry. Meanwhile, the Greek

³⁶⁴ Nihat Erim, *Bildiğim ve Gördüğüm Ölçüler İçinde Kıbrıs*, (Ankara: Ajans-Türk Press, 1975): 381.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 382.

³⁶⁶ Melek M. Fırat, 1960-1980 *Yunanistan'la İlişkiler*, 729.

³⁶⁷ Yunan Eski Savunma Bakanı Garufalyas'ın Kıbrıs Anıları (1963-65), *Milliyet*, December 13, 1974, 7.

Cypriots reached out to the Soviet Union for military intervention, though the Soviets appeared unlikely to respond militarily and instead focused their support within the Security Council. This call for Soviet intervention heightened concerns in the US about superpower involvement in the region, leading to a primary objective: preventing any Soviet action that might further destabilize the situation or escalate it to a broader Cold War conflict.³⁶⁸

Following these developments, Ambassador Hare in Ankara conveyed Washington's plea for restraint to Turkish officials. Turkish Foreign Minister Erkin conveyed that he had discussed this request with Prime Minister İnönü, who was hesitant to scale back military action given his mistrust of Greek Cypriot intentions and Makarios's use of the time for potentially damaging actions against Turkish Cypriots. Although İnönü expressed some willingness to halt airstrikes by the following morning, he conditioned this on a cessation of Greek Cypriot attacks at Kokkina and a withdrawal of Greek forces from occupied areas. İnönü's stance highlighted Turkey's frustration with what it perceived as inadequate action from the international community, reinforcing Ankara's insistence on maintaining military pressure as a means to secure compliance with their demands.³⁶⁹

Further efforts by the US to mediate a cessation in Turkish airstrikes met with Turkish resistance. During additional diplomatic exchanges, Erkin emphasized that any Security Council resolution must include provisions for the Greek withdrawal from the Mansoura complex, stressing that Turkey's priority was the restoration of the status quo ante. Without such terms, the Turkish government feared that an

³⁶⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Document 111. Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and the Under Secretary of State (George W. Ball), August 9, 1964.

³⁶⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey. 115. Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, Ankara, August 9, 1964.

international resolution would merely solidify Greek territorial gains, diminishing the likelihood of a fair resolution. Erkin also voiced disappointment over the perceived lack of US support, particularly in failing to advance Geneva negotiations as a path forward.³⁷⁰ There was some debate among Turkish military officials about continuing the operation as well. However, İnönü, concerned about international perceptions, commented, “We will be regarded as creating an unfair situation.”³⁷¹ After confirmation that Makarios had ordered a ceasefire, İnönü called off further airstrikes at 14:00 on August 9, 1964.

The Johnson letter prompted Turkey to rethink its Western alliances, which led to improved relations with the Soviet Union. Events like the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis had already cast doubt on NATO’s reliability in protecting Turkish interests, especially after the United States removed Jupiter missiles from Turkish territory in a trade-off with the Soviet Union.³⁷² Disappointment over the US support intensified Turkey’s pursuit of alternative partnerships, accelerating its diplomatic engagement with Moscow.

In these circumstances, Turkish Foreign Minister Erkin visited Moscow in November 1964, followed by Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko’s five-day visit to Ankara in 1965. Shortly after, Soviet media quoted Gromyko suggesting a federated state solution for Cyprus. Furthermore, during Ürgüplü’s visit to Moscow, both countries issued a joint communiqué supporting the rights of both Cypriot communities and the island’s independence.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey 118. Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State Ankara, August 10, 1964.

³⁷¹ Nihat Erim, *Bildiğim ve Gördüğüm Ölçüler İçinde Kıbrıs*, 393.

³⁷² George S. Harris, “The View from Ankara,” 132.

³⁷³ Baskin Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006 Facts and Analyses with Documents*, (Istanbul:

Turkish-Soviet relations continued to warm after the summer of 1964. Despite the clear influence of the “Johnson Letter,” the structural shifts in both countries’ foreign policies were more complex and long-standing. In late October and early November 1964, Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin visited Moscow, where the two sides affirmed a mutual respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Cyprus, as well as the rights of both Greek and Turkish communities on the island. This marked a significant departure from the Soviet Union’s earlier policy, which had largely favored Greek Cypriot interests. The Turkish-Soviet communiqué in November 1964 symbolized a shift in Soviet policy, aligning closer to Turkey’s position by acknowledging the legitimacy of the Turkish Cypriot community’s rights.³⁷⁴ The discussions extended well beyond mere political topics. Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin signed an expansive agreement that focused on deepening cultural connections, spanning various artistic and social domains such as music, opera, painting, museums, and sports.³⁷⁵ Additionally, Turkey and the Soviet Union agreed to waive tourist visa fees and appointed a team of experts to devise cooperative strategies in energy, natural resources, and oil sectors.³⁷⁶

The Turkish government recognized the value of Moscow’s support in the face of waning Western backing and continued to deepen its engagement with the Soviet Union. A high-profile visit to Turkey by Soviet official Nikolai Podgorny in 1965 further cemented this relationship. Podgorny’s speeches in Ankara reflected Soviet support for a federal solution in Cyprus that would acknowledge both communities

İletişim, 2015), 776-777.

³⁷⁴ Nihat Erim, *Bildiğim ve Gördüğüm Ölçüler İçinde Kıbrıs*, 243.

³⁷⁵ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Cultural exchange agreement with the USSR, 030.018.01/181.70.1, October 28, 1964.

³⁷⁶ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Cancellation of Tourist Visa Fees, 030.018.01/180.61.14, October 1, 1964. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Soviet-Turkish Cooperation Agreement in Technology, 030.018.02/182.78.10, December 18, 1964.

on the island. This position resonated with Turkish leaders, who saw it as aligning with Turkey's desire to protect the Turkish Cypriot community and prevent the island's enosis (union) with Greece.³⁷⁷

Turkey's rapprochement with the Soviet Union extended beyond diplomatic gestures; it represented a strategic shift towards a multi-faceted foreign policy. While Turkey had previously relied almost exclusively on NATO and the US for security guarantees, the Cyprus crisis underscored the importance of diversifying Turkey's relationship with its neighbors. Turkey's efforts to build closer ties with the Soviet Union symbolized its commitment to pursuing a more independent foreign policy that could adapt to changing geopolitical circumstances.

Amidst this evolving landscape, in a meeting with Mr. Jernegan, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, along with the American Ambassador, focusing on the ongoing Cyprus issue, the Turkish Prime Minister emphasized a critical concern regarding the Greek government's potential continued negative stance towards Turkey's demands. He warned that if Turkey was forced to take action in response to provocation, it should not be hindered by external powers as had happened previously. He stated that while the Turkish nation was known for its patience, and once the limit was reached, "no force can prevent the Turkish people from acting."³⁷⁸ The Prime Minister asserted that, "even if the Soviet Union or other nations decide to intervene, the Turkish nation would remain resolute." He underscored the importance of understanding this perspective in order

³⁷⁷ Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 776.

³⁷⁸ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Türk Başbakanın, Amerikan Dışişleri Yakın Doğu ve Güney Asya Bakan Yrd. Sernegan ve Amerikan Büyükelçisi ile Kıbrıs Meselesi hakkında görüşmesine ait telgraf, 64-395-5, March 29, 1965.

to safeguard the friendship between the United States and Turkey and pave the way for diplomatic efforts beforehand.³⁷⁹

The Soviet Union's evolving policy aimed at maintaining amicable relations with its neighboring states, including Turkey. During Ürgüplü's 1965 visit to Moscow, Soviet leaders raised Turkey's NATO membership and the Cyprus question. Kosygin's stance on Cyprus marked a shift; he advocated for Cyprus's independence and territorial integrity while acknowledging the rights of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, a position welcomed by Turkey.³⁸⁰

This phase of Turkish-Soviet rapprochement saw further progress in 1965, marked by the visit of Nikolai Podgorny, Chairman of the Soviet Presidium, to Ankara. Podgorny's address to the Turkish parliament explicitly supported a federal approach to the Cyprus problem, recognizing the island's bi-communal structure.³⁸¹

As Soviet-Turkish trade increased over the years, Turkish political discussions primarily focused on maintaining cordial relations with both Washington and Moscow. This focus became so pronounced that İsmet İnönü openly advocated for Turkey's alignment with both opposing blocs and argued that, in the event of conflict, Turkey should adopt a neutral stance.³⁸² This strategic balancing approach became a defining feature of Turkish foreign policy throughout the Cold War.

In parallel with Soviet outreach, Turkey also sought to improve relations with Third World nations and the non-aligned movement. Turkey's failure to garner significant support from non-aligned countries during the Cyprus crisis underscored the need for

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ J. A. Naik, Russia's Policies towards Neighbors. *Economic and Political Weekly* 3, no. 50 (1968).

³⁸¹ *Milliyet*. Rusya'nın Tutumu Atina'da Telâş Yarattı, January 23, 1965.

³⁸² Nihat Erim, *Günlükler, 1925–1979*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), 800, 849, 861.

a broader base of international support. During the Second Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cairo in 1964, non-aligned countries emphasized Cyprus's right to self-determination and sovereignty, reflecting a view that largely aligned with Makarios's stance.³⁸³ Turkey's historically close alignment with the West had often alienated non-aligned nations, but the developments around the Cyprus crisis highlighted the importance of repairing these relationships.

In response, Turkey began to cultivate a more balanced relationship with the Arab World as well, reaching out to countries that shared its skepticism of Western intervention. By 1967, Turkey's commitment to this new approach would be evident. Ankara assured its Arab neighbors that its military bases would not be used to support Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This decision helped Turkey gain credibility among Arab states and underscored its commitment to an independent foreign policy that prioritized regional solidarity over rigid alliances with the West.

On the cusp of the 1965 elections, when İnönü's CHP was poised to lose to Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party, Alexei Kosygin extended an invitation to Senate President Suat Hayri Ürgüplü for a visit to Moscow.³⁸⁴ In August 1965, Ürgüplü finalized several bilateral agreements, mostly on trade.³⁸⁵ The new Turkish approach to foreign relations was further reinforced by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's election in 1965. Although Demirel's administration maintained a pro-Western stance, it recognized the strategic value of maintaining close ties with the Soviet Union, as evidenced by the inclusion of "mutual respect and trust" in its policy

³⁸³ United Nations General Assembly, 2nd Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, Cairo, Egypt, 1964, 18.

³⁸⁴ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, On Suat Ürgüplü's August Trip to Moscow, 030.018.01/187.40.9, July 16, 1965.

³⁸⁵ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Miscellaneous Soviet-Turkish Agreements, 030.018.02/188.51.7 and 030.018.01/187.39.15, August 25, 1965.

declarations.³⁸⁶ Demirel's government viewed the Soviet Union as a valuable partner that could help Turkey address its economic challenges while offering an important alternative to US support on the Cyprus issue.

Shortly after the October 1965 elections, the Turkish delegation visiting the United States, led by Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, expressed the new government's commitment to strengthening relations with the United States and the Western bloc. The Turkish Minister highlighted that the Justice Party had secured a substantial majority, which would enable the formation of a stable government for the forthcoming four years. Çağlayangil also, however, continued with the Turkish government's desire to establish amicable relations with the Soviet Union. The focus of Turkish-Soviet relations, he said, would be on enhancing trade. The Secretary indicated that the US did not oppose its allies engaging in normal relations with the USSR and explicitly supported the normalization of Turkey's ties with the Soviet Union.³⁸⁷

Kosygin's week-long visit to Turkey in December 1965 marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations. Soviet publications highlighted not only economic progress between the nations but also cultural exchange, noting that Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* had premiered at the Ankara Opera House shortly before Kosygin's arrival. Turkish President Cevdet Sunay personally congratulated the renowned Soviet Azerbaijani conductor, Niyazi Hacıbeyov, underscoring the cultural rapport.³⁸⁸

In the meantime, March 16, 1966 marked the 45th anniversary of the Moscow

³⁸⁶ Adalet Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, Ankara, Doğuş Press, 1965, 31.

³⁸⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey. 215. Memorandum of Conversation, Turkish-United States Relations, Washington, December 1, 1965.

³⁸⁸ B. Kobyshev and A. Sharifov, Novaia Glava (New Chapter). *Izvestiia*, December 18, 1966.

Treaty, which established Turkish-Russian friendship in 1921. In light of improving relations, the *Ulus* newspaper noted:

Over these 45 years, this relationship has experienced fluctuations, with anniversaries sometimes celebrated, occasionally merely acknowledged, at times observed, and at other moments forgotten. Recent international developments provide reasons to remember and commemorate this milestone. Since 1953, Russia has shifted its stance towards Turkey, prompting questions of whether Russia can truly be trusted. Perhaps not—but can Britain or the United States be trusted any more reliably?³⁸⁹

The 45th anniversary of the Turkish-Russian Friendship Treaty was also given particular significance by the Soviet Union. In recognition of this occasion, articles were published in the *Izvestiia* and *Sovetskaia Rossiia* newspapers. Additionally, a luncheon was held in honor of the Turkish Ambassador, hosted by First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov, with the embassy's civilian staff also in attendance. Additionally, a meeting was organized at the Institute of Asian Peoples, affiliated with the Soviet Academy of Sciences, to further commemorate the anniversary.³⁹⁰

As Turkey entered the latter half of the 1960s, it developed a wider network of alliances and a renewed sense of purpose on the global stage. This change was not just a response to outside pressures; it reflected a deliberate decision by Turkish leaders to interact independently with global powers. By broadening its partnerships beyond NATO, Turkey showed its commitment to a balanced foreign policy that could effectively manage the challenges of the Cold War while maintaining its sovereignty amid superpower competition in the eastern Mediterranean. This shift toward multiple alignments ultimately strengthened Turkey's position, enabling it to

³⁸⁹ Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, Türk-Rus Dostluğunun Yıldönümü, *Ulus*, March 17, 1966.

³⁹⁰ Turkish Diplomatic Archives, Türk-Sovyet Anlaşmasının 45.nci yıldönümü sebebiyle İzvestiya ve Sovietakaya Rossiya gazetelerinde çıkan haberler ve Moskova Büyükelçimize verilen davet, 67713-296651-54, March 17, 1966.

adopt a more assertive approach in negotiations with the US, the Soviet Union, and other non-aligned countries regarding the Cyprus issue.

Nevertheless, Turkey's Western alliances remained central to its foreign policy framework. During a significant meeting at the White House on April 3, 1967, US President Lyndon B. Johnson met Turkish President Cevdet Sunay and Turkish Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil. This meeting was part of Sunay's state visit, and it marked the first of two substantive discussions between the leaders. After an initial exchange of pleasantries, President Sunay presented a comprehensive overview of Turkey's stance on several pressing issues, including NATO, East-West détente, the Middle East, Cyprus, US-Turkish relations, and the situation in Vietnam. In this context, Sunay noted that Turkey's relations with Romania, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union had begun to show signs of improvement amidst the prevailing atmosphere of détente. However, he emphasized that Turkey maintained no illusions about the complexities of these relationships, asserting that the fundamental guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy remained the "fulfillment of commitments to allies." Sunay underscored the shared interests and policies that bonded Turkey and the United States, highlighting that the fates of both nations were intertwined. He reminded President Johnson of the significance of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which left a lasting impression on Turkish sentiment. Sunay expressed the emotional turmoil felt by the Turkish people when the United States did not meet their expectations regarding the Cyprus issue in the summer of 1964, particularly given Turkey's swift military support during the Korean War, which they believed warranted a reciprocal response from the US. He articulated concerns that US interventions had led to strong criticism within Turkey, resulting in a perceived erosion of their freedom to act on the international stage. In response, President

Johnson acknowledged the mutual benefits stemming from the approximately \$5 billion in US aid provided to Turkey since 1947. He emphasized that this aid was indicative of the American people's favorable attitudes towards Turkey. While acknowledging the existence of some anti-American sentiments in Turkey, Johnson countered that there were equally strong pro-Turkish feelings in the United States, reinforcing the idea of a solid bilateral relationship grounded in shared values and interests.³⁹¹

Three weeks after the meeting between the Turkish and American Presidents, the political landscape shifted dramatically as a military coup in Greece on April 21, 1967, replaced the government with a junta. This development raised Turkish fears that the new Greek regime might provoke unrest in Cyprus to consolidate its own power. The Turkish government, led by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, viewed the Cyprus issue as strictly a matter between Turkey and Greece, seeking to counter Archbishop Makarios's pro-Greek Cypriot ambitions and avoid external interference.³⁹²

In September 1967, a Turkish-Greek summit was held, with Demirel meeting Greek Prime Minister Kollias in Keşan and later Alexandroupolis to discuss potential solutions. Kollias proposed a form of enosis (union with Greece) that, he argued, would respect Turkish security concerns by granting Turkish Cypriots rights similar to those of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. However, Demirel firmly opposed enosis, stressing that any resolution must avoid annexation by either side and ensure coexistence, in line with the balance established by the Lausanne

³⁹¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XVI Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, 266. Memorandum of Conversation, NATO and the East-West Détente; The Middle East; Cyprus; U.S.-Turkish Relations; and Viet-Nam, Washington, April 3, 1967.

³⁹² Süha Bölükbaşı, "The Cyprus Dispute and the U.N.: Peaceful Non-Settlement Between 1954-1998," *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (1998): 423.

Treaty.³⁹³ This exchange underscored the fundamental differences in Turkish and Greek visions for Cyprus, highlighting the tenuous diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue.

Shortly thereafter, tensions reached a peak on November 15, 1967, when Greek Cypriot forces, led by General Grivas, launched an assault on the Turkish Cypriot villages of Geçitkale and Boğaziçi, resulting in 22 deaths, mostly Turkish Cypriots, and widespread destruction.³⁹⁴ In response, Demirel convened a Cabinet meeting to consider military intervention, but again faced the constraints of Turkey's limited military capacity, reflecting the persistent challenges in Turkey's handling of the Cyprus crisis.

The United States grew deeply alarmed as the threat of war between two NATO allies resurfaced, deploying the Sixth Fleet near Cyprus in an attempt to deter Turkish action. US officials acknowledged that Demirel's Turkey could launch a substantial offensive if necessary, especially given ongoing mobilizations along the Turkish-Greek border.³⁹⁵ Unlike in 1964, when Turkish-American relations had been strained by President Johnson's sternly worded letter, this time the US maintained diplomatic channels. President Johnson sent emissary Cyrus Vance to negotiate a peaceful resolution, while Demirel insisted on the withdrawal of Greek troops as a condition for de-escalation.³⁹⁶ The emphasis on dialogue signaled a shift in US strategy, likely influenced by the growing urgency to preserve NATO unity.

³⁹³ Mehmet Ali Birand, *50 Years of Cyprus* (Istanbul: 32. Gün, 1999), VCD.

³⁹⁴ Mete Kaan Kaynar, *Türkiye'nin 1960lı Yılları*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2017), 245.

³⁹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, Military Capabilities of Turkey-Greece-Cyprus, RDP79T00826A002900280001-4, November 20, 1967.

³⁹⁶ Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in Americas Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 144.

During the peak of the crisis, Turkey also found unexpected support from the Soviet Union. In contrast to 1964, the USSR refrained from opposing Turkish intervention. Soviet Ambassador Smirnov met with Demirel, condemning the “Greek fascists” and attributing the crisis to the Greek junta, thereby marking a rare alignment between Turkish and Soviet interests on Cyprus.³⁹⁷ This alignment illustrated the diplomatic advantages of Turkey’s multipolar foreign policy, which increasingly embraced Soviet cooperation when beneficial.

On December 3, 1967, Vance successfully brokered an agreement in which Greece and Turkey committed to respecting Cyprus’s independence and territorial integrity. Under the agreement, Greek forces would withdraw under UN oversight, and General Grivas would be barred from returning to the island. With Greece unable to resist US pressure due to its reliance on Washington, Turkish-Greek relations temporarily stabilized, while Turkey benefited from a softer US diplomatic approach, which was shaped by growing Turkish public opposition to US involvement.³⁹⁸

The crisis, however, revealed Turkey’s limited amphibious capabilities and underscored the need to bolster its defense infrastructure. In response, Demirel’s administration launched an intensive military expansion program, establishing the Navy Association and initiating domestic fundraising campaigns to support a robust naval and amphibious fleet.³⁹⁹ By 1974, these efforts would culminate in Turkey’s readiness for a full-scale intervention, a testament to the government’s proactive response to the lessons of 1967.

³⁹⁷ M. Sarica, Ö. Eskiurt & E. Teziç, *Kıbrıs Sorunu* (Istanbul: Istanbul University, 1975), 156.

³⁹⁸ Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 738.

³⁹⁹ *Cumhuriyet*’in Büyük Teşebbüsü, *Cumhuriyet*, May 2, 1965, 1.

By the mid-1970s, Turkey began to see strategic benefits in aligning with the Soviet stance against Greek territorial claims. This was a notable shift from the early 1960s, when Turkey's interactions with the Soviet Union—such as Suat Hayri Ürgüplü's 1963 visit to Moscow—were still overshadowed by lingering resentment over Stalin's post-war demands. However, by the late 1960s, Turkey and the Soviet Union had gradually found common ground, managing geopolitical tensions through economic cooperation despite ideological differences.

Nonetheless, ideological rifts occasionally surfaced, particularly within Turkey. A 1969 KGB report observed growing nationalist sentiment within Turkey's ruling Justice Party, with prominent figures amplifying anti-communist rhetoric. Boris Solomatin, a senior KGB official, noted that Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MİT) actively promoted nationalist propaganda as a defense against communism, deploying civilian informants and undercover agents to rigorously monitor and curb leftist activities.⁴⁰⁰

The KGB report further highlighted that these ideological divides extended beyond the ruling party, influencing opposition groups as well. Solomatin observed that the main opposition, the CHP, was using populist tactics to undercut the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), whose influence was rising. Although these internal tensions subtly shaped Turkey's foreign policy outlook, they did not deter Turkey's pursuit of closer economic ties with the Soviet Union.⁴⁰¹

As Turkey prepared for elections in October 1969, Soviet assessments concluded that electoral results were unlikely to alter Turkey's NATO commitments, as all major

⁴⁰⁰ Polat Safi, *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı, 1826–2023*, (İstanbul: Kronik, 2023), 232–235.

⁴⁰¹ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Zakharov to TsK, F. 5, op. 61, d. 554, ll. 19–26, March 14, 1969.

political parties supported membership in the alliance. Additionally, they observed that the Turkish Workers Party (TİP), weakened by internal divisions and lacking favor toward Moscow, was likely to perform poorly, further reinforcing Turkey's Western alignment.⁴⁰²

The Turkish general elections of October 12, 1969, were marked by the victory of Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party, which was already in power. Shortly after the 1969 elections, Leonid Brezhnev extended an invitation to Turkish President Cevdet Sunay and his wife, leading to an official visit to Moscow from November 12 to 21. The Soviet Union's choice to collaborate with Turkey's staunchly anti-communist, center-right government was well-received in Ankara.⁴⁰³

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the easing of global tensions—highlighted by the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 1971 Seabed Treaty—provided Turkey with a favorable backdrop to enhance its relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union. In this atmosphere of détente, on March 15, 1971, a significant exchange of congratulatory telegrams took place between A. N. Kosygin, the Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, and Süleyman Demirel, the Prime Minister of Turkey, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Turkish-Soviet Treaty signed on March 16, 1921. In his message, Kosygin stated that the agreement remained closely aligned with the interests of both nations and contributed to the strengthening of peace. Kosygin reaffirmed the Soviet Union's commitment to maintaining and enhancing friendly relations with Turkey, expressing readiness to support the Turkish Government in its endeavors to cultivate mutually beneficial

⁴⁰² Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Lieutenant General Tolokonnikov to TsK, F. 5, op. 61, d. 554, ll. 176–184, October 3, 1969.

⁴⁰³ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Turkish Presidency to the Embassy in Moscow, 030.018.01/242.76.12, November 12, 1969.

cooperation between the two countries. Prime Minister Demirel responded with a message that echoed Kosygin's sentiments, highlighting the Moscow Agreement's pivotal role in establishing a framework for good-neighborly relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union. He reiterated Turkey's dedication to the principles outlined by both Lenin and Atatürk, as mentioned in the treaty. Demirel conveyed satisfaction regarding the development of bilateral relations. He concluded with a statement of confidence in the future trajectory of Turkish-Soviet relations, emphasizing he was "pleased with the development of relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union, as they benefit both nations in their entirety."⁴⁰⁴

The same month, on March 12, 1971, the Turkish military issued a memorandum to the government, citing political instability, economic difficulties, and escalating ideological conflicts as justification for intervention. This action forced Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel to resign, leading to the establishment of a technocratic government under military supervision. Following the military's crackdown on leftists and the closure of the Turkish Workers' Party (TİP) closure after the 1971 coup, the Soviet Politburo instructed *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* to publish a series of critical articles condemning Turkey's anti-communist actions, illustrating that the Kremlin was not entirely passive regarding Turkey's crackdown on communists.⁴⁰⁵ The KGB continued to track Turkey's internal strife, noting that the rivalry between the two dominant branches of the Turkish bourgeoisie was deepening, which they interpreted as an increase in "class consciousness."⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Turkish Diplomatic Archives, *Moskova Anlaşmasının 50.nci yıldönümü sebebiyle Kosigin ile Gromiko'dan alınan ve Başbakanımız ile Dışişleri Bakanımız tarafından gönderilen telgraflar*, 67713-296651-21, March 16, 1971.

⁴⁰⁵ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Andropov to TsK, F. 5, op. 63, d. 39, ll. 275-277, December 24, 1971.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

Meanwhile, nationalist and socialist ideologies gained momentum among Turkey's intellectuals, students, and junior military officers. Notably, KGB reports began viewing Turkish nationalism with a less critical lens, particularly in contrast to the pro-Western, export-oriented elites, marking a shift from previous Soviet criticisms of nationalism as a strictly anti-communist force.

Unlike the 1960 coup, which had been welcomed by Turkish leftists and Moscow alike, the March 1971 military intervention cast a shadow over Soviet-Turkish relations, as this coup was led by right-wing generals pursuing anti-communist agendas. In a letter to the Politburo in December 1971, Yuri Andropov, who would later lead the Soviet Union, foresaw an increasingly bleak outlook for Turkey, predicting a worsening economic crisis, rising political radicalization, and a potential slide toward a temporary military dictatorship.

Despite Soviet concerns about Turkey's increasingly volatile post-coup politics, certain developments bolstered Soviet-Turkish relations. In 1973, Fahri Korutürk—Turkey's former ambassador to Moscow from 1960 to 1964—was elected as Turkey's sixth president. Although arrests and executions of leftists marked the political climate, Korutürk, a former general, enjoyed Moscow's trust due to his previous diplomatic ties. Additionally, Bülent Ecevit's unexpected rise to power in a coalition government with political Islamists in 1973 shifted Turkey's political landscape toward the center-left, challenging prior expectations associated with Demirel's re-election.

The events of 1967-1974 not only intensified Turkey's military preparations but also influenced its broader geopolitical stance. Turkey sought to recalibrate its

dependency on the US, symbolized by renegotiations leading to the 1969 Joint Defense Cooperation Agreement, which realigned US military aid towards more autonomous Turkish defense strategies. Moreover, Turkey approached NATO's initiatives with caution, evident in its refusal to join the US-led Multilateral Force (MLF) amid Soviet encouragement to stay neutral on such NATO commitments.⁴⁰⁷

The Soviet Union's support for Turkey in the 1967 crisis, unlike its stance in 1964, was likely a strategic shift to prevent a NATO-aligned Cyprus and maintain influence over regional affairs. This approach fit with the Soviets' interest in Makarios's non-aligned stance. At the same time, Moscow carefully managed relations with both Turkey and Greece, avoiding any overt favoritism while encouraging Greek Cypriot resistance to NATO's influence.⁴⁰⁸

In parallel, Turkey fostered relationships with Third World and Arab states, recognizing their potential support on the Cyprus issue. At the 1969 Rabat Islamic Summit, Turkey's stance on Palestinian rights, combined with its condemnation of Israeli actions, aligned it with other Islamic states, expanding its diplomatic toolkit. By the early 1970s, the Republic of Turkey began actively seeking out support within the non-aligned movement, a stance further supported by Demirel's successor, Bülent Ecevit, whose anti-imperialist rhetoric resonated with non-aligned nations critical of Western interference.⁴⁰⁹

In summary, between 1967 and 1974, Turkey's approach to Cyprus and its broader foreign policy framework shifted significantly. The period's crises catalyzed Turkish military investments and redefined Turkey's relationships with the United States and

⁴⁰⁷ Nihat Erim, *Bildiğim ve Gördüğüm Ölçüler İçinde Kıbrıs*, 442.

⁴⁰⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, Cyprus-An Old Problem, RDP85T00875R001100160020-7, 1973. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001100160020-7>

⁴⁰⁹ Baskın Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 740.

the Soviet Union, while expanding its alliances with Third World and Islamic nations. With a strengthened military and an assertive political leadership, Turkey emerged more prepared to assert its interests on Cyprus and more willing to challenge US expectations, signaling a major evolution in its Cold War diplomacy and strategic orientation.

On July 15, 1974, Greece's ruling junta executed a violent coup in Cyprus with the goal of immediate *enosis* (union with Greece). This abrupt move overthrew Archbishop Makarios, who had envisioned a gradual path to *enosis*, and installed Nicos Sampson—a figure notorious for his violence against British and Turkish Cypriots in prior decades—as president of the newly declared “Hellenic Republic of Cyprus.” Sampson's ascent deeply unsettled both Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, especially amid uncertainty regarding Makarios's fate. News soon emerged that Makarios had escaped, first to Malta and then to London, reportedly with British assistance.⁴¹⁰

In Ankara, Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit promptly convened an emergency National Security Council session to address the unfolding crisis. During this meeting, Finance Minister Deniz Baykal argued that intervention was imperative, emphasizing that, in the era of *détente*, superpowers now tended to de-escalate rather than intervene directly in regional crises. He urged that Turkey should take proactive steps rather than risk enduring another crisis imposed from abroad, warning that Greece might solidify its control over Cyprus if Turkey delayed.⁴¹¹ The Council subsequently declared the situation a “Greek intervention,” signaling that Greece had

⁴¹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, British Fly Makarios out of Cyprus, RDP78S01932A000100070049-8, July 16, 1974. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78s01932a000100070049-8>

⁴¹¹ Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days*, (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1976), 21.

breached Cyprus's constitutional order and violated the island's sovereignty under international agreements.⁴¹² With this decision, preparations for a Turkish military intervention began.

International responses were swift. European nations condemned the coup, while the United States refrained from direct criticism. The situation escalated further as the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc states issued strong condemnations of the coup and moved forces toward regional borders, preparing for potential involvement.⁴¹³

Amid these global reactions, Ecevit—known for his assertive foreign policy that contrasted with former Prime Minister İnönü's caution—was determined to protect Turkey's interests while navigating complex Cold War alliances. Turkey was now militarily prepared, possessing 100 landing craft and a sufficient number of personnel, a significant improvement from the limited resources available in 1964 and 1967.⁴¹⁴ Ecevit, viewing NATO not only as a security guarantee but also as a tool for maintaining détente, saw this moment as crucial for asserting Turkey's sovereignty within NATO, marking a shift from a purely alliance-dependent foreign policy.⁴¹⁵

Ecevit's approach was shaped by the ongoing global détente, and he saw Greece's actions in Cyprus as an aggressive *fait accompli* that Turkey could not ignore. While Ecevit considered his options, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sought to mitigate Soviet suspicions of a NATO-backed operation by requesting Soviet cooperation in stabilizing the region. This Cyprus crisis, unfolding within the context

⁴¹² M. Sarica, Ö. Eskiyyurt & E. Teziç, *Kıbrıs Sorunu*, 180.

⁴¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, Coup: Short-term US Policy and Mid-term Considerations, LOC-HAK-123-1-15-7, July 18, 1974. <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/loc-hak-123-1-15-7>

⁴¹⁴ Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Yeni Demokrasi, Yeni Arayışlar: 1960-1965*, (Ankara: Bilgi, 1985), 283.

⁴¹⁵ Hasan Cem, *Kıbrıs Anlaşmalarında Ecevit'in Savunması*, (İstanbul: Aktüel Printing House, 1974), 64.

of Cold War détente, thus tested superpower commitments to regional stability and non-intervention.⁴¹⁶

In a final effort to find a diplomatic solution before resorting to military intervention, Ecevit traveled to London on July 17 to meet with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Foreign Minister James Callaghan. The British, however, rejected Ecevit's proposal for a joint intervention, concerned that it would damage their relations with Greek Cypriots and provoke Soviet accusations of colonialism.⁴¹⁷ Undeterred by Wilson's refusal, Ecevit returned to Ankara and met separately with US Undersecretary of State Joseph Sisco, who appealed for a delay to allow for a peaceful resolution. Drawing on past US intervention in 1964, Ecevit refused to defer action, stating firmly that Turkey would not repeat past mistakes of yielding to US pressure.⁴¹⁸

On July 20, 1974, Turkey launched its Cyprus operation, which Ecevit termed a peace mission aimed at protecting both Turkish and Greek Cypriots. The intervention involved mobilizing the Turkish navy and ground forces, while superpowers swiftly moved vessels into the Mediterranean to contain the crisis and prevent escalation. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger acted quickly, reassuring Moscow that neither the US nor the Soviet Union would engage militarily in Cyprus, thus avoiding a direct superpower confrontation.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Ilksoy Aslım, "The Soviet Union and Cyprus in 1974 Events", *Athens Journal of History* (2016): 257-258.

⁴¹⁷ Mehmet Ali Birand, *50 Years of Cyprus*, VCD.

⁴¹⁸ Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 64.

⁴¹⁹ David Binder, U.S. Presses Effort for Cyprus Truce. *New York Times*. July 21, 1974. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1974/07/21/archives/us-presses-effort-for-cyprus-truce-kissinger-keeping-in-touch.html>

The 1974 coalition between Ecevit's CHP and Erbakan's MSP marked a significant departure from the cautious policies of previous Turkish administrations. Both leaders embraced a more assertive foreign policy, advocating for Turkish Cypriot autonomy and Cyprus's federalization. Ecevit articulated a vision for an independent Turkish foreign policy based on historical resilience, citing Turkey's success in overcoming external pressures in the 1920s. He argued that smaller nations like Turkey need not submit to superpower interests when they could leverage the "liabilities" of great powers to protect their autonomy.⁴²⁰

Ecevit's approach drew on lessons learned from previous US stances on Cyprus, notably the Johnson Letter's limitations and the US reluctance to risk a NATO split. While the US had continued to advocate for a united Cyprus, citing concerns about communist influence and NATO stability, Ecevit countered by insisting that Turkey's intervention could address these concerns more effectively than the unification efforts pushed by the US⁴²¹

Soviet leaders, focusing on preventing a NATO-aligned Cyprus, recognized that a Greek-led Cyprus could jeopardize their interests. In discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Turkey's Foreign Minister Güneş emphasized that Turkey's intervention would restrain Greek ambitions and prevent Cyprus from becoming a pro-NATO base, reinforcing Soviet interest in a non-aligned Cyprus.⁴²² This pragmatic exchange kept the Soviets at bay, reflecting the stronger ties built between Ankara and Moscow since the mid-1960s.

⁴²⁰ Bülent Ecevit, *Dış Politika*, (Ankara: Ajans, 1975), 18.

⁴²¹ Bülent Ecevit, Kıbrıs ve Amerika, *Milliyet*, March 30, 1965.

⁴²² Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 72.

Emboldened by the Soviet Union's supportive stance, Ecevit's government proceeded with its military strategy, intervening in Cyprus on July 20. After two days, Turkey halted its advance on July 22, allowing diplomatic efforts to unfold at the Geneva Conference. Encouraged by the US, Turkey participated in the talks with the goal of establishing a secure Turkish Cypriot zone and securing broader autonomy for Turkish Cypriots on the island. However, negotiations soon stalled as the recently returned Greek government under Karamanlis had limited leverage and resisted making substantial concessions.⁴²³

In early August, escalating ceasefire violations and diplomatic gridlock led Turkey to resume military operations. The second offensive, launched on August 14, further solidified Turkish control over Northern Cyprus, halting only after establishing the "Attila Line" as a boundary of influence. Despite widespread international condemnation, the Soviet Union maintained a strategic silence, avoiding direct conflict with Turkey while continuing to criticize Greece's coup.⁴²⁴ The United States' response was notably ambivalent; Kissinger anticipated that allowing Turkey some room for maneuver could recalibrate the Eastern Mediterranean's power balance and avert a more costly US intervention.⁴²⁵

Following the second intervention, Ecevit announced a ceasefire. Turkey justified its actions under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, arguing that the situation required such measures to protect Turkish Cypriots. Critics, however, contended that Turkey's

⁴²³ Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 162.

⁴²⁴ Süha Bölükbaşı, *The Superpowers and the Third World: Turkish-American Relations and Cyprus*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 210.

⁴²⁵ J. Sakas & N. Zhukova, "The Soviet Union, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem, 1967-1974," *Les Cahiers Irice*, no. 1 (2013): 131, doi:10.3917/lci.010.0123.

actions exceeded the treaty's bounds by establishing a new political order rather than restoring the status quo.⁴²⁶

The 1974 intervention, unlike previous crises, highlighted Turkey's strategic resilience, underscoring how its steady diversification of alliances, strengthened Soviet relations, and reassertion of an independent foreign policy within NATO since 1964 had transformed its international standing. With regional stability supported by détente, enhanced military capabilities, and an increasingly autonomous stance, Turkey was able to act decisively without fearing superpower retaliation. This balanced relationship with both the US and the USSR, coupled with the diplomatic groundwork laid with the Soviet Union and an assertive approach to the crisis, ultimately empowered Turkey to effectively safeguard its interests.

In addition to the Cyprus issue, the opium problem had also emerged, further escalating tensions in the relationship between Turkey and the US during the critical summer of 1974. In March 1971, following the Turkish military's takeover in what was termed a "coup by memorandum," the Nixon administration, which was about to launch the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), had reached out to the Turkish generals and negotiated a complete prohibition on opium poppy cultivation in exchange for a \$35 million subsidy to support Turkish farmers. This move was welcomed by urban leaders in the United States, who believed that limiting foreign supply would be easier than managing domestic demand. The ban was in effect for three years until the military relinquished power and called for democratic elections.

Turkey's newly elected civilian government faced mounting pressure, particularly from rural communities, to reinstate poppy cultivation, a practice with deep roots in

⁴²⁶ Baskin Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 748.

Turkey. Local farmers utilized the plant in various culinary applications, notably valuing the oil derived from its seeds for cooking. They also fed their livestock the remaining stalks and byproducts, resulting in well-fed cattle. Critics of the ban contended that no foreign nation should dictate to Turkish farmers what crops they could grow, turning the debate into a matter of national pride.⁴²⁷ By spring 1974, speculation circulated that Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's government was poised to lift the ban, raising alarms in both chambers of Congress. Ecevit took a firm stance, declaring to the Turkish media, "Poppy cultivation is a domestic issue for Turkey. It is Turkey that decides what to cultivate within its borders." He emphasized that his government was democratically elected and accountable to the people, contrasting it with the military regime that had imposed the 1971 ban. On July 1, Prime Minister Ecevit officially announced the repeal of the poppy ban, signaling that Turkish nationalism had triumphed over American pressures.⁴²⁸

The Cyprus intervention and the opium dispute paved the way for the US arms embargo and significantly accelerated Soviet-Turkish relations. This period saw Turkey's economic challenges become entangled with political issues, providing Moscow with an opportunity to expand cooperation, particularly around the Cyprus question. The Soviet Union maintained a position supporting Cyprus's sovereignty to prevent a NATO-aligned resolution favoring Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean. Notably, Soviet-Turkish discussions on Cyprus dated back to 1965 when Nikolai Podgornyi had expressed Moscow's support for a federal solution respecting the bi-

⁴²⁷ Kyle T. Evered, "'Poppies Are Democracy!' A Critical Geopolitics of Opium Eradication and Reintroduction in Turkey," *Geographical Review* 101, no. 3 (2011): 299–315.

⁴²⁸ James F. Goode, *The Turkish Arms Embargo: Drugs, Ethnic Lobbies, and US Domestic Politics*, (University Press of Kentucky, 2020), 14.

communal structure of the island, a stance that bolstered Ankara's position against Greece's maximalist claims by the mid-1970s.⁴²⁹

Amidst the challenges posed by the US arms embargo, questions of military support emerged as Turkey assessed its options. In a February 21, 1975, interagency intelligence memorandum titled "Turkey After the US Arms Cutoff," US analysts evaluated Turkey's military procurement alternatives following the suspension of American military aid. The memorandum suggested that Turkey was unlikely to seek substantial military supplies from the Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact countries.

Although the Soviet Union possessed the capacity to re-equip Turkish forces, the idea of Soviet dependency was not appealing to Ankara. Instead, Turkey might use the prospect of a shift toward the USSR as leverage to persuade Western countries to resume military support. A significant pivot toward Soviet alignment was viewed as even less probable than an outreach to Arab nations.

Following the US aid cutoff, there were unverified reports indicating that Turkey might contemplate a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union; however, there were no indications of any serious initiative in this regard. Such a pact might emerge as a potential alternative if Turkey truly felt abandoned by its allies and increasingly vulnerable. It was noted that Turkey's strategic control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which provided the Soviets access to the Mediterranean, would afford Ankara considerable leverage should it choose to strengthen ties with the Soviet Union. There were also reports, albeit unconfirmed, suggesting that Moscow had offered limited arms assistance, yet it was understood that the Soviets harbored

⁴²⁹ *Milliyet*, Rusya'nın Tutumu Atina'da Telâş Yarattı, January 23, 1965.

no illusions about their ability to supplant the United States as Turkey's primary arms supplier.⁴³⁰

This tension came to a head in Brussels on May 29, 1975, when Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel met with US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to voice his concerns about Turkish-American relations in light of the embargo. During a frank discussion with US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Demirel emphasized Turkey's longstanding commitment to opposing communism and supporting NATO. He articulated that the arms embargo placed Turkey in a precarious position, questioning the fairness of the situation. Demirel sought to understand the rationale behind the embargo, asking what harm Turkey had inflicted upon the United States that warranted such treatment. He noted that despite Turkey's loyalty as an ally—having provided missile bases for the US Atlas missile program and allowing intelligence facilities—Turkey was being denied arms while other nations, including Yugoslavia, continued to receive US military support. He expressed frustration over the perceived inequity, highlighting Turkey's dedication to democracy and its anti-communist stance. The Prime Minister's remarks underscored the emotional turmoil within Turkey regarding its relationship with the US. Demirel's remarks highlighted the sense of betrayal felt within Turkey, as the embargo stirred deep-seated resentment among the Turkish public. He questioned how he could justify the embargo to his fellow citizens when Turkey had taken substantial risks for American interests.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976 Volume XXX Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1973–1976, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, Turkey After the US Arms Cutoff, DCI/NIO 386–75, Washington, February 21, 1975.

⁴³¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976 Volume XXX Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1973–1976, 227. Memorandum of Conversation Brussels, May 29, 1975.

Beyond state-level diplomacy, the Soviet Union began inviting influential Turkish socialists and sympathizers to foster deeper cultural connections. Among these guests were Ahmet Yıldız, a former military officer involved in the 1960 coup who later led the People's Houses (Halkevleri), and Mustafa Timisi, the head of the Socialist Unity Party. In September 1976, these figures led a delegation to Moscow, discussing opportunities to enhance cultural exchange. They emphasized the importance of eradicating imperialist influences in Turkey and sought Soviet support for a new parliamentary group of Turkish senators advocating economic cooperation and cultural ties with Moscow.⁴³²

Another significant development in Soviet-Turkish relations occurred in 1976 when Kenan Evren, future Turkish Chief of Staff, visited Moscow to discuss potential arms sales. This marked the first serious consideration of military cooperation between the two countries since the 1930s. Evren appeared to enjoy his visit thoroughly; in his memoirs, Soviet Ambassador Rodionov recounts that the embassy later sent rye bread to Turkey in response to the appreciation Evren and his wife developed for it during their stay.⁴³³ Nikolai Ogarkov, Evren's counterpart, made a reciprocal visit to Ankara in April 1978, at which point the Soviet Union was contemplating military equipment deliveries to Turkey. However, this initiative was ultimately cut short when Washington lifted the embargo in response to Turkey's persistent requests.

As Turkish-Soviet cooperation continued, a significant regional event occurred in 1979. The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), initially established as the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and rebranded following Iraq's withdrawal in 1959,

⁴³² Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Report on Turkish Leftists in Moscow, F. 5, op. 69, d. 2609, ll. 70–75, October 12, 1976.

⁴³³ A. A. Rodionov, *Turtsiia: perekrestok sudeb. Vospominaniia posla* [Turkey: A Crossroads of Destinies. Memoirs of an Ambassador], (Moscow: M.O., 2006), 89–90.

represented a strategic alliance aimed at countering Soviet influence in the Middle East. Comprised of Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States as a supporting member, CENTO was positioned as a bulwark against communist expansion on NATO's southeastern flank. However, by the late 1970s, the stability of the alliance was severely undermined by shifting geopolitical currents, particularly with the unfolding crisis in Iran. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, resulting in the ousting of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, destabilized the regional power structure and prompted Iran's official departure from CENTO on March 11th. Pakistan soon followed on March 12th, expressing that the organization could no longer safeguard its security. The following day, Turkey announced that "CENTO had effectively lost its purpose in the region."⁴³⁴ Although CENTO had not been actively effective for some time, its dissolution meant the removal of a political barrier in Turkish-Soviet relations.

Even though the dissolution of CENTO might seem positive for Turkish-Soviet relations, it also left Turkey in a more isolated position in regional politics. During this period, the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan increased Turkey's strategic importance, but domestic politics were deeply unstable. By the late 1970s, a worsening economic crisis, rising unemployment, and escalating clashes between right- and left-wing factions destabilized the country. Increasing street violence and the inefficiency of successive governments eroded public trust in state authority. These conditions culminated in the military coup of September 12, 1980, which ushered in a period of martial law and societal restructuring under the rule of the Turkish Armed Forces.

⁴³⁴ İsmail Soysal, *Soğuk Savaş Dönemi ve Türkiye: Olaylar Kronolojisi (1945–1975)*, [The Cold War Period and Turkey: A Chronology of Events, (1945–1975)], (Istanbul: ISIS, 1997), 259.

4.2 Institutionalized Collaboration: Soviet-Turkish Economic Partnerships and Development Projects

The years 1960 and 1961 were defined by Turkey's focus on restoring political stability following the military coup of May 27, 1960. The newly established National Unity Committee (NUC) prioritized re-establishing civilian governance, aiming to stabilize a country grappling with political polarization and economic challenges. In this transitional period, economic policy took a backseat to the pressing need for institutional reorganization.

Following the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Moscow observed US-Turkey relations attentively. The Soviet interpretation of Ankara's dilemma centered on the notion that the Democrat Party had overly prioritized military spending, suggesting that Turkey should break away from American foreign policy's aggressive orientation and instead emphasize its agricultural and industrial development.⁴³⁵ At the height of the crisis on October 20, 1962, Khrushchev had criticized Turkey's reliance on US aid for economic growth. He pointed out that, in 1948, when Turkey initially accepted American economic assistance, its industrial sector accounted for 10.5% of the national economy; by 1960, this figure had risen insignificantly to 10.9%.⁴³⁶ The Soviets recognized Turkey's agricultural emphasis but framed it mainly as a focus on reclaiming arid lands, attributing the country's economic challenges and stagnant industrialization to its commitment to the US-led military bloc. Khrushchev held a somewhat simplistic view, believing that underdeveloped nations were driven by a singular economic and social impulse that could be uniformly leveraged.

⁴³⁵ N. Bragin, Pust' chernoe more ne raz'ediniat, a soediniat nas [Let the Black Sea unite us, not divide us], *Pravda*, October 29, 1963.

⁴³⁶ M. Viktorov and M. Kovalev, Turetskaia ekonomika v tupike [The Turkish economy is at an impasse], *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta*, October 20, 1962.

Accordingly, the Soviet Union made consistent strides in enhancing its influence over the nations located along its southern periphery, especially Turkey along with Iran, and the US believed, it would persist in meticulously managing its relations with these countries.⁴³⁷

In the wake of the 1960 coup, Turkish leaders also acknowledged that reliance on US aid had negatively impacted the economy. Consequently, they pursued new trade agreements with several Eastern Bloc nations, including the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland.⁴³⁸ Turkey also requested Soviet collaboration to modernize its railways, repair stations, and restore tracks to facilitate cross-border commerce.⁴³⁹ Although direct phone lines existed with certain Eastern Bloc capitals such as Sofia and Bucharest, there was an immediate need for a direct line connecting Ankara to Moscow. Soviet Ambassador Nikita Ryzhov submitted a proposal in 1962 to upgrade existing radio-telegraph lines and create a telecommunications network linking Ankara, Moscow, Sofia, and Bucharest.⁴⁴⁰

Initially, these interactions unfolded in a piecemeal fashion. To address immediate needs, the two countries signed a new protocol, with the USSR agreeing to supply

⁴³⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XIV Soviet Union Document 260 The USSR: Problems, Policies, And Prospects 1967–1968, General Perspective. Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, January 9, 1968. No. 0577/68

⁴³⁸ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Renewal of Bilateral Trade Agreements with Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, 030.0.018.02/172.46.3, August 21, 1961. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Renewal of the 1955 Bulgarian-Turkish Trade Agreement, 1954 Romanian-Turkish Trade Agreement, 1948 Polish-Turkish Trade Agreement, respectively, 030.018.01/159.19.18 August 21, 1961. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Additional Protocol for updating the 1937 Soviet-Turkish Trade Agreement, 030.018.02/163.64.3, December 16, 1961.

⁴³⁹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Soviet-Turkish Agreement for railway modernization, 030.018.02/159.18.11, April 7, 1961.

⁴⁴⁰ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Establishment of telecommunication lines between Turkey and USSR, 030.018.01/164.18.3, April 30, 1962. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Establishment of telecommunication lines between Turkey and USSR, 030.018.01/172.45.2, August 21, 1963.

Turkey with \$3.5 million worth of chemicals, fertilizers, paper, rubber, industrial machinery, trucks, and tractors in exchange for Turkish livestock, dried figs, walnuts, and cotton.⁴⁴¹ During discussions, officials from both nations revived an abandoned plan for a dam on the Akhurian River (Arpaçay). In October 1963, they updated the project's budget to an estimated 40 million Turkish liras, and given Turkey's economic situation and limited foreign currency reserves, the costs were shared, and transactions conducted in local currencies.⁴⁴²

Turkey's economic outreach to Moscow persisted into 1964, highlighted by a visit from Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin. During the visit, Erkin not only evaluated the Soviet position on the intensifying Cyprus crisis but also sought to strengthen trade relations between the two nations.⁴⁴³ Following the Johnson Letter, which disappointed Turkey in the summer of 1964, it was hardly surprising that Turkey continued its pursuits not only in the security domain but also in the economic sphere. The Turkish leadership was driven by a desire to develop the ability to act more autonomously in a matter of national significance.

During this period, the Soviet Union sought to sustain friendly relations with Turkey. During Ürgüplü's visit to Moscow in 1965, Turkey received the political support it anticipated from the Soviets regarding Cyprus, while economic relations between the two countries also appeared to progress positively. Economic agreements reached in 1965–66, along with Soviet financing for an oil refinery in İzmir, highlighted this

⁴⁴¹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Additional Protocol for the October 8, 1937 Soviet-Turkish Trade Agreement, 030.018.01/169.19.10, April 5, 1963.

⁴⁴² Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Arpaçay Dam Construction Payment Authorization, 030.018.01/173.52.11, October 3, 1963.

⁴⁴³ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Feridun Cemal Erkin and the Turkish Delegation's Trip to the Soviet Union, 030.018.01/181.66.9, October 27, 1964.

growing rapport and reflected Turkey's effort to adopt a more balanced foreign policy amid its strained relations with Western allies.⁴⁴⁴

This phase of Turkish-Soviet rapprochement saw further progress, marked by the visit of Nikolai Podgorny, Chairman of the Soviet Presidium, to Ankara in April 1965.⁴⁴⁵ Economic ties continued to expand and the Soviet Union repeatedly emphasized the financial burden of Turkey's NATO commitments. For instance, Andrei Smirnov, the newly appointed Soviet Ambassador to Turkey, informally compared Turkey's sizable military to its limited industrial base, contrasting this with West Germany's much smaller military paired with robust industry, highlighting what he viewed as the economic strain imposed by Turkey's defense obligations to NATO.⁴⁴⁶

On the cusp of the October 1965 elections in Turkey, when İnönü's CHP was poised to lose to Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party, Alexei Kosygin extended an invitation to Senate President Suat Hayri Ürgüplü for a visit to Moscow.⁴⁴⁷ In August 1965, Ürgüplü finalized several bilateral agreements, which included arrangements for agricultural cooperation, the sale of tractors, and the procurement of Soviet-manufactured petrol tankers aimed at upgrading Turkey's fuel distribution network and relocating gas stations outside central Istanbul.⁴⁴⁸

The new Turkish approach to foreign relations was further reinforced by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's election in 1965. Demirel's government viewed the

⁴⁴⁴ Martin Edmonds & John Skitt, "Current Soviet Maritime Strategy and NATO," 41.

⁴⁴⁵ *Milliyet*. Rusya'nın Tutumu Atina'da Telâş Yarattı, January 23, 1965.

⁴⁴⁶ Nihat Erim, *Günlükler, 1925–1979*, 842.

⁴⁴⁷ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, On Suat Ürgüplü's August Trip to Moscow, 030.018.01/187.40.9, July 16, 1965.

⁴⁴⁸ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Miscellaneous Soviet-Turkish Agreements, 030.018.02/188.51.7 and 030.018.01/187.39.15, August 25, 1965.

Soviet Union as a valuable partner that could help Turkey address its economic challenges while offering an important alternative to US support on the Cyprus issue.⁴⁴⁹

Kosygin's week-long visit to Turkey in December 1965 represented another important milestone in the development of Turkish-Soviet relations. Soviet-Turkish trade had already surged by 72% over the previous year, and the two sides committed to boosting trade by an additional 50%. Yet, for Turkey, the primary focus was the potential agreements on constructing industrial facilities, which represented the real promise of Kosygin's visit.⁴⁵⁰

Following Kosygin's return to Moscow, expert teams worked through financial projections for the proposed industrial plants and agreed to raise Turkey's one-time credit limit by 50%—from £1.5 million to £2.25 million—repayable through Turkish agricultural exports.⁴⁵¹ Concurrently, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) assembled an extensive report outlining Moscow's renewed strategy towards Turkey. Acknowledging Turkey as an existing export market, the report emphasized the limited range of Turkish goods suited for export to the USSR. Optimistic in outlook, the authors suggested that “with substantial effort, Turkey could, in 10–15 years, become an economic partner akin to Finland... and economically independent of the West.”⁴⁵² Given that Turkey already benefited from Western credit lines, the Soviets opted for targeted investments in key sectors. The foreign ministry advised

Ambassador Smirnov to focus on Ankara's interest in developing a nuclear power

⁴⁴⁹ Adalet Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, Ankara, Doğuş Press, 1965, 31.

⁴⁵⁰ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Turkish MFA Report on Soviet Proposal to Build 7 Industrial Plants, 030.010.00/64.398.12, December 16, 1966.

⁴⁵¹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Ryzhov and Minister of Trade, 030.010.00/64.398.5, March 19, 1966; Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, 1963 Additional Protocol Update, 030.018.01/204.22.2, March 30, 1966.

⁴⁵² Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), MID Report on Turkey, F. 5, op. 59, d. 348, ll. 1–41, February 3, 1967.

plant, which would support aluminum and copper production, resources the USSR could then import. Recognizing the economic dominance of Western powers, the Soviet Union pragmatically showed readiness to purchase refrigerators and electronic equipment manufactured in Turkey, even if these were produced in facilities funded by American capital.

By the end of 1966, trade volume between Turkey and the Soviet Union had grown by 25.3% over the previous year, totaling \$44.324 million. This increase, however, was modest compared to the impressive 108.5% surge in 1965—the highest annual growth rate in six years. Trends in exports and imports between Turkey and the Soviet Union revealed distinct patterns over both the last year and the six-year period from 1961 to 1966. Turkish exports to the Soviet Union, for instance, steadily rose from 1961 through 1965, peaking with a cumulative 321.4% growth over 1961, reaching \$18.8 million. Yet in 1966, this growth leveled off, with a 2.0% drop from 1965, bringing exports down to \$18.5 million. On the import side, Turkey's purchases from the Soviet Union rebounded following a brief decrease in 1962, showing a 282.1% increase from 1961 and a 56.6% rise from 1965, reaching \$25.9 million by 1966. Overall, Turkey's trade balance with the Soviet Union was mostly negative across the six years, starting with a \$3.9 million deficit in 1961. Although Turkey experienced temporary trade surpluses in 1964 and 1965, the deficit returned in 1966, widening to \$7.4 million by year-end. This shift was due to a sharp increase in imports from the Soviet Union—156% of the previous year's level—while Turkish exports to the Soviet Union declined slightly. The trade developments between Turkey and the Soviet Union from 1961 to 1966 are summarized in the

following table:⁴⁵³

Table 3. Trade Relations Between Turkey and the Soviet Union (1961–1966)

Year	Imports (1000 USD)	Exports (1000 USD)	Total Trade Volume (1000 USD)	Trade Balance (1000 USD)
1961	8,358	4,473	12,831	-3,885
1962	6,414	5,465	11,879	-949
1963	8,847	7,086	15,933	-1,761
1964	7,912	9,040	16,952	+1,128
1965	16,507	18,851	35,358	+2,344
1966	25,850	18,474	44,324	-7,376

Source: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Commerce Foreign Trade Department Statistics

The growth in trade between Turkey and the Soviet Union substantially boosted the Soviet Union's share in Turkey's overall foreign trade. In 1961, the Soviet Union made up a mere 1.5% of Turkey's trade volume. However, particularly over the subsequent two years, this share grew substantially, reaching 3.47% in 1965 and rising further to 3.67% by the close of 1966. This growth pattern, however, differed between imports and exports. The Soviet Union's portion of Turkey's imports initially dropped from 1.65% in 1961 to 1.04% in 1962 but then steadily increased, peaking at 3.6% in 1966. For exports, the Soviet share climbed each year from 1.29% in 1961 to 4.06% in 1965, but then slipped to 3.77% in 1966 due to a reduction in Turkish exports to the Soviet Union that year.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği Dış Ticareti, 86-543-5, June 22, 1967.

⁴⁵⁴ In analyzing Turkey's main exports to the Soviet Union in 1965, hazelnuts led with a trade value of 43.3 million TL, representing 21.3% of Turkey's total exports to the Soviet Union. Other key exports included livestock (31.6 million TL), dried grapes (30.2 million TL), sheep and lamb wool (26.4 million TL), olive oil (11.6 million TL), and tobacco leaves (9.0 million TL), along with various other agricultural goods. Notably, tobacco leaf exports saw limited growth, which is interesting given the Eastern Bloc's substantial demand for tobacco products. On the import side, industrial goods held significant value. Iron and steel products dominated, comprising 55.3% of total imports from the Soviet Union at 83.3 million TL, followed by wood and wood products (15.5 and 23.6 million TL, respectively), paper and cardboard (6.4 million TL), boilers and machinery (6.3 million TL), cement and similar materials (5.9 million TL), and mineral-organic chemicals (4.6 million TL). Overall, the trade profile showed a strong focus on industrial goods in imports and agricultural products in exports. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği Dış Ticareti [Turkey-Soviet Union Foreign Trade], 86-543-5, June 22, 1967.

The Soviet Union's role in Turkey's trade with Eastern Bloc countries also saw notable growth between 1961 and 1966. Its share of Turkey's exports to the Eastern Bloc increased from 16.29% in 1961 to 28.04% by 1966. Over the same period, Turkey's imports from Eastern Bloc countries also expanded, with the Soviet Union's share of these imports rising from 21.27% in 1961 to 30.94% in 1966. This evolving trade relationship highlighted the Soviet Union's rising influence in Turkey's economic sphere.

Despite competition from other Eastern Bloc countries, Turkish officials recognized the Soviet Union's significant consumption capacity and saw it as a valuable market for Turkish exports, such as fresh produce and citrus. They viewed expanding trade with the Soviets as both beneficial and feasible, as long as it did not interfere with Turkey's trade relations with OECD countries. International organizations, including the International Chamber of Commerce, also encouraged Turkey to deepen its economic ties within the Eastern Bloc while maintaining Western connections. Consequently, Turkey increasingly looked to the Soviet Union as a partner in economic growth—a strategic decision that dovetailed with its ongoing efforts to diversify trade.⁴⁵⁵

In addition to trade, Turkish leaders in the 1960s took note of the Soviet Union's successful development projects in the Global South, particularly India's Bhilai Steel Plant and Egypt's Aswan High Dam. Inspired by such achievements, Turkey signed the "Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement" with the Soviet Union on March 25, 1967, which paved the way for large-scale projects, including the İskenderun Iron and Steel Works, Aliğa Oil Refinery, and Seydişehir Aluminum

⁴⁵⁵ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği Dış Ticareti, 86-543-5, June 22, 1967

Plant. This agreement marked a significant expansion of Soviet-Turkish cooperation beyond trade, establishing the foundation for economic collaboration and positioning the USSR as a key partner in Turkey's modernization efforts.⁴⁵⁶

In 1969, Ankara requested for a 25% increase in trade and this request was welcomed by the Kremlin.⁴⁵⁷ While the Justice Party aimed to uphold Turkey's commitments to NATO, it also took care to avoid alienating Eastern Bloc nations. Demonstrating this dual strategy, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel dispatched Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil to a NATO summit in Washington in April 1969. Following the meeting, Çağlayangil presented a detailed report to Turkey's Council of Ministers.⁴⁵⁸ The KGB, having secured a copy, observed that Çağlayangil had voiced frustration to American officials over declining US aid, while he noted more promising Soviet offers, including a Romanian proposal to construct a dam on the Yeşil Irmak.⁴⁵⁹

When, shortly after the 1969 elections, Leonid Brezhnev extended his invitation to Turkish President Cevdet Sunay and his wife, Sunay assembled a delegation of 43 people, including ministers, prominent newspaper editors, and economists, to accompany him.⁴⁶⁰ During the visit, Sunay and Brezhnev discussed expanding

⁴⁵⁶ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Report on the Cyprus Problem, 030.010.00/129.841.6, September 28, 1967.

⁴⁵⁷ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Zakharov to TsK, F. 5, op. 61, d. 554, ll. 19–26, March 14, 1969.

⁴⁵⁸ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil's Trip to the NATO Meeting in Washington D.C., 30.18.1/232.22.8, April 2, 1969.

⁴⁵⁹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, The Implementation of the 1967 Soviet-Turkish agreement on the re-demarcation of the Soviet-Turkish Border, 030.018.01/234.34.19, May 18, 1969.

⁴⁶⁰ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Turkish Presidency to the Embassy in Moscow, 030.018.01/242.76.12, November 12, 1969.

Soviet-Turkish trade relations through a long-term agreement and reviewed the progress on Soviet-backed industrial projects in Anatolia.⁴⁶¹

These initiatives underscored each country's willingness to foster economic collaboration despite their opposing ideological allegiances. The Soviet Union's support for Turkey's industrialization in the 1970s served to advance Ankara's development goals, with substantial Soviet commitments dating back to 1967. However, the ambitious scope of these joint projects sometimes posed challenges. Many initiatives lacked clear timelines, budgets, or technical specifics, resulting in delays. By 1969, plans for a vodka distillery and a glass manufacturing plant were abandoned as costs exceeded initial estimates.⁴⁶² Funds from these canceled projects were then redirected to prioritize the Seydişehir Plant, as aluminum production was deemed more essential than vodka or glass.⁴⁶³

The Aliğa Oil Refinery project encountered similar challenges, primarily due to supply issues. Although the project required 50,000 tons of equipment and machinery from the Soviet Union, only 40,000 tons arrived on schedule, delaying the groundbreaking by several months. Additional shipments arrived at Ilichevsk, the port of Chernomorsk near Odesa, in August 1970, but Turkish vessels failed to pick them up, leaving goods stranded for weeks.⁴⁶⁴ The situation worsened when no Turkish ships arrived in September, prompting the Soviets to dispatch 2,000 tons on

⁴⁶¹ *Pravda*, Sovmestnoe sovetsko-turetksoe kommuniike, November 22, 1969.

⁴⁶² Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Termination of Vodka and Glass factories, 030.018.01/242.80.10, November 29, 1969.

⁴⁶³ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Seydişehir plant will be paid with Turkish agricultural products which shall not exceed 4 million USD each year for 1970-1971-1972, 030.018.01/246.12.19, January 10, 1970.

⁴⁶⁴ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), M. Kovrigin to TsK, F. 5, op. 62, d. 324, ll. 143–145, August 9, 1970.

their own vessel to prevent further delays.⁴⁶⁵ This delay would have seemed minor had it not impacted Turkey's broader obligation to deliver \$113.7 million in agricultural goods to Odesa to cover the costs of the İskenderun Steel Plant project.⁴⁶⁶ Concern mounted among Soviet officials as Turkey lagged in shipping its goods on time and with a \$45 million installment on the horizon.⁴⁶⁷

Beneath these diplomatic exchanges, Turkey was experiencing mounting political instability and social unrest that had been building since the late 1960s. This period was marked by intensifying polarization and violent clashes between leftist and rightist factions, with economic challenges amplifying public discontent.

Economic challenges intertwined with geopolitical tensions, particularly following the US arms embargo imposed after Turkey's Cyprus intervention. This underlying discontent set the stage for Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin's visit to Turkey in December 1975, during which he attended the inauguration of the İskenderun Steel Factory—an event that underscored the strengthening Soviet-Turkish partnership and marked a high point in their cooperative relations.⁴⁶⁸ Kosygin's visit marked the peak of Soviet-Turkish engagement, with Soviet leaders publicly committed to supporting state-led development in Turkey.

During the US arms embargo from 1975 to 1978, Soviet-Turkish economic cooperation diversified significantly, and many Soviet-funded factories in Turkey

⁴⁶⁵ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Ilich'evsk, F. 5, op. 62, d. 324, ll. 146–149, October, exact day unclear, 1970.

⁴⁶⁶ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Turkish payments in the form of agricultural products for İskenderun Steel Plant based on the 1969 Agreement, 030.018.01/257.69.8, August 21, 1970. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Report on İskenderun Demir-Çelik, 030.018.01/241.72.9, October 21, 1969.

⁴⁶⁷ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Payments for İskenderun, 030.018.01/256.64.16, September 18, 1970.

⁴⁶⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976 Volume XXX Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1973–1976, Memorandum of Conversation Brussels, 227, May 29, 1975.

began operations, though with some challenges. For example, the Seydişehir aluminium plant fell short of expectations, producing only 80,000 tons per year instead of the anticipated 200,000. Consequently, production costs spiked to \$210 per ton, rather than the expected \$87. Soviet Ambassador Aleksei Rodionov attributed these issues to the plant's machinery not operating at full capacity.⁴⁶⁹ Nonetheless, in a private discussion about the Seydişehir plant with Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, Rodionov was surprised and encouraged by Demirel's expressed desire to transition Soviet-Turkish relations beyond Cold War constraints towards "full normalization."⁴⁷⁰ Clearly, the US arms embargo was inadvertently bolstering Soviet influence in Turkey.

In the wake of the OPEC Oil Crisis and rising energy prices, the late 1970s saw concrete advances in the energy sector. Initiated by Foreign Minister Çağlayangil's visit to Moscow in March 1977, the energy negotiations marked a pivotal shift. During his talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Çağlayangil sought a deal for Soviet oil, driven by Turkey's interest in the newly discovered West Siberian Oil Basin. Moscow, however, linked the oil agreement to a broader political commitment from Turkey, a condition Çağlayangil was unwilling to meet.⁴⁷¹ In 1978, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit visited Moscow, aiming to follow up on a potential oil deal and explore the feasibility of establishing metro lines in Ankara and İstanbul. Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, familiar with such requests, raised the possibility of oil sales under certain trade conditions, proposing that Turkey export

⁴⁶⁹ A. A. Rodionov, *Turtsiia: perekrestok sudeb. Vospominaniia posla* [Turkey: A Crossroads of Destinies. Memoirs of an Ambassador], (Moscow: M.O., 2006), 57.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 123.

mohair and pharmaceuticals as payment.⁴⁷² Kosygin sought to ensure a successful outcome for Ecevit, mindful that the Turkish leader had recently questioned US rhetoric about a renewed Soviet threat during a NATO meeting in Washington. In that context, Ecevit had publicly downplayed Soviet threats to Turkey, a gesture for which Kosygin and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko expressed appreciation.⁴⁷³

However, amidst its shift from industrial to energy exports, the Soviet Union sought payments in resources beyond Turkey's traditional agricultural offerings. Kosygin emphasized that while they were open to an oil deal, repayment would need to extend beyond agriculture, aligning with Soviet efforts to distance itself from Bretton Woods-style bilateral exchanges and towards hard-currency transactions.⁴⁷⁴ Despite falling short of his initial goals, Ecevit returned with a commitment for a significant infrastructure project: the construction of an electricity line from Batumi to Hopa, finalized in 1979, which supplied much-needed power to Eastern Anatolia.⁴⁷⁵

4.3 Security Autonomy, Cooperative Economics

Turkey's security alignment with NATO remained the backbone of its defense strategy in the given period, but its relationship with the United States faced significant challenges. The 1964 Johnson Letter starkly exposed the limits of US support, warning Turkey against unilateral military action in Cyprus and raising doubts about US's and NATO's reliability in defending Turkish interests. This incident deeply impacted Turkish leaders, fostering a growing sentiment that Turkey

⁴⁷² Samuel J. Hirst, A. Khajei, and D. Kaptan, "A Turkish Mayor goes to Moscow: Vedat Dalokay and Development Politics in the 1970s," *Contemporary European History* 58, no. 4 (2023): 739–758.

⁴⁷³ A. A. Rodionov, *Turtsiia: perekrestok sudeb. Vospominaniia posla* [Turkey: A Crossroads of Destinies. Memoirs of an Ambassador], (Moscow: M.O, 2006), 123.

⁴⁷⁴ Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *The Soviet Union and the Construction of the Global Market: Energy and the Ascent of Finance in Cold War Europe, 1964–1971*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

⁴⁷⁵ A. A. Rodionov, *Turtsiia: perekrestok sudeb. Vospominaniia posla* [Turkey: A Crossroads of Destinies. Memoirs of an Ambassador], (Moscow: M.O., 2006), 200.

could not rely solely on the United States, particularly on national issues of critical importance such as Cyprus.

In the aftermath of the Johnson Letter, Turkey tried to pursue a more autonomous approach to its security policy. By the time of the 1967 Cyprus Crisis, Turkey leveraged improved relations with the Soviet Union to counterbalance American hesitancy and manage to have a more decisive stance. This trend reached its apex with the 1974 Cyprus military intervention, where Turkey acted decisively and carried out a military operation, despite objections from its Western allies. The relations developed with the Soviets over the past decade, with Cyprus actually serving as the starting point, prevented the Soviets from overreacting to the intervention and allowed Turkey to pursue its Cyprus policy as it deemed appropriate.

However, the intervention also triggered significant repercussions, most notably the US-led arms embargo imposed in 1975. While this embargo strained US-Turkey relations, it also prompted Ankara to seek alternative sources of military supplies, including exploratory contacts with the Soviet Union. Compared to the periods discussed in the previous chapters, this was new. Although these contacts did not result in a full-fledged realignment, they signaled Turkey's willingness to diversify its options under duress. The embargo was lifted in 1978, easing the immediate pressure on Turkey's defense infrastructure and reaffirming its security alignment with NATO.

Economically, Turkey's dissatisfaction with declining Western aid in the 1960s pushed it to intensify its engagement with the Soviet Union. The groundwork for Soviet-Turkish rapprochement was laid during İsmet İnönü's coalition government in

the mid-1960s, whose statist economic policies aligned more closely with Moscow's preferences. However, it was under Süleyman Demirel's leadership that these economic collaborations expanded significantly, reflecting a pragmatic approach that transcended ideological divides.

The economic dimension of Soviet-Turkish relations during this period was not purely transactional. Soviet support during the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated a commitment to Turkey's development, prioritizing pragmatic economic logic over political rivalry. This collaboration provided Turkey with critical resources to modernize its industrial base while reducing its dependence on Western aid, offering Ankara bargaining power in its broader geopolitical engagements.

Overall, during the period in question, Turkey's approach to managing economic and security pressures reveals a clear compartmentalization of these two domains. But, unlike in the 1950s, Turkey was now also willing to compartmentalize particular issues within these two domains. Security challenges, particularly those related to Cyprus and NATO commitments, prompted Turkey to balance its reliance on the United States with improved relations with the Soviet Union, leveraging these ties to assert greater autonomy in its defense policies, as seen during the 1974 Cyprus intervention. Conversely, economic pressures, driven by declining Western aid and domestic development needs, motivated Turkey to deepen its cooperation with the Soviet Union, particularly through industrial and infrastructure agreements like the 1967 Agreement. These efforts were pragmatic and divorced from ideological alignment, reflecting a deliberate strategy to engage the two superpowers differently based on the specific nature of the pressures faced. This compartmentalized balancing allowed Turkey to simultaneously safeguard its security interests within

NATO while advancing its economic modernization with Soviet support, showcasing a dual-track strategy tailored to its distinct priorities.



CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy from 1945 to 1980, emphasizing its dynamic and multifaceted approach to balancing relations with global superpowers during the Cold War. Far from adhering rigidly to a single bloc or adopting a static alignment, Turkey engaged in a fluid process of recalibrating its foreign policy in response to shifting geopolitical pressures and domestic imperatives. By juxtaposing security concerns with economic necessities, Turkey demonstrated an adaptive pragmatism, leveraging its position as a middle power to navigate the complex demands of bipolar global politics.

At the core of Turkey's Cold War strategy was the recurring challenge of managing security threats and economic vulnerabilities. Turkey's alignment with the Western bloc in the immediate aftermath of World War II, culminating in NATO membership, was driven by the imperative of countering Soviet territorial ambitions and ensuring its survival within a hostile geopolitical landscape. However, as the global Cold War dynamics evolved, Turkey adopted a more nuanced and compartmentalized approach, particularly from the mid-1950s onward, balancing its enduring commitment to NATO with pragmatic engagements with the Soviet Union and other alternative partners. This balancing act was not merely a reaction to external pressures but reflected a deliberate strategy shaped by internal economic needs and an awareness of the limits of unilateral dependence on a single power.

Through this analysis, the dissertation highlights Turkey's agency as a strategic actor, adept at navigating the dual imperatives of maintaining its security within the Western alliance system while exploring opportunities for economic collaboration

with the Eastern Bloc. This dual-track strategy allowed Turkey to assert greater autonomy and resilience in an era marked by profound geopolitical and economic uncertainties.

Throughout this dissertation, Turkey's Cold War foreign policy has been analyzed as a dynamic interplay of security imperatives and economic pressures, manifesting in distinct but interrelated patterns across three key periods.

The first period (1945–1953) underscored Turkey's initial post-war alignment with the Western bloc, driven by existential threats from the Soviet Union and acute economic vulnerabilities. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Turkey faced explicit territorial demands from the Soviet Union, including the cession of Kars and Ardahan and joint control over the Turkish Straits. These demands, delivered in formal communications in 1945, signaled an existential threat to Turkey's sovereignty, prompting a reevaluation of its foreign policy.

In response, Turkey turned to the United States, which was increasingly adopting a global strategy to contain Soviet expansionism. The Truman Doctrine, announced in March 1947, marked a turning point in Turkey's foreign policy. Under this framework, the U.S. pledged military and economic assistance to Turkey and Greece to counter Soviet pressures, providing Turkey with critical resources to bolster its defense capabilities. This aid signaled the beginning of Turkey's deeper integration into the Western security architecture, further solidified by its active participation in the Marshall Plan starting in 1948. These measures collectively represented a decisive break from Turkey's wartime neutrality, aligning the country firmly with the emerging Western bloc.

Turkey's NATO membership in 1952 was the culmination of these efforts. The decision to seek membership was driven by the need for collective security guarantees against the Soviet threat. Turkish leaders viewed NATO as an essential framework not only for deterring Soviet aggression but also for securing a stable alliance with the West. Joining NATO required Turkey to demonstrate its reliability as a partner, which it did through symbolic commitments like sending troops to Korea in 1950. These efforts solidified Turkey's strategic importance to the West, ensuring its place in the alliance and providing the collective defense mechanisms it desperately needed.

Economically, Turkey faced significant challenges in the post-war years, including inflation, declining foreign reserves, and structural weaknesses exacerbated by its reliance on agricultural exports. The Peker government's 1946 devaluation decision was a critical step toward addressing these vulnerabilities. By sharply reducing the value of the Turkish lira, the government aimed to stabilize the economy and encourage foreign investment. However, this move also signaled Turkey's willingness to align with Western economic frameworks, particularly those emerging from the Bretton Woods system. The devaluation, coupled with trade liberalization policies, demonstrated Turkey's commitment to integrating into the global economic order dominated by the West. While these measures provided short-term relief, they also exposed Turkey to greater dependency on foreign aid, further reinforcing the alignment of its economic and security policies during this period.

In the second period (1953–1960), Turkey began to compartmentalize the two major issue in its foreign policy. The chapter revealed that Turkey's leadership highlighted its continued strategic value to the West in regional security initiatives like the

Baghdad Pact, even as rising economic challenges prompted Ankara to explore pragmatic partnerships with the Soviet Union. The Baghdad Pact, formed in 1955 and including Britain, was a cornerstone of Turkey's Middle Eastern policy during this period. However, the pact's association with Western powers led to widespread criticism from regional states such as Egypt and Syria, which viewed it as a symbol of imperialist intervention. This perception significantly complicated Turkey's relations with these countries, creating a lingering distrust that constrained its regional diplomacy. The 1957 Syrian Crisis and the 1958 Iraqi Crisis provided stark examples of the challenges Turkey faced as it sought to reconcile its Western alignment with its aspirations for regional influence.

From a security standpoint, Turkey's alignment with NATO remained unshakable, yet its focus expanded to include new challenges closer to home. After 1955, Turkey began to regard the Cyprus issue not merely as a British domestic concern but as a national security priority. Ankara's growing insistence on protecting the rights of the Turkish Cypriot minority and ensuring regional stability marked a shift in its approach, complicating relations with both Britain and Greece. This transformation underscored Turkey's increasing assertion of its own strategic interests within the framework of its broader Western alignment.

Economically, by the mid-1950s, the Turkish economy, which had heavily relied on American financial aid during the Democrat Party's early years, began to face significant strains as the expected level of U.S. support failed to materialize. This shortfall created acute economic pressures, exposing vulnerabilities in Turkey's development model, which had been dependent on foreign capital inflows. Western institutions like the OEEC and IMF, though offering frameworks for economic

coordination, were perceived by Turkish leaders as inadequate substitutes for direct American assistance.

Amid these growing challenges, Stalin's death in 1953 and subsequent Soviet overtures of détente, including messages of economic cooperation, encouraged Turkish leaders to consider alternative sources of support. Moscow's proposals included trade agreements and credit offers, which presented a potential counterbalance to the waning American aid. These overtures gained renewed attention as Ankara sought to address its financial difficulties. However, Western negotiations eventually culminated in the 1958 Stabilization Program, which provided Turkey with critical relief in two main forms: \$359 million in financial assistance and debt restructuring agreements. While these measures marked a breakthrough, the pace of aid delivery fell short of Turkey's immediate needs, prolonging its economic struggles and forcing Turkish leaders to continue exploring alternative partnerships. In this context, a Turkish delegation visited the Soviet Union in 1958, reflecting Ankara's ongoing search for supplementary economic solutions. Although the trip demonstrated Turkey's willingness to engage Moscow more directly, it failed to produce the anticipated outcomes in its initial phase for the Turkish leadership.

The third period (1960–1980) showcased Turkey's increasing autonomy in both security and economic domains, catalyzed by key crises such as the 1964 Johnson Letter and the 1974 Cyprus intervention. The Johnson Letter starkly exposed the limits of U.S. support, as President Lyndon B. Johnson warned Turkey against unilateral military action in Cyprus and cast doubt on NATO's commitment to defending Turkey against a potential Soviet response. This event deeply impacted

Turkish policymakers, fostering a determination to reduce their dependency on the United States. By the time of the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Agreement, this reorientation had begun to yield tangible results. The agreement marked a landmark moment in bilateral relations, as it provided Turkey with Soviet-funded industrial and infrastructure projects, including oil refineries, steel mills, and hydroelectric power plants. These initiatives not only advanced Turkey's economic modernization but also symbolized a pragmatic alignment that strengthened Ankara's bargaining position vis-à-vis the West. The agreement underscored the Soviet Union's willingness to invest in Turkey's development, reflecting a broader strategy to deepen economic ties without directly challenging Turkey's NATO commitments.

The 1974 Cyprus intervention further illustrated Turkey's growing assertiveness in its security policy. In the face of Western objections, particularly from the United States, Turkey launched a military operation to protect Turkish Cypriots and secure its strategic interests on the island. This decisive action highlighted Turkey's capacity to prioritize national security objectives over alliance constraints. However, the intervention triggered a U.S.-led arms embargo in 1975, which severely strained Turkish-American relations. In response, Turkey sought to diversify its defense partnerships, including exploratory discussions with the Soviet Union to meet its military needs. While these discussions did not result in significant arms transfers as the embargo was lifted in 1978, they signaled Turkey's willingness to engage alternative sources to mitigate the embargo's impact. Domestically, the embargo spurred efforts to develop an indigenous defense industry, laying the groundwork for greater self-sufficiency in the long term.

Across these three periods, a recurring theme emerged: Turkey's capacity to adapt to shifting global dynamics by leveraging its middle-power status to balance competing demands. The research demonstrated that Turkey's foreign policy was neither reactive nor passive but an active process of recalibration, shaped by the intersecting forces of security threats, economic dependencies, and domestic priorities.

This dissertation contributes to the study of Turkey's Cold War foreign policy by challenging traditional narratives that depict the country as a passive or Western-aligned actor. To explain Turkey's balancing act between the two superpowers, it proposes that scholars pay greater attention to the process of compartmentalization. By focusing on the interplay between economic pressures and security imperatives, the study provides a more integrated and dynamic understanding of how Turkey managed the Cold War's shifting power structures.

A key contribution of this work lies in its reframing of the concept of "balancing" within Turkish foreign policy. Unlike conventional interpretations that view balancing as a static state of equilibrium, this dissertation demonstrates how balancing was an ongoing, adaptive process. Through detailed analyses of pivotal moments such as the 1946 devaluation, the mid-1950s economic crisis, the 1964 Johnson Letter, the 1967 Soviet-Turkish Agreement, and the 1974 Cyprus intervention, the research highlights how Turkey recalibrated its policies in response to simultaneous domestic and international challenges. This approach not only enriches our understanding of Turkey's foreign policy but also offers valuable insights into the broader behavior of middle powers in Cold War geopolitics.

In addition to contributing to the historiography of Turkish foreign policy, this dissertation speaks to broader debates about the role of middle powers in global

politics. Most directly, it demonstrates that Turkey leveraged its strategic location and middle-power status to pursue over time an autonomous foreign policy within the constraints of a bipolar international system. By doing so, the research not only allows us to compare Turkey's Cold War experience to that of other middle powers in comparable contexts.

In sum, this dissertation is relevant not only for its contributions to the study of Turkish foreign policy but also for its broader implications in understanding the complexities of Cold War diplomacy, middle-power agency, and the intersection of economic and security dynamics in global politics.

Last but not the least, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this research that may inform future study. First, the research's focus on the period from 1945 to 1980, though crucial for understanding Turkey's Cold War strategy, necessarily excludes developments in the post-1980 era that may have offered additional insights into the long-term implications of Turkey's balancing approach. Future research could extend this framework to analyze how the legacies of Cold War dynamics influenced Turkey's post-Cold War foreign policy.

Second, despite the extensive use of archival materials from Turkish, American, and Soviet sources, access to certain classified documents, particularly from the Turkish and Soviet archives, remains restricted. These constraints may have limited the study's ability to fully explore the decision-making processes of key actors or uncover additional layers of bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Further declassification of relevant materials could provide a more detailed understanding of the events analyzed.

Third, the scope of this study emphasizes economic and security dimensions.

Cultural, ideological, and societal factors, such as the role of public opinion or the influence of transnational movements, were beyond the immediate focus of this research. Incorporating these dimensions in future studies could offer a more multidimensional view of Turkey's foreign policy during this period.

Lastly, as with any historical analysis, the interpretation of events is shaped by the available evidence and the researcher's perspective. While this study strives for balance and rigor, alternative approaches, such as comparative analyses with other middle powers, could further enhance the understanding of Turkey's unique position in Cold War geopolitics.

By reflecting on these limitations, this dissertation aims to highlight areas for further inquiry and invites future scholarship to build upon its findings to deepen our understanding of Turkey's foreign policy strategies.

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