

A CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRACTICE OF THE IDEALIST PEACE PROJECT: LEAGUE OF NATIONS' MEDIATION IN THE MOSUL QUESTION^{1 2}



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ABSTRACT | The idealist peace project after the end of World War I realized various principles-based regulations and conventions to provide a new international peace and stability. One such arrangement was the rule that conflicts and disputes should be resolved under the auspices of these principles within the League of Nations. Representing the international community, the League successfully fulfilled this responsibility in many cases and established procedures for settling territorial disputes. However, the case of Mosul Question between 1925-1926, considerable divergences in that structure became evident. This article examines Mosul Question as a mediation process through the arguments and proposals that reveal the expectations of the parties or their departure from the idealist peace project. Findings based on archival documents, commission reports, and sources from that period reveal that while the British government avoided practices of the idealist peace project, the Turkish government made more explicit appeals to implement them in the case considered as an opportunity for the League of Nations to foster confidence between the Eastern and Western parts of the World.

Keywords: *Idealist peace project, Mosul question, league of nations, conflict resolution, mediation*

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İDEALİST BARIŞ PROJESİNİN ÇATIŞMA ÇÖZÜMÜ PRATIĞI: MUSUL İHTİLAFINDA MİLLETLER CEMİYETİ ARABULUCULUĞU



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ÖZ | Birinci Dünya Savaşının sona ermesinin ardından ortaya çıkan idealist barış projesi, yeni bir uluslararası barış ve istikrarı sağlamak için çeşitli ilkelere dayalı düzenleme ve anlaşmaları hayata geçirmiştir. Çatışmaların ve anlaşmazlıkların uluslararası topluluğu temsil etme iddiası taşıyan Milletler Cemiyeti bünyesinde bu ilkeler doğrultusunda çözümlenmesi üzerinde uzlaşmıştır. Uluslararası topluluğu temsil eden Milletler Cemiyeti, birçok durumda bu sorumluluğunu başarıyla yerine getirmiş ve toprak anlaşmazlıklarının çözümü için prosedürler oluşturmuştur. Ancak 1925-1926 yılları arasında gerçekleşen Musul sorunu örneğinde bu yapıdan önemli ayrışmalar ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu makale, bir arabuluculuk süreci olarak Musul Sorunu müzakerelerini, tarafların idealist barış projesinden beklentilerini ya da uzaklaşmalarını açığa çıkaran tez ve önerileri üzerinden incelemektedir. Arşiv belgelerine, komisyon raporlarına ve o döneme ait kaynaklara dayanan bulgular; İngiliz hükümeti idealist barış projesinin uygulamalarından kaçınırken, Türk hükümetinin Dünyanın Doğu ve Batı yarısı arasındaki güveni güçlendirmesi için Milletler Cemiyeti'nin önündeki bir fırsat olarak gördüğü vakada idealist prensiplerin uygulanması için daha açık çağrılar yaptığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İdealist barış projesi, Musul sorunu, milletler cemiyeti, çatışma çözümü, arabuluculuk*

JEL Kodları: F50, F51, F53

Alan: *Siyaset bilimi ve uluslararası ilişkiler*

Türü: *Araştırma*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aftermath of major international wars has often been a fertile environment for the replacement of a flawed international order. In such an environment as the quest for the new world order settles on the agenda of international politics, the geopolitical transition process bases the rules and norms of international security, peace and legal issues related to state sovereignty into the composition of values and interests of the novel actor(s) with the ability to influence international politics. An example of such a recurring pattern between great wars and the re-construction of the international order reappeared at the beginning of the 20th century when the old European order destroyed by World War I was replaced by a new international architecture of the idealist peace. The First World War brought to the breakdown of the European international order, which had been in place for almost a century, leaving any operating leverage behind which means there was neither a framework for post-war conflict resolution and no political actor/institution to uphold international peace. The border disputes produced by the collapsing empires and the need to regulate undefined territories emerged as new problems of international affairs. Wilson's diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference and his normative approach to international peace with resolute thoughts promised frameworks drawn with certain principles that are important for the legal and territorial arrangement of most countries.

Idealist peace project that emerged in such an environment offered an opportunity for diplomatic negotiations of the post-World War I questions. Idealist peace has found its political roots in the ideas of US President Woodrow Wilson, and its geopolitical conditions in the political legacy left by the old order made inoperable by the war. The governing principles of idealist peace referred to as Wilsonianism, became an important guide in the Western World for post-World War I territorial disputes. Wilsonian post-war ideas may be found in the redrawn boundaries, post-imperial societies' national affiliations, and the aspirations for sovereign rights of Europe's newborn states. To put it briefly, the abandonment of 19th Century's balance of power diplomacy along with the construction of collective peace and security structure, and the legal rules of international politics were manifested as the novel international peace architecture.

In this article the author refers the international peace as functioning of international orders by diplomatic means based on established institutional norms and rules. How does international peace manifest itself in international politics? Conflict resolution processes are one of the areas where international politics converge to the principles of peace the most. Revealing that leads to

problematizing the perspective of peace, which established conflict resolution structures of various historical periods.

The article deals with the international policy carried out for the peaceful resolution of the Mosul conflict in the context of idealism to deepen the peace perspectives of international orders. The Mosul conflict emerged as a part of World War I and entered the agenda of the international community between 1918-1926 as a multidimensional case that was tried to be resolved with all its instruments by the idealist international order shaped around the League of Nations.

The 1926 Mosul dispute occurred between Britain and Turkey and escalated in the multi-layered course of diplomacy, is a promising case to have a historical observation of international conflict resolution processes. During the diplomatic negotiations, disagreements arose between the parties over the mediator's role, method and compliance with the dispute resolution principles of peace in the international order. As an international issue of the 1920s, the Mosul dispute is mostly covered in historical studies. The fact that it is an exemplary case for the League of Nations' functioning and procedure further drew academics' attention to the Mosul issue (Makko, 2010). The mediation process itself, on the other hand, is explained in terms of the challenges it encountered (Beck, 1981; Shields, 2009; Shields, 2004). Such studies providing substantial knowledge about the origins and further stages of the Mosul dispute have left a lacuna in terms of broad international order perspective. Issues such as the mediation process's relevance to the post-World War I political atmosphere and the procedural influence of the idealist peace project embodied in the League of Nations remain neglected.

This study aims to bring such an explanation. When the Mosul dispute is evaluated as the conflict resolution practice of idealist peace project, the positions, arguments and political attitudes of the conflict parties, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Turkey, in the peace process reveal remarkable results. Turkey's expectations about the routine and committed functioning of the League of Nations and the avoidance of some peace practices in contrast to the United Kingdom's role in forming the international order are worth examining. In this article, the reflections of the idealist peace project, which was shaped on the image of Wilsonian idealism under the political leadership of the USA after the World War I, on the mediation process of the Mosul Question is investigated to answer the following questions:

How did the basic precepts of the idealist peace manifest in the conflict resolution carried out by its agent, the League of Nations? Have principles such as the unchangeability of borders by using force, the self-determination of

peoples, the promotion of national states after collapsing empires guided the conflict resolution process and its policy-making? To answer, the article evaluates main lines of idealist international peace project and the conflict resolution diplomacy process carried out by the League in the Mosul dispute, using archives, reports, official papers, anecdotes and historical analysis based on the foundations of peace. To address these issues, the research investigates international peace policies and discourses influenced by Wilsonian idealism in post-World War I and the role of practices based upon in the context of the Mosul question.

2. FOUNDATIONS OF THE IDEALIST PEACE IN THE POST-WORLD WAR I

The changing political conditions after World War I faced many problems brought by the collapse of the European state-system such as the redefinition of territorial boundaries, the future of colonial empires and adaptation of multi-ethnic empires to the principles of new peace that emerged with the disappearance of monarchies. Overcoming these uncertainties and achieving a new international peace, according to the Wilsonian approach, were depending on the clarification of national borders legally providing consent of the great powers (Zimmern, 1953, p. 71). The consent of the great powers was assured when post-war conditions placed them in a position to need a non-conflict environment. That need is evident in British Prime Minister Lloyd George's speech in 1918, before peace talks had even begun, in his proposal to establish an international organization to limit the level of international armament and reduce the possibility of war (Walters, 1952, p. 20). The favourable condition for the idealist international order was the atmosphere in which the cost of war made victory meaningless.

A usual reference for assessments describing the impact of Wilson's ideas on the new international order was his 14-point speech addressed to the US Congress on January 9, 1918. The title of this statement, which contains reference principles on the shaping of the international order, as determined by the President of the United States as the Program for World Peace. The plan could be described as idealist because it leans on the thought that a world peace can be achieved around certain normative principles. The Wilsonian peace proposal played its most important role in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where peace talks were held after the World War I. Peace agreements to be prepared for the countries defeated in the war generated opportunity to create necessary conditions for World Peace. The Paris Peace Conference's discussions on peace were considerably different from earlier ones for its idealistic nature. Establishing

international peace in her image motivated the US to take the lead in the organization of peace after World War I (Zimmern, 1953, p. 69). The US delegation was going to Paris not only to end the war but to establish a new order in Europe. This would be a lasting peace standing on idealist expectations (Nicolson, 2013, pp. 31-32). The words of French Prime Minister Clemenceau, addressed to Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference, reveal perceiving the principles of peace on the table as an American perspective (Macmillan, 2002, p. 23):

“We too came into the world with the noble instincts and the lofty aspirations which you express so often and so eloquently. We have become what we are because we have been shaped by the rough hand of the world in which we have to live.”

Europe's erratic and unstable international order was being replaced by a US-led peace design under the normative mandate of a principled and moral attitude. That means, international peace will be sustained not only by a delicate balance of power, but also by the rules, procedures and institutions that define idealistic peace. The idealist peace brought to Europe settled within the League of Nations system which was designed during the negotiation process of the Versailles Peace Treaty. The negotiations also regulated the nature of peace and how it would be achieved. The vitality of the new international order would depend on organizing and framing ways to maintain international peace. To undertake this responsibility, the League of Nations was charged and equipped with the mission of maintaining international peace and security against aggressor states. A critical reading of the international architecture rising around the organization shows that the US, with its rising position to hegemony, is building a peace in its image, while the rights of other actors are defined by idealistic principles such as self-determination and democracy (Richmond, 2019, p. 33).

As long as the League of Nations system is operational, the creation of new nation-states and acceptance of self-determination as a foundation of peace in the world have shaped conflict resolution procedures and settlements for border disputes. The efforts to establish a new international peace represented by the League of Nations are evident in the conflict management and conflict resolution methods of the 1919-1939 era. The Mosul dispute, which arose during the Lausanne Agreement negotiations in 1923 and ceased in 1926, is an obvious case that occurred exactly during that moment.

2.1.A Key to Idealist Peace: Self-Determination in the League of Nations

The establishment of an organization to ensure the political independence and territorial integrity of all states, which is included in Article 14 of the Wilson

principles, through special agreements, explains the centrality of the nation-state system in the idealist peace project (Wilson, 1918). Though Wilson did not refer directly, the right of self-determination was a core pillar underlying territorial adjustment of new nation-state-based geopolitical architecture (Wilson, 1918). Accordingly, construction of new nations or states, legitimized by self-determination, could serve the stability of the post-war order in manifestation of the idealist peace. According to Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary of the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson's 14 points were the moral pillars of peace and international order (Nicolson, 2013, pp. 35-42). That is, the drive to maintain a just system of universal peace was an influential legacy of Wilson's idealist mind.

Wilson defined self-determination as the right of people to lead their own lives under self-elected governments (Bonsal, 1946, p. 275). The construction of new sovereign states and nations is among the legacies of the idealist peace order that extends to the present day and does not disappear with the order. Idealist peace, which envisioned peoples taking control of their political destiny if they satisfied certain conditions, signaled that the number of nation-states would gradually increase. The birth of many states that exists today dates back to the period when idealist peace was in effect and operation. Heywood calculated that only 15 of today's 193 sovereign states were independent in 1910 (Heywood, 2019, p. 268). The effort to regulate relations between new sovereign states in the context of international peace is a concrete product of the idealist idea that peace will be maintained with the demand for more national democracy and self-determination.

Another important function of the emphasis on the right to self-determination is reinforcing the veil of idealist values over political interests by declaring that small states have the same rights as the great powers. This situation is directly related to structuring mandatory system within the League of Nations, especially as a derivative of the imperial policies in the 19th-century international order. The mandatory system developed by the League of Nations as a solution to harmonize the imperialist policies of the great powers with the restrictive attitude of colonialism of the idealist peace agreement is a kind of civilization project. The former colonial empires of Europe, France and Britain, were to be governed by the League of Nations until the peoples living in the colonial lands were ready to demand self-determination. Accordingly, developed nations such as England or France will train the newly built nations and states in line with the idealist peace order (Provence, 2017, p. 86).

2.2. An Agent of Idealist Peace: Mediation in the League of Nations

The League of Nations served the peace framework of the international order as a conflict resolution mechanism, with the International Permanent Court

of Justice, defined in its Charter. This practice, defined in Articles 12, 13 and 15 of the League's Statute, allowed the organization to mediate in international disputes (League of Nations, 1919). The creation of a conflict resolution platform in the League of Nations was an extension of the new diplomatic discourse and structured the resolution of disputes in political and legal channels (Yearwood, 2009, p. 101).

The first 10 articles of the League Covenant introduce measures and procedures to promote peace and prevent international conflicts. Accordingly, if an international dispute cannot be resolved between the parties, the issue would be left to the mediation of the League of Nations. The assigned mediation role paved the way for the League to take responsibility for intervening in the various disputes and conflicts in the uncertain and unstable post-war atmosphere.

The establishment of practices and principles would enhance the permanence of international peace to prevent violation of peace. It is based on the logic that the prevention of interstate violence should be treated as a matter of the entire international community, not just the parties to the conflict. Thus, among the diplomatic commitments of the new international order, collective security became one of the most important political doctrines of idealist peace (Kirchwey, 1917, p. 43). Acting as an agent of international order to organize collective security and peace the League of Nations operated a diplomatic resolution process for many international disputes and conflicts, including the Mosul Question. To list the prominent examples:

- 1) Resolution of the sovereignty dispute between Sweden and Finland over the Aaland Islands, which was transferred to the League in 1921 (Åkermark, 2009).
- 2) The solution of the problem of territorial belonging of the Upper Silesian region by dividing the region into two as a result of the plebiscite application, which offers the options of union with Germany or Poland (Bialasiewicz, 2002).
- 3) Decision on the transfer of the former Prussian port city of Memelland to Lithuania on the condition of being an international port area (Gade, 1924).
- 4) Greece's invasion of Bulgaria and then its withdrawal by consenting to pay compensation in 1925 with the intervention of the League (Barros, 1964).
- 5) Determination of the legal status of the Saar region by plebiscite in 1925 to decide its unification into Germany or France (Wambaugh, 2013).
- 6) East Prussian plebiscite was conducted to determine the right of self-determination of the East Prussian region, which was the subject of the German-Polish conflict, to the territories under the observance and practice of the League of Nations in 1920 (Tooley, 1997, p. 176).
- 7) The Mosul investigation, the case of the article that the League undertook as another conflict resolution process.

The idealist international peace project, through its underlying sociological assumptions and institutional structure, made the right of self-determination the guiding principle of the League of Nations, which would enable the peaceful resolution of problems. In many cases, plebiscites have been used as a legitimizing tool in the conflict resolution and mediation processes conducted before the League (De Auer, 1920). However, a plebiscite was not implemented for the Mosul conflict. The League of Nations Council and its representative Commission of Inquiry preferred to resort to alternative and indirect methods to understand the tendency of the people as a mediator. The rejection by the League of Nations to implement a plebiscite in Mosul question, where implementing self-determination principle is seen as perilous, is concrete evidence for a deviation from idealist conflict resolution procedures.

The relationship between idea of civilization underlying the method of administration in Iraq and the plebiscite debate on the Mosul issue will be confirmed again by Britain's dissatisfaction with the activities of the mediation commission (Tejel Gorgas, 2018, p. 10). This has led the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry, whose work will be discussed in the following sections, to propose an alternative approach based on the mandatory system and economic argument of state-building conforming to British theses. A detailed portrait is presented in the following part of the article.

3. THE MOSUL DISPUTE AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS'S MEDIATION

The Mosul Dispute arose from a three-stage historical context. The British occupation, which took place after the Mudros armistice accepted by the Ottoman Empire after the World War I, was the first stage; The Lausanne negotiations, in which the government leading the national independence movement in Turkey participated as a result of the success of the struggle, corresponds the second stage. Thus, the province's political future was left to be settled the dispute between Turkey and Britain. The third stage was the bilateral conflict phase, which lasted from 1923 to 1926 and was marked by a complete breakdown in relations between the parties. The Armistice of Mudros, which declared the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, functioned to controversially justify the occupation of various parts of the Ottoman country by the victorious states. The British occupation of the Mosul province was an extension of it.

In April 1920, as a result of the British occupation a government was formed in Mesopotamia, which included the former Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, and the new state established under the authority of the

League of Nations was named Iraq (Michalopoulos, 2020, p. 288). The fact that the League of Nations gave the Mesopotamian mandate to the United Kingdom in May 1920 will be used as an English argument for the conflict to be experienced in the Lausanne negotiations (Michalopoulos, 2020, p. 293). In the Lausanne negotiations the British delegation argued the British right to victory and the acceptance of the mandate in Mosul by the League of Nations, on the other hand, it applied to the argument that Turks and Kurds did not come from the same origin to follow the policy of constructing new national identities that shaped the Wilsonian principles of the period (Alantar, 1992, p. 87). The Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which affirmed the sovereignty of the National Turkish government following her military achievements in Anatolia, left Turkish-British dispute over the future of the Mosul province unsolved.

Disagreement over the conflict's definition was the first problem arised at the Lausanne negotiations on the Mosul problem. While Lord Curzon, minister of foreign affairs, who attended the meeting on behalf of the British delegation, stated that the matter in question should be defined as a border issue, in contrast the head of the Turkish delegation, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, stated that what needs to be resolved is not a border issue, but the status of the Mosul Province over which Turkish sovereignty is being violated (League of Nations Political Collection, 1924). While the British side struggled to base this approach on the right of victory rhetoric, Turkey objected since Mosul was occupied after the signign of armistice. These arguments, which were discussed at the League of Nations sessions, were directly related to how the problem was to be defined. Turkey's way of defining the conflict is to determine the future of the Mosul province. With this definition, the Turkish government intended the League of Nations would decide to organize a plebiscite in the province of Mosul to obtain the people's opinion on their future.

In the memorandum transmitted to the Council, the Turkish government asserted that the people of Mosul could openly and freely express their willthrough referendum (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 6):

“My Government is convinced . . . that the expression of the popular will should be regarded as the essential factor in the solution of the problem, and it hopes that the Commission will take into consideration the most earnest desire of the Turkish Government and people that the solution may be found in a free expression of the desire of the population of the Mosul Vilayet.”

The role of the League of Nations in the Mosul dispute was touted as an opportunity to test the problem-solving procedures and peace principles of the idealist international order in that memorandum. According to the document, a

non-Western society should be able to benefit from the peace of the Western World, which manifests itself in idealist thought. In the cover letter sent to the Council including Turkish proposal about plebiscite the Turkish Government put forward the following considerations (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 6):

“For the first time since the foundation of the League of Nations, a dispute of considerable importance between a great Western Power and a Near Eastern Power regarding the final destiny of an Oriental people has been brought before the Council of the League. Feelings of good-will and confidence between East and West, and the faith of Oriental peoples in the new era for which the League of Nations stands, will depend very largely on the solution your Commission may advocate, after a thorough investigation of the question. The Government of the Republic is convinced that your Commission sincerely desires to contribute to the creation of confidence between these two parts of the world, which would be so desirable a result, and will wish to ensure the triumph of justice by recommending that the Council should allow the population of the Vilayet of Mosul freely to determine its fate.”

Since the Lausanne negotiations, British diplomacy has opposed the implementation of the plebiscite-based consensus option for the solution of the Mosul Question (Taha, 2013, p. 336). The British thesis was that the plebiscite was a method of electing rulers and could not be used to determine disputed borders. The British justification of their objection to the plebiscite rested on their portrayal of the Kurdish and Arab people of Mosul as nomads, illiterate, and ignorant, which might have caused them to make poor judgments (League of Nations Political Collection, 1924).

While the Turkish government argued that a plebiscite should be applied for the political fate of the Mosul Province, through recalling it was favoured in the peace agreements designed at the Paris Peace Conference. The international community created by the idealist peace was able to resolve the territorial disputes in many parts of Europe such as Saar, Schleswig, Klagenfurt, Upper Silesia, with a plebiscite. Therefore, according to Turkey, there was no reason why it should not be applied in Mosul (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 14). The peaceful resolution of territorial disputes and the determination of the territorial status of the regions were legitimizing prescriptions in which the idealist international peace project after the Paris Peace Conference positioned in a special place to distinguish itself from the belligerence of the old European order. Problems such as Upper Silesia, East Prussia, Saar, Teschen within the scope of the conflict resolution mechanism and responsibility of the League of

Nations were easily resorted to and produced a peaceful solution. That cardinal principle designed to ensure the conditions of international peace could also be applied to eastern societies as the Turkish government stated in its letter with civilizational implications (Commission Report, p. 14).

However, the British government found a new economic argument that seemed as relevant as self-determination to the idealistic cover of the new international order. That was the necessity of providing minimum development conditions for the survival of newly formed nation states. Since the beginning of the war, Britain defined the provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul as Mesopotamia and argued that a single unit should administer the three Ottoman provinces for economic survival (Macmillan, 2002, p. 397). The existence of Iraq as a single entity was a geopolitical concern for British policy, and the construction of a sovereign Iraqi state in the region was considered an essential part of its grand strategy.

Cecil John Edmonds, a member of the British team assisting the Commission of Inquiry assigned by the League of Nations with a fact-finding mission to be referenced in its recommendation on the Mosul issue, wrote that openly in his memoirs: According to the British argument, the plebiscite could have prevented the people from learning where they "really" inclined (Edmonds, 1957, p. 403). Therefore, it was necessary to provide them with an economic condition to live in their new state (Edmonds, 1957, p. 398):

"That we are not now engaged upon what was for Iraq a life and death struggle we none of us had any doubt, for we were convinced that Basra and Baghdad without Mosul could, for economic and strategic reasons, never be built up into a viable state."

According to Edmonds, the British narrative of economic argument impressed the Commission's report (Edmonds, 1957, p. 413). Recalling the opposing views on the definition of the conflict, the insistence of the British side to define the conflict to be brought to the League of Nations Council as the northern border of the Kingdom of Iraq can be considered related to the economic argument. As a result, Mosul Investigation Commission unanimously recognized the practical impossibility of holding the plebiscite suggested by the Turkish Government for ascertaining the wishes of the population and concluded that the best method of preparing the way for a solution would be to produce from its own inquiries suggestions which it could lay before the Council (League of Nations Political Collection, 1926). The mediator's final proposal in the Turkish-British conflict over Mosul was shaped by the economic argument that emphasized the existence of Iraq as a single unit which indicates the limitations of idealist peace's achievements and its flaws in the mediation process.

Conflict resolution and mediation diplomacy applied in the Mosul question was also the subject of a severe conceptual discussion. The Turkish and British governments argued for different positions on what role the League of Nations would play as a mediator, and hence the nature of its decision. Whether the mediator's assessment would turn into a binding decision, in other words, whether it was mediation or arbitration, was a cleavage for the parties to the dispute. The phrase in article 3(2) of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), over which the League was authorized, states

"The frontier between Turkey and Iraq shall be laid down in friendly arrangement to be concluded between Turkey and Great Britain within nine months. In the event of no agreement being reached between the two Governments within the time mentioned, the dispute shall be referred to the Council of the League of Nations."

In that article, no clear implication of binding decision for the mediator was included. However, it may not make a significant difference in terms of the League's activities in the relevant process, since the diplomatic activities directed by the League of Nations include all three defining features of mediation; making suggestions for the solution of the problem, creating a pool of information by meeting with the parties and conducting fieldwork, and providing the parties with a bargaining environment where they can express their theses (Princen, 2014, p. 32).

Turkey had declared that it had taken the issue without giving the Council the "arbitrary" authority to decide, even before the mediation started and the Investigation Commission was formed (League of Nations Political Collection, 1924). The letter of Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras to the Council shows that Turkey's position on the role of the mediator did not change after the Commission report was discussed in the Council in December 1925³:

"I should add that, as all the proposals which I have previously made with the object of reaching an agreement and of facilitating the role of mediator and conciliator which we have always recognised the Council to possess have had no result, and as the Council has decided not to carry out this role, I find myself obliged to inform you that these proposals are now ipso facto null and void. I desire further to declare that the sovereign rights of a State over a territory can only come to an end with its consent and that therefore our sovereign rights over the whole of the Vilayet of Mosul remain

³ The text of the letter is included in the meeting minutes of 16 December 1925 (15th meeting, article no. 1651).

intact.” (translated by the author)

Aras's reaction in the Turkish parliament to the League of Nations stance on the Commission's report is another confirmation that the League was not accepted as an arbitrator, at least by one of the parties (*TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, 09.01.1926, pp. 91-92).

“For us.....since the meaning of the commitment to present the dispute to the League of Nations is not unclear, our organizational principle requires that the Assembly must authorize the Government for we can accept the submission and negotiation of any issue related to the sovereign of the law of our state to the arbitrator. This decision, which was declared by the Assembly of the League of Nations, under the fifteenth article of the pact, the authority of which it was adopted, is mentioned! Since it is a decision of recommendation according to the provisions and scope of that article, the delegation had no authority of any treatment that could be included in the broadest meaning inspired by the word mediation.” (translated by the author)

The parties to the conflict and conflict resolution, have different positions in the period that we defined in the previous title as the period when idealist peace principles prevailed. While the Turkish government represents a national attitude shaped by the concern for sovereignty bearing the traces of the post-imperial conditions, the British government is an actor seeking ways to adapt its imperial identity inherited from the previous century to the foundations of peace of the new order. The idealist peace-based stance, of which the League of Nations is the institutional agent, has made the conflict between the two opposites more complicated in the geopolitical as well as in the intellectual sense. Different outcomes for the parties to this dispute might result from how the self-determination principle was interpreted. Turkey's arguments would be enhanced if this principle were used to reflect the political will of a people, as in other examples of European conflicts. But it worked for the British position when considered as a necessary step in imperial state-building process. As a result, the League of Nations, which supported the British claims, rejected Turkey's demand to implement the principle of self-determination (Okur, 2020, p. 322). According to the League's decision, economic justifications were more important than self-determination in ensuring the survival of the mandate which was another institution of idealist peace.

3.1. League of Nations Commission of Inquiry

The first stage of the mediation diplomacy by the League of Nations for the Mosul Question was to initiate the information and fact-finding program on the conflict. It was decided to establish an investigation commission at the League

of Nations session dated September 30, 1924, to enrich the knowledge accumulated by the theses and arguments of the parties with the data to be obtained directly from the field that is the subject of the conflict. The commission to examine the Mosul issue will be elected by the League of Nations Assembly. The members of the Commission thought to make their decisions according to the principle of self-determination, which was the main principle of the ideology of peace prevailing after the World War I (Shields, 2020, p. 301). Commissioners represented the principles of self-determination and Wilson's idealism as constant ideas (Wahrman, 2016, p. 22).

The Commission's principal objective was to determine whether Mosul population preferred an Iraq- or Turkey-dependent future. In pursuit of this goal, Commissioners came to Baghdad on January 16, 1925, and started fieldwork. First, a meeting was held with King Faisal in Baghdad. According to Faisal, the essence of the Mosul problem was not a border dispute but about surrendering the existence of the Iraqi state (Edmonds, 1957, p. 389). This demonstrates the connection between the British thesis and the claims of the yet-to-be-legitimized ruler assigned to the disputed area.

The commission of Inquiry, appointed on 13 November 1924, started the fieldwork on 16 January 1925 and presented its final report to the League of Nations on 16 July 1925. During that period, the Commission could not assume a completely independent role due to the conjuncture created by the British pressure, and the mediation process became partially dysfunctional.

Three diplomats composed the delegation of the Commission of Inquiry, which the League of Nations Council constituted under the condition that each member had the approval of both the Turkish and the British governments. These were Carl Einar Thure af Wirsén, a senior minister in the Swedish diplomatic service; Count Paul Teleki, former prime minister of Hungary and a geographer and ethnographer; and Colonel Albert Paulis, a Belgian army veteran experienced in the Belgian Congo. Other officials involved in the process were secretaries and translators to assist them (Edmonds, 1957, p. 396).

Among commission members, Count Paul Teleki's ethnographic acquis is important in terms of analyzing the Commission's activities according to the regulatory principles of idealist peace. An influential geologist of his time, Teleki was one of the pioneers of the ethnographic mapping method with his work on Hungarian ethnography and his work became a reference source in the Versailles negotiations (Wahrman, 2016, p. 34). Engaging in the method aimed at understanding the cultural structure, values and thoughts of the communities became an alternative ground of legitimacy to the plebiscite, where the people whose fate was to be decided could directly express their inclinations. While the

plebiscite would be able to directly and unmediatedly reflect the opinions of the members of the society who are asked to determine their destiny, ethnographic research would enable the Commission in question to decide on behalf of the people, based on the authority of the scientific method, instead of the people. Thus, the “self-destiny” of the people of Mosul will be determined by the authorities of the scientific paradigm, who see them as an object of research rather than a political subject. Indeed, in their final report, the commissioners based their research on what they called a *psychological study of the population* that goes beyond the public's political views to holistically describe the inhabitants of Mosul (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, pp. 12-13).

One of the Commission's main conclusions in its report was that the Kurds are a separate race from Turks and Arabs. This result has been a clause that will support the effectiveness of the rule of independence of ethnic identities in resolving the conflict. Accordingly, the Commission proposes that the region related to the conflict should be connected to Iraq. But again, according to the Commission report, Mosul is a part of Turkey in terms of law, as long as Turkey does not give up its sovereignty, and the Iraqi or British government has no right to victory. This legal assessment, which is completely inconsistent with the proposed solution, remained as an easily violated interpretation in the final decision of the League of Nations since the commission did not consider itself legally responsible.

The Commission of Inquiry structured its final report under several headings. These titles present different arguments about which side to transfer the disputed region's sovereignty. The strategic, historical or ethnic structure conclusions of the report could not answer the question of under which country Mosul would remain. Under the heading of the political consequences of the report, it is accepted that it legally belongs to Turkey (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 84).

Therefore the territory occupied by the British and Iraqi authorities still belongs in law to Turkey, until she renounces her rights.

According to the report, because of the complexity of ethnicity in disputed territories, ethnic considerations alone cannot be considered when determining the border (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 87). And there was no sense of Iraqiness in the disputed region (Commission Report, 1925, p. 78) and the population's wishes to which country they want to unit may vary depending on conditions (Commission of Inquiry Report, 1925, p. 86). The reference to ethnicity has become dysfunctional due to a lack of clear and exact definitions of people's identification (Akın, 2009, p. 70). While some Iraqis opposed to British authority, most Turks were pro-Turkey and Arab nationalists

may also prefer to be loyal to Turkey rather than Iraq, which is under foreign rule. Apart from that, economic, religious, and linguistic kinship supersedes national identity (Shields, 2004, p. 52). Theses regarding ethnic identities were utilized as grounds for diplomatic conflict since they were closely tied to forming new international frontiers (Okur, 2020, p. 341).

In this case, the economic argument promoted by the British side as an alternative to plebiscite remained a stand-alone guiding reference for the Commission's recommendation. In recommending to the Council the decision to unite Mosul with Iraq, the report adds that this will come at the expense of various political problems. However, there were some reservations about the economic argument as a substitute for self-determination. If the British mandate is to be terminated, the report suggested that the Mosul province be left to Turkey to ensure the province's political stability (Okur, 2020, p. 317). The Commission's proposal for the annexation of Mosul to Iraq was conditional on establishing a 25-year mandate to resolve racial conflicts and Iraq to become a sovereign state. The report based its solution proposal on the justification of ensuring and preserving the existence of Iraq. The final concluding section of the report states that the disputed region should not be divided. The report justified its territorial regulation suggestion by stressing the need to ensure and preserve Iraq's existence. The predisposition to the economic reasoning of the nation-building concern rises to the fore at this moment. The existence of Iraq was a geopolitical concern for British policy, and the core of British grand strategy is to create and dominate the Iraqi state in the region. The possible threat to British interests presented by Turkey's geopolitical return to the region, starting with Mosul, was one of the factors that drove this British strategy (Okur, 2020, p. 330).

When the League of Nations launched the inquiry, it acknowledged that the principle of self-determination was essential to the solution. Based on this, the Commission of Inquiry made a census by ethnicity during its work in the region. Taking the population of ethnic identities as a reference in solving the problem was based on the assumption that the region's people would make decisions based on their ethnicity. It is important that there were observations that contradicted this expectation during the Commission's work in the field and that they were prevented by the use of force. The Commission's investigation indicates that sentiments about Mosul's political future were unrelated to identities. Arab nationalists may prefer to be loyal to Turkey instead of Iraq under the control of a foreign power. Economic, religious and linguistic kinship was more influential than national identity (Shields, 2004, p. 52).

3.2. The Decision of the League of Nations

The final report of the Commission of Inquiry included the proposal to leave Iraq under the Mandate for 25 years and to fulfil the stated conditions during this period. While the British delegation announced that it accepted that proposal and its conditions, Turkey declared that it would reject that proposition since it does not recognize the Iraqi mandate regime. Thereupon, the debate on the role of the mediator and the quality of the assessment he would make, which had been going on since the beginning of the League of Nations mediation process, re-emerged to settle the dispute on 26 and 27 October 1925.

After the League's decision, the dispute over the mediator's role and the substance of the decision—which occasionally arose throughout the process—became an ambiguity that needed to be resolved first. To overcome that uncertainty, the League Council unilaterally decided on 19 September 1925 to seek the advisory opinion of the Permanent Court of International Justice, another new institutional actor of the idealist international order (League of Nations Political Collection, 1926). The Court was to give an opinion on whether the decision of the Council was an arbitral award, a recommendation, or a mediation (Minorsky, 2015, p. 48). It has led to a conclusion that violates the rule that international mediation can only be determined by the parties to the conflict, in terms of its functioning, mechanism, role and decision-making. Accordingly, the Mosul Question process, which was a perfect example of mediation from the beginning, has turned into a means of forcing an unequal agreement by going beyond the borders of conflict resolution (Okur, 2020, p. 346). The mediator's stance to settling the Mosul question has shifted the process away from mediation based on the parties' mutual consent. Due to the conflict resolution process' implicit influence on the demarcation of Turkey and Iraq's boundaries, alternative border imaginations have emerged, feeding recurring threat perceptions and political contests (Oztig & Okur, 2022).

The Mosul issue offers an important opportunity to assess the ability of the first comprehensive international peace initiative of the 20th century to resolve territorial disputes, as well as a chance to observe the idealist peace project's stance in a confrontation between mandatory powers and nation states. The League of Nations' decision to ignore the context of self-determination in resolving the conflict, based on maps, graphs and statistics presented after a thorough field mission and discussion process, reveals the failure of idealist peace in the 1920s and in a relatively solvable case.

4. CONCLUSION

The post-World War I World had favourable conditions for forming a new international peace architecture. The foundations of the new international peace began as Wilsonian idealism at the Paris Peace Conference established the League of Nations as the cornerstone for the history of diplomacy. While this organization was equipped with conflict resolution and mediation capabilities, principles of the idealist peace were embodied to inform its operation. Self-determination was among the most prominent principle of the idealist peace project. From the 1920s through the 1930s, it became a key for the management for several international disputes and boundary conflicts as a right that was defined and acknowledged via various mechanisms adopted through plebiscites, research commissions' works, and ethnographic mappings.

The conflict over territorial control of Mosul between Turkey and Great Britain was one of the major controversies of the moment. There were significant deviations from the idealist peace project, as well as the demands and manipulations of the United Kingdom, the most dominant actor in this order, in the process of resolving the Mosul conflict, which was unsuccessful in the Lausanne negotiations and was entrusted to the mediation of the League of Nations. One of the most obvious results was avoidance from the self-determination of the province's people, which was exacerbated by resistance to the plebiscite and the use of alternate formulae that resulted in an uneven agreement.

Another significant facet of the Mosul case, which covered the full content of conflict resolution, was that the mediator was prominent and determinant in the conflict resolution process. The mediator's determination makes a profound contribution to the fact that the issue, which covers a wide range of topics from oil fields to economic interests, from nationalism to historical bond discussions, is very productive for observing idealist peace. The League of Nations, with its stance, in this case, has shown that it is a purposeful agent of the transformation in the international order.

The fact that the principle of self-determination was the criterion on which the League of Nations would rely in decision-making led to the establishment of a Commission to determine the will of the indigenous people, but when the field research revealed the contradiction between the peace project and the local truth, a tendency to turn to alternative principles and methods emerged. The expectation that each ethnic group would act according to its own identity was falsified. The region's sociology, suitable for a multi-identity existence, was incompatible with the Western-centered understanding of ethnicity. An attempt to resolve a sovereignty and border dispute with

demographic territorial mapping was favoured over plebiscite to guide the principle of self-determination.

The Commission declared that it did not approve of the plebiscite because its experience during the fieldwork had rendered it useless. The Commission has associated this assertion with practical difficulties. According to the mission's observations, in the event of a plebiscite, security problems will arise due to the administration's instability and the absence of an impartial police force. It seems possible for the conflicting states to influence the people's opinion. The education level of the population in the region where the plebiscite will be held is insufficient to make such a decision, and the dominance of the tribal structure and feudal order in the social organization is an obstacle for the people to make independent decisions. For these reasons, the Commission did not propose a plebiscite to resolve the conflict. It is possible to make strong claims that doubt the Commission's impartiality in field research. The British government has stated from the very beginning of the conflict that it would prefer establishing of a field research commission to a plebiscite. The headlines in the Commission's report justifying the proposal to resolve the conflict show that ethnic origin alone cannot be considered a legitimate factor for self-determination. Therefore, the main argument in the Commission's proposal has been shaped around Iraq's economic survival. This result reveals that the dominance of the United Kingdom in the League of Nations and its capacity for international pressure were the most critical factors that led to the failure of the idealist peace practice in this case.

The Commission's field observation has lessened the emphasis on ethnic identity in favour of the conditions for the construction and survival of the new state. Thus, the discourse of self-determination based on ethnic identity has turned into an economic argument by being replaced by a concerned discourse of the geographical and economic necessity of the survival of the newly established Iraqi state. The Commission's use of the argument that Mosul meets agricultural needs of Iraq reveals the impact of an imperial state-building project on mediation. Determining Mosul's political future has become an issue of preserving Iraq's territorial integrity as part of the British-mandated transition to a newly built state. That demonstrates the troublesome interplay between the imperial state-building initiative and self-determination-based conflict settlement.

Despite the United Kingdom's participation in organizing the international order, Turkey's expectations for the League of Nations' regular and dedicated functioning contrasted with the British avoidance of those practices. Ignoring the Commission's warnings regarding potential problems including political instability that could arise in this scenario, the mediator's ultimate

assessment in the Turkish-British conflict over Mosul was determined by an economic argument that stressed the existence of Iraq as a unified unit under the British mandate. Throughout the investigation, the study revealed a definite limit to the impacts of idealist peace instruments on the conflict resolution process, as well as its biased flaws in the mediation process. Throughout the dispute settlement process, Turkish and British views and demands collided. The Turkish government's attempt to resolve this dispute adopting methods used in earlier League of Nations-managed disputes demonstrated a positive propensity toward idealist peacemaking.

The British government's attitude was to move away from that, and as a result, with its disapproval of the plebiscite and approach to the final decision, the British government demonstrated an attitude that avoided the conflict resolution practice of idealistic peace, leading to the conclusion that the League missed the opportunity for the achievement of the idealist international peace. According to findings based on archival documents, Commission reports, and sources from the era, while the British government avoided idealistic peace project practices, the Turkish government made more explicit appeals for those practices to be carried out, which are considered as a failing test regarding a civilizational justice. As a result, aspects of the Mosul case that differ from other territorial problems settled within the League of Nations are revealed. This led to an unequal peace, which stemmed from the nature of the disputed region itself and the divergence of the mediation process from the idealistic principles of peace.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

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8. ETHICS COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COPYRIGHTS

Ethics committee principles were complied with during the study process. The methods and data used in the study do not require ethics committee approval.

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