



TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS: TRADE ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES DURING THE ATATÜRK ERA

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Abstract

The relations between the United States and Turkey, initiated after the United States declared its independence, were predominantly shaped by trade. The commercial ties between the Ottoman Empire and the United States persisted until the late 19th century but weakened in the early 20th century due to diplomatic tensions. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, trade regained prominence during the Atatürk era as part of the country's goals for economic independence. This study examines Turkish-American trade relations between 1923 and 1938 using documents from the Turkish Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The analysis focuses on the economic dynamics and strategies of the period. Turkey increased its exports to the United States, particularly agricultural products, while the U.S. regarded Turkey as a vital trade partner during economic crises. Consequently, both nations adopted a trade-centered approach, with Turkey leveraging the U.S. market to support its economic development goals and the U.S. using international trade as a tool to overcome economic challenges. This mutually beneficial relationship deepened Turkish-American trade relations and contributed to the economic growth of both countries.

Keywords: Turkish-American relations, Trade, Atatürk era.

Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri: Atatürk Dönemindeki Ticari Faaliyetler ve Dönüm Noktaları

Öz

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bağımsızlık ilanından sonra başlayan Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri, özellikle ticaret üzerinden şekillenmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti ile ABD arasındaki ticari bağlar 19. yüzyılın sonlarına kadar sürmüş, ancak 20. yüzyılın başında diplomatik gerginlikler nedeniyle zayıflamıştır. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu ile birlikte, Atatürk döneminde ticaret tekrar ön plana çıkmış ve ekonomik bağımsızlık hedefleri doğrultusunda iki ülke arasındaki ilişkiler yeniden güçlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, Atatürk dönemindeki Türk-Amerikan ticaret ilişkileri, 1923-1938 yılları arasındaki döneme odaklanarak Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşivi'ndeki belgelerle incelenmiştir. Çalışma, dönemin ticari dinamiklerini ve ekonomik stratejilerini analiz etmektedir. Türkiye, özellikle tarım ürünleri ihraç ederek ABD ile dış ticaretini artırmıştır. ABD ise ekonomik krizler sırasında Türkiye'yi önemli bir ticaret ortağı olarak görmüştür. Sonuçta, her iki ülke de ticaretin merkezde olduğu bir anlayış benimsemiş ve Türkiye, ABD pazarına odaklanarak ekonomik kalkınma hedeflerini desteklemiştir. ABD ise dış ticaret yoluyla krizleri aşmayı hedeflemiş ve Türkiye'yi stratejik bir pazar olarak kabul etmiştir. Bu karşılıklı çıkar ilişkisi, Türk-Amerikan ticaret ilişkilerinin derinleşmesine ve her iki ülkenin ekonomik büyümesine katkı sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk-Amerikan ilişkileri, Ticaret, Atatürk dönemi.

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1. Introduction

Turkish-American relations have a deep-rooted history extending from the Ottoman Empire to the present day. These relations first began in the late 18th century, centered on maritime trade in Mediterranean ports of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Navigation and Commerce, signed in 1830 between the Ottoman Empire and the United States, laid the foundation for commercial relations between the two nations, eventually expanding to include diplomatic aspects (Güler, 2005; Köprülü, 1987).

However, the 19th century witnessed periods of tension in Turkish-American relations, driven by the Ottoman Empire's economic and military weaknesses and pressures from Western powers. Although the United States did not declare war on the Ottoman Empire during World War I, diplomatic relations were severed in 1917. Factors such as American missionary activities and the Armenian question further strained relations during this period (Armaoğlu, 1997; Helmreich, 1996; Köse, 2002). Nevertheless, with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and its modernization efforts, Turkish-American relations were redefined.

Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish War of Independence and subsequent reforms marked a period emphasizing national sovereignty and independence. In this context, Turkish-American relations during the Atatürk era witnessed significant developments both economically and diplomatically. Following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, Turkey and the United States began revitalizing their relations, particularly in trade and diplomacy (Köse, 2014). However, challenges persisted, including the U.S. stance on the Armenian issue and Western interference in Turkey's internal affairs.

During the Atatürk era, the foundation of Turkish-American relations was strengthened by economic cooperation, although establishing a robust and enduring partnership took time. Turkey's diplomatic victory in Lausanne in 1923 stabilized Turkish-American relations, but lingering mistrust and disagreements in foreign policy hindered progress. While trade characterized Turkish-American relations during the Ottoman period, the Atatürk era saw a more institutional and diplomatic dimension to these interactions. Atatürk's pragmatism in foreign policy, coupled with Turkey's aspirations for economic development and independence, significantly influenced Turkish-American relations, which deepened over time. These relations continued after Atatürk's death, albeit with fluctuations due to shifting global dynamics and differing strategic interests.

This study employs document analysis to examine Turkey's trade relations with the United States from the late Ottoman period to the end of the Atatürk era, focusing on key commercial activities and milestones through archival sources.

1.1. Turkish-American Relations until the Atatürk Era

In 1783, following its independence, the United States (U.S.) established itself as a sovereign state on the global stage, constructing a unique system and structure. Prioritizing international trade, the U.S. extended its commercial activities beyond its continent, targeting strategic and economically significant regions such as the Mediterranean. The U.S.'s first official visit to the Ottoman Empire occurred on November 9, 1800, with the frigate George Washington arriving in Istanbul. This visit reflected the young U.S. state's desire to develop diplomatic and trade relations with the Ottoman Empire (Durmuş, 2011). In 1827, however, the Battle of Navarino saw a coalition fleet of French, British, and Russian ships destroy the Ottoman navy (Örenç, 2007). This event severely damaged Sultan Mahmud II's trust in Western powers and demonstrated the necessity for a more cautious approach to relations with the West. After the Navarino disaster, the Ottoman Empire sought alternative trade and diplomatic partnerships. Within this context, the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was signed between the

Ottoman Empire and the U.S. on May 7, 1830 (Erhan, 1998; Kayapınar, 2017). This treaty was a significant step in developing commercial and diplomatic relations between the two states (Öksüz, 2010).

The Treaty of Commerce and Navigation consisted of a preamble, nine articles, a conclusion, and a secret clause. The treaty's open articles granted "most-favored-nation" status in trade to both states, allowed the establishment of consulates, and facilitated American trade ships' access to Ottoman ports. Furthermore, it regulated the legal processes for crimes committed by American citizens and prohibited U.S. envoys or consuls from granting protection to Ottoman subjects. It granted American trade ships free passage through the Bosphorus and provided for mutual assistance in case of maritime accidents involving either nation's ships (Erhan, 1998). The treaty's first article formalized the "most-favored-nation" status for American merchants and trade ships (Çörekli, 2023). The fourth article granted American citizens residing in Ottoman territories the benefits of capitulations. These provisions enabled American merchants to operate more freely within Ottoman territories and strengthened the U.S.'s commercial presence in the Mediterranean. By regulating and securing trade, this treaty facilitated the growth of reciprocal commerce between the Ottoman Empire and the U.S. (Armaoğlu, 1996).

The treaty also contained a secret clause that envisioned technical assistance, including constructing ships at cost prices for the Ottoman navy in the U.S. and building ships in Istanbul's shipyard under American engineers' supervision. However, the American Senate rejected this clause due to concerns about potential conflicts in U.S. foreign policy. This rejection deeply disappointed the Ottoman Porte (Akbaş et al., 2019; Kurat, 1967). Turkish-American relations began to take shape toward the late 18th century through maritime trade in Ottoman Mediterranean ports. The U.S., as a young state, initiated commercial activities on Ottoman soil, laying the groundwork for initial interactions between the two nations. These relations were initially confined to trade but later expanded to include diplomatic dimensions. In 1831, the Ottoman Empire opened an embassy in Washington, formalizing these relations. In April of the same year, the U.S. appointed a chargé d'affaires to Istanbul (Kasalak, 2014). The establishment of these embassies institutionalized diplomatic relations and initiated a process that fostered mutual trust.

After the Ottoman Empire signed the Balta Liman Treaty of Commerce with Britain on August 16, 1838, a more liberal commercial environment was established, which indirectly benefited other powers such as the United States by setting a precedent for favorable trade conditions. In this context, a significant increase was observed in Ottoman-American trade throughout the 19th century. The United States imported products such as opium, raisins, and tobacco from the Ottoman Empire, while exporting cotton textiles, arms, and mineral oils. A major turning point in bilateral commercial relations occurred with the signing of the 1862 Ottoman-American Treaty of Commerce. This treaty granted the United States "most favored nation" status and aimed to reduce trade barriers. While the existing 8% customs duty on American goods was preserved, the treaty foresaw the gradual reduction of this rate to 1%. It also lowered export taxes from 8% to 1% and import taxes from 3% to 2%, thus deepening liberal trade practices between the two countries (Selvi & Demirkol, 2012). Although primarily economic in scope, the treaty also had a political dimension, particularly regarding the right to establish consulates and issues surrounding Article IV, which would later become subjects of diplomatic debate (Saçlı, 2024). However, several economic and geopolitical developments strained this liberal framework. The American Civil War (1861–1865) temporarily disrupted trade volumes, but commerce quickly recovered in the post-war years. Seeking to increase revenues, the Ottoman Empire attempted to revise customs duties to 20% in 1874 and again in 1883. Although the United States initially accepted this increase, opposition from other capitulatory powers prevented its implementation. In response, the Ottoman government sought to apply the higher rate exclusively to American imports, which was met

with resistance by the United States. These unresolved disputes ultimately led to the annulment of the 1862 treaty twelve years after its signing (Kaya, 2023).

The Ottoman Empire's approach to establishing diplomatic relations with the U.S. was initially slow. Unlike the U.S., the Ottoman government prioritized setting up consulates over embassies (Sönmez, 2013). The first Ottoman consul, Tibgeoğlu Abraham, was appointed in Boston in 1845 to regulate Ottoman trade activities and protect the rights and privileges of Ottoman citizens in the U.S. This was followed by consulates established in New York in 1856 and Baltimore in 1858. These consulates facilitated the development of trade and safeguarded the rights of Ottoman citizens abroad (Kara, 2006).

The American Civil War (1861–1865) had a multifaceted impact on Ottoman-American relations, particularly by fostering closer diplomatic ties and creating new opportunities for arms trade (Ünver, 2013). Although the United States had established a diplomatic mission in Istanbul prior to the war, the Ottoman Empire did not reciprocate until the post-war period. In an effort to balance the bilateral relationship, the Ottoman government opened a ministerial-level diplomatic mission in Washington after the war, signaling a shift toward more institutionalized relations (Sander & Fişek, 1977; Tüter, 2015). In parallel with diplomatic developments, the post-war period also marked the beginning of formal arms trade between the two nations. Although the United States sought to expand its arms exports following the Civil War, the 1830 and 1862 treaties had imposed restrictions on the trade of weapons and munitions, limiting earlier exchanges. It was not until 1869 that a suitable legal and political framework emerged, enabling the Ottoman Empire to purchase 114,000 rifles from the United States. This transaction marked the beginning of significant arms trade and indirectly contributed to the modernization of the Ottoman military (Satış, 2011).

The origins of Turkish-American relations can be traced back to the late 18th century through connections between the Ottoman Empire and U.S. territories in North Africa (Field, 1991). Initially focused on trade, these relations gradually extended into political and cultural domains. However, World War I disrupted these ties, which were later revived through post-war trade. Efforts to transition these renewed trade relations into political cooperation faced significant challenges. One major obstacle was anti-Turkish propaganda and negative perceptions in the U.S. In this context, the Turkish-American Treaty of Lausanne, signed on August 6, 1923, remained unratified by the American Senate for years. When finally brought before the Senate in 1927, the treaty failed to achieve the required two-thirds majority. Consequently, Turkey and the U.S. resorted to diplomatic notes exchanged in the same year to establish official diplomatic relations. This marked a critical step in reshaping Turkish-American relations during the post-war period. However, while commercial and diplomatic relations gained momentum, political cooperation faced delays due to various obstacles.

The initially favorable environment in Turkish-American relations eventually deteriorated due to internal and external crises faced by the Ottoman Empire. Western powers exploited the empire's vulnerabilities to exert pressure, leading to interventions that undermined Ottoman sovereignty. These pressures became more pronounced in the mid-19th century and led to political instability and weakened military and economic capacity. During this period, U.S. criticism of the Ottoman Empire on issues such as the Armenian question and its support for ethnic and religious groups within Ottoman territories further complicated Turkish-American relations (Armaoğlu, 1991; Güler, 2005).

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in historical methodology, aiming to examine the economic strategies and commercial relations between Turkey and the United States during the Atatürk era, specifically covering the years between 1923 and 1938. Historical approaches are, in

essence, critical frameworks used to systematically examine the credibility, representativeness, and meaning of primary sources—that is, documents, images, or artifacts that provide evidence about the past and were created contemporaneously with the events under investigation (Bosi & Reiter, 2014).

The primary method employed is document analysis. As a qualitative method, document analysis requires a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents through the processes of locating, selecting, interpreting (i.e., making meaning of), and synthesizing the data they contain (Kutsyuruba, 2023). Within this framework, archival materials—particularly diplomatic correspondences, trade agreements, commercial reports, and economic policy documents—have been systematically examined. These sources were primarily obtained from the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (T.C. Dışışleri Bakanlığı Diplomatik Arşivi), which houses official intergovernmental communications and bilateral agreements pertaining to foreign economic relations.

The data obtained were classified using the content analysis method. Content analysis is a research technique aimed at making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful materials to their contexts of use (Krippendorff, 2004). Themes were developed based on the data derived from the documents. These themes included: The Role of Temporary Trade, Trade Agreements of Agricultural Products, Industrial Products and Customs Negotiations, and U.S. Investments and Collaboration in Turkey. Based on these themes, inferences regarding the transformation and evolution of Turkish-American trade relations, particularly with respect to pivotal moments and economic strategies, were made. Additionally, the study analyzed how the U.S. viewed Turkey as a trade partner during periods of economic crises.

2.1. Research Ethics

In conducting this research, strict adherence to research ethics was maintained. All archival materials, including diplomatic correspondences and trade agreements, were examined within the framework of academic integrity, ensuring accurate representation of their content without distortion or selective omission. The study utilised publicly accessible or institutionally permitted documents from the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, with full compliance to relevant archival regulations. Proper attribution was given to all scholarly sources through accurate citation, and interpretations were grounded in verifiable evidence to uphold objectivity, transparency, and scholarly responsibility.

3. Findings

3.1. First Trade Relations between Turks and the USA (1830-1917)

After the signing of the Treaty on Navigation and Commerce between the Ottoman Empire and the United States in 1830, commercial activities between the two states gained momentum (Saçlı, 2024). Table 1 illustrates the trade relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States, reflecting the volume of imports and exports during this period. The table, derived from Leland James Gordon's *American Relations with Turkey 1830-1930*, covers the years 1832-1912 with data recorded at ten-year intervals. This era witnessed a significant increase in bilateral trade. Initially, the Ottoman Empire's imports from the United States were minimal but later exhibited substantial growth. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire's exports to the United States also rose markedly over time. The table clearly demonstrates the expanding trade volume between the two nations, showcasing the growing economic connections (Gordon, 1932; Köprülü, 1987).

Table 1*Trade Volume Between the Ottoman Empire and the United States (1832-1922)*

Year	Imports from the U.S. (USD)	Exports to the U.S. (USD)	Total Trade Volume (USD)
1832	64,722	923,629	988,351
1842	125,521	370,248	495,769
1852	265,825	556,100	821,925
1862	442,721	959,692	1,402,413
1872	1,209,443	866,719	2,076,162
1882	1,829,166	3,315,647	5,144,813
1892	206,350	4,969,029	5,175,379
1902	774,552	8,895,740	9,670,292
1912	3,798,168	19,208,926	23,007,094
1922	15,980,548	21,682,492	37,663,040
1929	5,741,657	12,165,664	17,907,321

Source: Gordon, 1932: pp.46-47,60.

An examination of the table (Gordon, 1932) reveals a steady increase in trade volume between the Ottoman Empire and the United States from 1832 onward, with a notable rise by 1912, reaching \$23 million (Kaya, 2023). This upward trend continued into the early Republican period, with trade peaking in the early 1920s. Although there was a decline by the end of the decade—likely due to the global effects of the Great Depression—the overall trajectory points to deepening economic relations over the long term.

Diplomatic relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire were severed on April 20, 1917, following a note from the Ottoman government. Although the United States had declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, it refrained from declaring war on the Ottoman Empire to protect its economic and missionary activities. Despite this, the Ottoman government unilaterally severed diplomatic ties. Nevertheless, American activities in Ottoman territories continued (Armaoğlu, 1997). The strained relations between Turkey and the United States due to missionary activities and the Armenian issue began to improve gradually during Atatürk's era (Kasalak, 2014). During the Lausanne negotiations, the United States proposed initiating bilateral discussions with Turkey after a peace agreement was reached. However, progress was hindered by disagreements over judicial capitulations and financial regulations. The United States played an active role in the negotiations, particularly on issues such as the Armenian question, the Mosul problem, and the abolition of capitulations (Koçak, 2018).

3.2. The beginning of trade relations with the USA during the Atatürk period

Due to tensions at Lausanne, no diplomatic relations were established between Ankara and Washington in 1921. However, by the year's end, an American diplomat, Julian Gillespie, was sent to Ankara to initiate relations. Gillespie (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of State Archives [BCA], 502,22401,99187,20) arrived in İnebolu aboard an American destroyer and traveled to Ankara over an eleven-day journey. He met with key leaders of the time, including Mustafa Kemal

Pasha, Yusuf Kemal Bey, Adnan Bey, and Rauf Bey. Gillespie was particularly impressed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha's charisma and leadership.

At the beginning of 1922, Gillespie presented a 24-item questionnaire to Rauf Bey (BCA, 502,22401,99187,8). The questions were primarily focused on economic, technical, and commercial topics, aiming to understand Ankara's approach to American businesses and capital. Turkey expressed a clear interest in utilizing American investments during its development phase. Key projects such as the Mersin Port, irrigation in Çukurova, and the construction of electrical plants in Bayburt and Zonguldak were discussed, with the hope of attracting American business interest. In subsequent years, collaboration on major projects like railway construction and mining was also suggested. However, the Turkish government emphasized that economic and commercial cooperation should not compromise Turkey's independence and sovereignty. This stance highlighted Turkey's effort to balance development goals with the preservation of national sovereignty.

After a month-and-a-half stay in Ankara, Gillespie returned to Istanbul in mid-February 1922 and prepared a report. The report indicated Turkey's desire to enhance economic and commercial relations with the United States and its hope for financial aid or loans in exchange for certain concessions. However, Gillespie noted that wartime conditions limited opportunities for American trade in Turkey. Gillespie's visit marked a significant step as the first semi-official representative sent by the United States to Ankara during the Turkish War of Independence, laying the groundwork for economic relations (Şimşir, 1977).

Following these developments, an American delegation proposed a visit to Anatolia to explore economic and commercial relations further (BCA, 502,22401,99187,5). During this period, Standard Oil Company and Omniyum Petroleum Company officially sought government permission to search for and extract petroleum in Turkey (BCA, 502,22401,99276,40; BCA, 502,22401,99275,19). Official records show that American goods were subject to taxation in Turkey, with diverse imports and exports evident between the two nations. In 1923, Turkey decided to impose taxes on artificial oils imported from the United States (BCA, 502,22401,99271,1). Simultaneously, Turkey exported products such as figs and grapes to the United States (BCA, 502,22401,99272,1; BCA, 502,22401,99270,2).

As the Lausanne negotiations neared conclusion, bilateral discussions between the United States and Turkey commenced in May 1923, motivated by progress in achieving peace between Turkey and the Allies. On June 29, 1923, the Treaty of Residence, Commerce, Consular Rights, and Extradition was signed (BCA, 502,22240,98077,2), followed by the Turkish-American Lausanne Treaty and the Extradition Agreement on August 6, 1923 (BCA, 502,88029,320742,40). Steps were taken to promote trade, including implementing low tariffs, as part of these agreements. For example, the United States agreed to apply the lowest tariff on Turkish dried grape exports, provided American products received similar treatment (BCA, 502,22401,99266,2). Known in Turkish archives as the "Turkish-American Friendship and Trade Agreement," the treaty was signed by Joseph Grew for the United States and by İsmet Pasha, Rıza Nur, and Hasan Bey for Turkey (Köse, 2014). The treaty's first article allowed for the mutual appointment of diplomatic representatives, while the second article abolished capitulations. Additionally, Article 9 ensured the preservation of the "most-favored-nation" status.

The status of American institutions recognized before October 30, 1914, was maintained under Turkish law, and previous agreements between the United States and the Ottoman Empire were deemed invalid. However, in a report to the U.S. State Department, Joseph Grew expressed dissatisfaction over unresolved issues such as minority rights, citizenship, and compensation. By 1925, economic relations between Turkey and the United States had made significant progress through special agreements. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State M. Crew played a major role in this development, advocating for American

markets to open up to Turkish products, particularly figs and tobacco (Tomalı, 2022). This assertion is validated by trade data from the period. In 1925, Turkey exported goods worth 25.1 million Turkish Lira to the United States, representing 13% of its total exports. Conversely, American exports to Turkey remained limited. More broadly, the U.S. share in Turkey's imports rose from 3% to 6%, while its share in exports increased from 6% to 13%. This shift indicates that the trade balance had turned in Turkey's favor, strengthening bilateral economic ties (Arslan, 2018; Özgiray, 1999).

3.3. The Role of Temporary Trade Agreements

The temporary trade agreement signed between Turkey and the United States in 1926 laid the legal foundation for the commercial relations between the two countries. The main objective of the agreement was to facilitate trade and ensure continuity. Initially extended for six months in 1926 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive [TMFAA], 502/23182/101210/79), this agreement was periodically renewed in 1927, strengthening the cooperation between the parties (TMFAA, 502/23182/101210/63, 76, 54). Extensions continued in 1928 and 1929, highlighting the importance of the agreement for both countries (TMFAA, 502/23182/101210/51, 48, 40). However, in 1929, delays in communicating the extension to Istanbul Customs caused commercial disruptions, which were resolved through diplomatic intervention by the U.S. Embassy (TMFAA, 502/23182/101210/33). This incident emphasized the need to consider the technical and communication aspects of commercial cooperation.

The Trade and Navigation Agreement, whose negotiations began in 1929, provided a broader framework for regulating commercial relations between Turkey and the United States. Prepared with the aim of long-term cooperation, the agreement was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) in 1930 (TMFAA, 502/23182/101210/23,5). This agreement clarified the rights and obligations of both parties in trade and navigation, establishing a more solid foundation for economic relations. However, the "Trade and Navigation Agreement" signed in 1929 and ratified by Congress, along with the "Residence Agreement" concluded two years later, offered Turkey far fewer advantages than the agreement rejected by the U.S. Congress in 1923 (Soysal, 1977).

3.4. Trade of Agricultural Products

Agricultural products constituted a significant portion of trade between Turkey and the United States. Products such as tobacco, carpets, and figs exported from Turkey to the U.S. were key elements of the economic relationship between the two countries. However, this trade faced challenges from customs duties and tariff policies. For instance, increased customs duties on Turkish carpets imported by the U.S. negatively impacted the competitiveness of Turkish carpet makers (TMFAA, 502/22400/99249/1). Similarly, customs tariffs imposed during the transit of Turkish tobacco through Spanish ports posed another challenge for Turkish exporters (TMFAA, 502/22400/99218/3, 11). Customs duties on agricultural products like figs further underscored the necessity of aligning trade policies with mutual interests during this period (TMFAA, 502/22400/99211/8).

Table 2

Dollar-Based Values of Turkey's Major Export Products to the United States by Year

Product	1920	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937
Birdseed	...	9,504	49,105	159,249	71,655	106,545	222,154
Tobacco leaf	19,422,318	9,953,000	10,366,000	5,963,000	4,367,000	3,666,000	8,807,000
Figs	1,949,463	1,383,000	1,168,000	447,000	397,000	256,000	221,000
Hazelnuts	917,991	809,200	234,089	357,945	201,058	153,062	96,517

Licorice extract	...	...	...	...	6,156	1,636	9,398
Licorice root	955,417	739,994	663,188	438,007	168,142	346,795	421,068
Opium	1,191,129	410,628	244,617	231,161	137,660	63,292	163,421
Pistachios	...	14,809	...	73	12,907	6,022	6,727
Poppy seeds	...	2,875	32,025	18,643	13,380	2,226	...
Raisins	1,215,686	71,079	43,427	37,875	19,808	16,337	26,491
Oak acorns (raw)	...	174,694	267,089	251,855	236,276	313,512	364,941
Oak extract	...	...	47,830	107,768	125,868	69,400	25,908

Source: Bulut, 2008: 125

Significant increases were observed in the values of Turkey's exports to the United States, particularly in products like birdseed and tobacco leaf. While birdseed exports, which were at low levels in the 1920s, reached \$222,154 by 1937, tobacco leaf exports fell from nearly \$19 million in the 1920s to \$8.8 million by 1937. For other products, there were declines in exports of figs and hazelnuts, while products like licorice root and poppy seeds experienced fluctuations in certain years. On the import side, edible vegetable products and beverages, as well as inedible vegetable products, showed a marked increase, particularly after 1929, with imports peaking in 1937. This trend highlights the changing structure of trade and Turkey's growing demand for American products.

3.5. Industrial Products and Customs Negotiations

Trade in industrial products was primarily shaped by taxes imposed on goods imported from the United States and the efforts of American companies to sell their products to Turkey. For instance, the consumption taxes applied by Turkey on oleo oils imported from the U.S. became a significant issue in trade negotiations between the two countries (TMFAA, 502/22400/99239/3, 502/22400/99221/2).

Table 3

Dollar-Based Values of Turkey's Major Import Groups from the United States by Year

Product Group	1923	1925	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937
Textile products	647,448	395,117	164,524	139,698	39,501	54,038	117,151	1,361,603
Timber and paper	26,838	19,920	27,360	29,682	11,096	11,611	36,081	83,456
Non-metal minerals	514,570	366,393	99,927	207,341	84,887	204,123	713,945	1,416,520
Metal ores	138,786	284,662	529,405	621,683	45,653	237,240	422,864	3,758,973
Machinery and vehicles	252,682	653,281	1,209,450	2,900,286	956,072	584,180	1,830,945	5,999,552
Chemicals	33,612	21,504	45,794	109,524	84,045	39,563	126,198	393,236
Miscellaneous	135,529	465,115	485,592	642,861	76,321	53,252	505,878	211,289

Source: Trask, 1971; Bulut: 2008: 126.

Additionally, American companies' efforts to sell industrial products to Turkey are notable. For example, in 1928, an American company applied to sell holsters to Turkey, reflecting the expanding scope of economic relations between the two countries (TMFAA, 502/22400/99223/3).

3.6. U.S. Investments and Collaboration in Turkey

The Atatürk era was a period when policies to encourage foreign investment were implemented. In this context, American business people's interest in investing in Turkey added another dimension to the economic relations between the two countries. In 1926, U.S. investors sought opportunities in Turkey, indicating international recognition of the country's economic potential (TMFAA, 502/22401/99258/1). During the 1930s, companies like the U.S.-based Colonial Stove Company requested to purchase iron, manganese, and other raw materials from Turkey, demonstrating that this collaboration extended to the industrial sector (TMFAA, 502/23243/101542/2). The export of raw materials from Turkey to the United States illustrated Turkey's integration of its natural resources into global markets.

Table 4

Trade Volume Between Turkey and the United States During the Atatürk Era (in USD)

Year	Turkey's Imports from the USA	Turkey's Exports to the USA	Total Trade Volume
1922	16,465,000	21,693,000	38,158,000
1923	3,470,000	13,009,000	16,479,000
1924	3,665,000	14,621,000	18,286,000
1925	3,380,000	14,648,000	18,028,000
1926	2,927,000	16,832,000	19,759,000
1927	4,027,000	20,070,000	24,097,000
1928	4,242,000	18,388,000	22,630,000
1929	5,810,000	12,166,000	17,976,000
1930	4,385,000	11,638,000	16,023,000
1931	1,713,000	8,085,000	9,798,000
1932	1,539,000	5,388,000	6,927,000
1933	1,343,000	8,191,000	9,534,000
1934	2,722,000	7,161,000	9,883,000
1935	4,456,000	7,780,000	12,236,000
1936	6,222,000	9,811,000	16,033,000
1937	14,916,000	17,855,000	32,771,000
1938	13,218,000	18,958,000	32,176,000

Source: Bulut, 2008: 123

The data in the table illustrates the evolution of economic relations between Turkey and the United States, particularly in terms of trade volume. Between 1922 and 1929, trade steadily increased, reflecting Turkey's growing importation of industrial products such as machinery and technology in line with its early Republican modernization agenda. However, a sharp decline occurred between 1930 and 1933, largely due to the global impact of the 1929 Great Depression. During this period, the inward-looking economic policies adopted by the United States, combined with Turkey's efforts to restructure its own economy through statist policies, led to a significant contraction in bilateral trade. From 1934 to 1937, trade volumes rebounded markedly, with 1937 representing the peak year of commercial

exchange between the two nations. In 1938, trade experienced a slight decline, likely influenced by the rising uncertainty preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. Overall, this period marks the formation and institutionalization of economic relations between Turkey and the United States.

4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The Atatürk era was a period during which Turkey took significant steps toward economic independence and redefined its international trade relations. Turkish-American trade relations during this time were enriched through provisional trade agreements, agricultural and industrial goods trade, investment initiatives, and customs regulations. Turkey's cooperation with the United States, aligned with its modernization and economic development goals, contributed to the country's integration into the international trade system. The United States' perception of Turkey as a trade partner and investment field played a key role in stabilizing bilateral commercial relations.

Turkey's exports to the United States followed a fluctuating trend between 1920 and 1937. Particularly, the export of chromium surged significantly after 1929, while emery exports witnessed a sharp decline. Exports of rabbit fur and marten fur increased, whereas demand for meerschaum and mohair declined. The carpet trade exhibited substantial volatility, while the export of sheep, lamb, and goat hides fluctuated between 1927 and 1937. These variations illustrate that trade was influenced by international market demands and economic conditions (Bulut, 2008). In this regard, the findings are consistent with the arguments of Keyder (1981) and Boratav (2005), who emphasise the structural instability of Turkey's foreign trade during the interwar period. Similarly, Quataert (1994) underscores that commodity-based exports such as minerals and raw materials were highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global demand.

Toward the latter part of the Atatürk era, Turkish-American trade relations began to shift unfavorably for Turkey. In 1934, the Turkish government, aiming to regulate and boost trade relations, issued a decision allowing for the unrestricted import of goods exported from the United States. This decision was implemented within the framework of free lists appended to trade agreements that Turkey had signed with other countries, ushering in a new phase in bilateral trade relations. However, by 1937, significant imbalances in Turkey's trade with the United States emerged. Turkey began facing considerable trade deficits and struggled to pay for its imports. These difficulties led to payment delays, prompting the United States to reassess its economic relations with Turkey. Consequently, on November 2, 1937, the United States notified Turkey of its intention to review the bilateral trade agreements. This situation underscored the challenges of achieving sustainable economic relations despite the growing trade volume (Özgiray, 1999). These findings are also in line with Pamuk's (2008) argument that Turkey's foreign trade policies of the 1930s, while aimed at securing economic sovereignty, nevertheless produced long-term structural dependence on external markets.

In conclusion, the Atatürk era was a pivotal period during which Turkey made significant progress in achieving economic independence and development. Turkish-American trade relations advanced during this time, influenced by modernization, industrialization, and economic reforms. While trade volume increased in the latter half of the 1920s, it contracted during the early 1930s due to the Great Depression. Trade regained momentum after 1934 but experienced notable imbalances by 1937. These findings, when compared with the broader literature, indicate that Turkey's foreign trade strategy was heavily shaped both by the exigencies of the international economy and by its domestic state-led industrialisation policies (Tekeli & İlkin, 1982; Zürcher, 2004).

Based on the results, several suggestions can be made for future research. First, trade agreements between Turkey and the United States during Atatürk's time could be systematically compared with those concluded with other countries, particularly in Europe, in order to identify differences in

bargaining power and trade balance. Second, detailed analyses of import and export data could be conducted in the context of the Great Depression and shifting international market conditions, providing a broader comparative framework. Third, the long-term effects of the 1934 decision to liberalise imports from the United States should be examined within the wider context of Turkey's economic policies of the 1930s, particularly the First and Second Industrial Plans. Fourth, the dynamics of Turkish-American economic relations in this period could be studied as a prelude to the post-Second World War era, offering insight into the roots of Turkey's eventual integration into the Western economic system under the Marshall Plan. Finally, further archival research in both Turkish and American repositories could enrich our understanding of the political as well as economic dimensions of bilateral relations.

5. References

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