

**A PREDECESSOR OF THE 2ND WORLD WAR DURING ATATÜRK'S
ERA AND A HISTORY OF CREATION OF AN AMERICAN CAMP: US
CHIEF OF STAFF'S TURKEY VISIT & RAMIFICATIONS TO THE
PRESENT***

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: <i>American Imperialism, 2nd World War, Turkish Foreign Policy, Political Camping of the Countries.</i></p> <p>DOI: <i>10.26809/joa.2018548619</i></p>	<p><i>It is a social memory among many communities of the 20th century as well as a presentation within the academic circles and publications that the 2nd World War was triggered in the Balkans due to the conflicts among various ethnical groups; and political developments following the war outbreak led the creation of the American and the Soviet camps. This widespread conviction also reveals that the war created a conducive atmosphere for America to rise as a world hegemon power in world affairs superseding the roles of the imperialistic European countries such as England and France. However, this American march to political dominancy was neither peculiar to the developments of the 2nd World War nor the camping of the countries could be restricted to the events following the 1939 German occupation of Poland. Potential and significant circumstantial evidence had existed showing that Washington's ostensible non-imperialistic discourse and methods were in fact to attract the nations trying to avoid the yoke of the imperialistic powers of Europe: And once the British, French and others' military and political strengths were shaken and diminished, the US was ready to assume the their role and its dominancy in world affairs became inevitable. This aspiration had particular historic roots dating back to the American missionary infiltrations especially into the Ottoman lands since 1820s when Washington carefully avoided imperialistic actions and discourse but pacifically penetrated the territories with benevolent means such as schools, hospitals as well as charity. These engagements seemingly working for the goodwill of the Ottoman communities endangered the unity of the empire by creating nationalistic aspirations within the minds of the non-Muslim communities and provoked the ethnical revolts against the Porte. Thus, the US had not have to start a war against the Ottoman State, request territories unlike did the imperialistic powers of Europe in the 19th century though American methods were as destructive as the European concerning the Ottoman Empire. Similar attempts continued even during the early years of the Turkish Republic and Atatürk's era. The US did not want the new republic fall into the Soviet protector umbrella and event invited Ankara to participate in the new peace initiatives such as the Briand-Kellogg Pact. American attempts could be regarded as the predecessor of the camping of the world countries in late 30s and in fact which was very visible after the 2nd World War. Washington wanted to give message that she would not let Turkey fall into the Soviet protective wings. A significant example of this message as well as the sign of the strategic importance given to Turkey by the US was the General Douglas MacArthur's Turkey visit in 1932 as a part of his Europe and Middle East program.</i></p>

*Bu çalışma, 19-21 Nisan 2018 tarihlerinde Çanakkale/TÜRKİYE'de gerçekleşen 2. Uluslararası Rating Academy Kongresi: Umut temalı kongrede sunulmuş aynı isimli bildirinin gözden geçirilmiş halidir.

1. INTRODUCTION

History discipline does not have the responsibility to give lessons but it would not be wrong to assert that it teaches us. As an example, an overwhelming majority of the people in the world learn how inglorious the two world wars were and their devastating effects on the history of humanity even in the modern ages such as the 20th century. Among the valuable and significant information we are taught by history is that the term in between the two world wars would be regarded troublesome, alarming and contain uncertainties for many countries be it involved in conflicts or stay politically neutral. Furthermore, history also embraces people with the sentiments of hope. Because the humanistic events in history are not repeated; however, they may likely to hold many similarities, which make people to think that events in the past and at present are the same. Yet, at this stage what is neglected is the power of time and change: time changes, people and humanity, too. As it was put by well-known British novelist Hartley “the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there” (L.P.Hartley, 1953).

Past and present hold many similarities or regularities; as is the recent past of Turkey. A striking example is the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. Although it was one of the two key countries of the concerned crisis and seriously within the Soviet nuclear threat, Turkey was neither informed properly nor was she consulted well by Washington. Apparently, nuclear issue was not new to Turkey; quite the contrary it dated back to the 50s when Ankara signed some nuclear and atomic agreements with the US. This allowed American nuclear IRBM missiles to be deployed in Çiğli, İzmir in late 50s on the one hand; but on the other hand, not well informed of these missiles, villagers of Çiğli, who could be the easy targets of a nuclear attack, were very much into wonder what these weird things would be and questioned the existence of these unknown machines in their vicinity The curious villagers were made fun of with the answer they get from the army officers, these erected structures were *minarets*. Furthermore, the press called them *İbrahim* (Milliyet, YeniAsır, 2010 and Haberturk, 2011). Interestingly, with the intention of shooting some geese and ducks, Turkish village hunters did not much care targeting these structures since they believed that bullets would not harm the so-called minarets.

This tragicomic story poses many questions about why Ankara preferred to accept American missiles in various parts of Turkey while many historians claimed that the missiles were outdated. One of the replies would be that Turkey was located in a hotspot region where nuclear rivalry between the US and the Soviet Russia was quite active in 50s and 60s. When we seek for the ramifications of this event to the present, how could we analyze the last few years in which Turkey has gone through and how can we understand and comment on it especially when the Arab Spring, wars in Iraq and Syria; gradual increase of terrorist attacks in Turkey from 2013 to 2016 and finally the attempted coup d'état of July 15, 2016 were concerned? Does the current rivalry of superpowers explain all these questions? Was it just a slip of the tongue when the Russian President Putin declared to the press in March 2018 that in case of a nuclear assault to Turkey, Russian Federation would not hesitate to protect her southern neighbor? Is this a Russian joke to the US when such a nuclear protection is mentioned? The purpose of this study is not to make an analysis of the current political events and conjuncture; neither has it aimed to propose a brand-new theory of international relations and explain the situation within that theory. However, it aims to put forth that history has similarities when compared the case of Atatürk's era with the first quarter of the 21st century.

2. REPUBLICAN ERA RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.A

Returning to the subject matter of the study, years between 1918 and 1938 passed for the young Turkish Republic with lengthy struggles to gain full independence in various realms including military, economy, politics and social life so as to survive and stand on its own. These

were done to extricate Turkey from the so-called the ossified institutional structure and so to speak the hunchback of the Ottoman Empire that lived more than 600 years.

During the mentioned period when on the one hand Republic of Turkey, established with endeavors, initiatives and efforts of a nationalistic cadre led by Mustafa Kemal, but on the other hand, the country was striving to become one of the significant as well as an amicable member of the international system with its “peace at home, peace in the world” policy. However, the mentioned cadre had to fight to keep the integrity of the country not only against the imperialist powers that were not successful in partitioning and capturing the Ottoman Empire in the way they wished after the end of the 1st World War but Turkey also had gone through struggles in the form of the internal disturbances, uprisings and treachery eagerly carried out by the anti-revolutionary groups.

Nevertheless, it required a robust capacity of diplomatic versatility, adaptability as well as wide and deep knowledge to compete and overcome the mentioned events and crisis no matter how bothersome they were. Common sense and human experience allows us to comprehend that such an accumulated knowledge does not descend from the sky; however, it requires capacity to keep up with world politics, a well-read brain, and skills to analyze accompanied by a profound historical knowledge. The books showed us whether Atatürk had any of the above.

Anıtkabir (Atatürk's Mausoleum) has a library section displaying some of the books read by Atatürk. When carefully looked, it becomes very visible to see how well the books of diverse disciplines including history, politics, sociology, anthropology among some others were read with many underlines. Even the variety of disciplines of the books indicates Mustafa Kemal's knowledge on world affairs of the time and the past; he also knew quite well not only the Turkish but also other countries' history. Therefore, it would not be much possible to implement diplomatic maneuvers and design a roadmap of political vision for his country without having a deep historical knowledge (Gönlübol and Kürkçüoğlu, 2000). Additionally, creating a meaningful connection among the past, the present and the future; thus make anticipation for the future would be realized with the help of such a deep historical knowledge (Gönlübol and Kürkçüoğlu, 2000).

However, this historical knowledge may both teach us lessons and it can also have restrictive defects. Such defects occur when the information is confined just with the past and when an analysis portion is missing. A significant example of combining historical knowledge with the prospects to the future for Atatürk was the visit of General Douglas Mac Arthur (Chief of the Staff of the United States Army) paid to Turkey in 1932. Atatürk's attribution was concealed in the minutes related to his well-known meeting with Mac Arthur in İstanbul, which was published both by *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on November 8, 1951 (Cumhuriyet, 1951) and brought to the attention of its readers by the American magazine *The Caucasus* (Mango, 1999). Although there is still an ongoing debate on what was told during the meeting and whether Atatürk had prophecy skills to anticipate the approaching 2nd World War, many details of the visit as well as the leaders' meeting were revealed and made public. Such details were also asked to the US Ambassador to Ankara of the time, H.E. Charles Sherill, he refrained from giving a clear answer to these requests (Dilek, 2005). The two leaders exchanged ideas on the current political situation in Europe. Moreover Atatürk commented on possible threatening consequences of the arms race of the world powers. The available minutes of the meeting documentarily reveal it is a fact that Atatürk did not literally mention a 2nd World War; however, his sentences on the ongoing armament are not exempt from clear interpretation of this threat.

Details of this meeting are available on T.C Başbakanlık Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi official internet site (www.atam.gov.tr). The

minutes of the mentioned meeting can also be found in Cumhuriyet Archives (official state archives) in Ankara (Cumhuriyet Archives, 030.10.267.802.23). However, presenting what the meeting mean to the Turkish society from a historian's eye together with a commentary as well as what really was meant to be told by the concerned leaders would be one of the appropriate methods so that people would comprehend closest to the reality. Otherwise, without this help, time may play its distortive and restrictive defects on social memory.

3. A DUBIOS VISIT FROM AN AMERICAN GENERAL

With this respect, one of the most significant debates would be the timing of Mac Arthur's visit. This corresponded to a timeline when the European powers that lost the 1st World War and could not achieve what they aimed for gradually started to pronounce revisionist discourse against the status quo set in the international system after the war. Raising their voices tolled the alarm bell for a possible new world war. While a potential war was approaching, Turkey consolidated its position in the international system as well as emerged as a prominent country that was attached a great importance and approached both by the European powers some of which strived to keep status quo and others sought for revisions and by the USA that would not dare to endanger its economic as well as political investments in this new republic (Bulut, 2010).

Chief of the Staff of the US Army General Douglas Mac Arthur included Turkey to the last part of his September 1932 East European trip. What made this trip interesting was that all of the countries included in his program were Soviet Russia's neighbors. This carefully tour could be regarded as a strong circumstantial evidence for the political polarization that had been gradually starting to shape. Furthermore, it would not be hard to anticipate that Russia regarded an American General's visit to Turkey with disfavor. Although Turkey and Russia signed amity agreement in 1925, their relations deteriorated in time and especially in 1931, the political tension between the two reached to a climax when Turkey became a member of the League of Nations. For them, it was an organization under the US leadership. While this tension and rivalry was ongoing, the US planned Mac Arthur's visit.

General Mac Arthur, after finishing his Romania visit, left Constanta on the deck of a ship and arrived in İstanbul on September 25, 1932. The General was first met by a military ceremony. He then rode to Ankara in a train on the same day and reached to the capital on September 26, 1932; met there by an official ceremony, too. Turkish Chief of the Army General Fevzi Çakmak hosted a lunch to the honor of his visitor. It was revealed thanks to the correspondence of the Ministry of Interior as well as the telegram sent to İsmet İnönü (Cumhuriyet Archives, 030/10/1/3/1) by the Acting Minister of Defense Mr. Zekai. The Minister quoted that they watched together with General Mac Arthur the Turkish plane show and that his visitor enjoyed it so much and commented that General Mac Arthur had told him that he had not seen a better trained, orderly, capable and equipped army among the countries he visited in Eastern Europe.

In the meetings between the Ministry of Defense and General Douglas Mac Arthur, some newspapers reported that Turkey requested to buy Curtis-Wright combat planes from the US (New York Times, 1932); however, this news was neither confirmed by Mac Arthur nor a documentary evidence has been found to demonstrate such a bargaining carried out by the Ministry of Defense or a final agreement on the purchase of the mentioned planes (Dilek, 2005).

In the meantime, Douglas Mac Arthur completed his official visits and meetings in Ankara and returned to İstanbul on September 27, 1932 by train. On the same day, he was accepted by Mustafa Kemal, as Atatürk has official businesses in the city, in Dolmabahçe Palace at 17.00 pm (Bulut, 2010). Both leaders exchanged ideas about the conditions and the situation in the European continent. The meeting created an atmosphere for the US General to learn

views on the controversial issues about Europe from the first hand source and from an experienced former Turkish General.

When posed by his visitor, Atatürk commented on the current situation on Europe and told him that the Versailles Agreement has not eliminated any of the causes of the 1st World War. On the contrary, it deepened the gap between the hostile countries of the recent past. Therefore, the victors while making the defeated countries ratify the peace conditions by force, disregarded ethnical, geopolitical and economic characteristics specific to these countries but made attempts only with the feelings of enmity. Thus, the conditions of the time they were in then were only to implement the capitulation of the arm. If the Americans had not swerved from the European affairs; then the capitulation time would have been longer and a long-lasting peace would have been settled. Just like the recent past, future of Europe would be determined by Germany's conducts. Having a great dynamism and a hardworking and disciplined society of 70 million people, Germans may be whipped by nationalistic aspirations, and then this would abolish the Versailles Agreement (Cumhuriyet, 1951) in the coming years.

Similar to his views on Germany and possible revisionist requests, Mustafa Kemal also told about Italy and its fascist leader Mussolini. Italy's situation was not very much different than Germany in the sense that nationalistic sentiments, no need for a big guess, would trigger disturbances in Italy and may lead to questioning of territorial gains in and out of European continent while England and France seemed to have relatively more gains than other powers.

4. CONCLUSION

Concerning the American hands-off policy in European affairs, Mustafa Kemal was not in a position approving this understanding. He believed and indicated that just like in the 1st World War; the US should be involved in world and European affairs for a better future. This included continuing good relations with Turkey. In line with this understanding, Atatürk invited not only the European but also the American experts for the development of economy and particularly of education in his country. Atatürk's approach was to keep a good balance between the Europeans and the Americans so that Turkey would not be too much depended on one source.

Atatürk's balanced approach in Turkish foreign policy tells us that he was neither an oracle nor a fortune-teller. His characteristic is the product of accumulated knowledge and experience. His understanding and worldview is the result of each underlined sentence and paragraph as well as what these taught him in the history, sociology, anthropology, economy and political science books let it what the war front taught him.

Finally, the existence of such a meeting between Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and General Douglas Mac Arthur has already been documented with archival records. Additionally, neither Mac Arthur himself when he was alive in 1951 nor his family after his death dismissed the publications, commentaries or studies concerning the meeting. Moreover, the interview with Atatürk's adoptive child Ms. Afet İnan, while she was alive, conducted by Prof. Dr. Seçil Karal Akgün verifies both the presence and the content of the meeting between the two leaders.

To conclude, it would not be an unrealistic comment to assert that a leader with such personal traits would keep Turkey off the political and military disturbances of the international system with agile diplomatic maneuvers rather than sticking to a political camp, example of such were briefly mentioned. This was partly true when Atatürk's peace at home peace in the world motto was considered. His close comrade-in-arms İsmet İnönü's policies after Mustafa Kemal's death were in principle quite similar to this understanding and constituted good examples of continuation of such a philosophy.

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