

# FROM SEVRES TO LAUSANNE: THE ARMENIAN QUESTION (1920-23)

(SEVR'DEN LOZAN'A: ERMENİ SORUNU (1920-23))

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**Abstract:** *From the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the First World War the Ottoman Empire called the “sick man of Europe” faced multiple crises afflicting the Empire most of which resulted in the loss of territory and subjects. The Eastern Question –the question of what should become of the Ottoman Empire- changed its character and final liquidation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe soon followed its collapse in Anatolia. With the demise of the Ottoman Empire the Armenian issue in Anatolia -as in the case of the Christian subjects of the Empire in the Balkans- was brought to the forefront of the diplomatic forums in the international political system. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War the Allies were prepared to give the Armenian nationalists most of their demands over Turkey. With the Sevres Treaty (August 10, 1920) the Allies endorsed the Armenian claims to East Anatolia in return for the latter's services to their cause during the First World War. However, the Nationalist victories both against the Armenians in the East and against the Greeks in the West made the treaty a dead letter and compelled the Allies to meet the victorious Turks on equal terms at Luasanne (24 July 1923). In other words, three years later when the Lausanne Treaty was signed, the text did not contain any reference whatsoever to an Armenian National home, let alone a state. In short, the Lausanne Treaty put an end to the centuries old Eastern Question as well as the Armenian Question which became the integral part of it.*

**Keywords:** *First World War, Ottoman Empire, Eastern Question, Treaty of Sevres, Treaty of Lausanne, the Armenian Question*

**Öz:** *19. Yüzyılın ortalarından Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlangıcına kadar, “Avrupa'nın hasta adamı” olarak anılan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, çoğu toprak ve tebaa kaybıyla sonuçlanmış pek çok krizle karşılaşmıştır. Doğu Sorununun, yani Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na ne olacağı sorusu, niteliği değişmiş ve Anadolu'daki çöküşünden kısa süre sonra Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun nihai tasfiyesi başlamıştır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun*

*çöküşü ile beraber, İmparatorluğun Balkanlar'daki Hristiyan tebaalarıyla ilgili gerçekleşmiş olduğu gibi, Anadolu'daki Ermeni Meselesi uluslararası siyasi sistemdeki diplomatik tartışmaların gündeminin ön sıralarına getirilmiştir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndaki yenilgisini takiben Müttefikler, Ermeni milliyetçilerine Osmanlı İmparatorluğu üzerine olan taleplerinin çoğunluğunu elde etmelerine izin vermeye hazırdılar. Sevr Antlaşması (10 Ağustos 1920) ile beraber, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda kendilerine vermiş oldukları hizmete karşılık Müttefikler, Ermenilerin Doğu Anadolu'ya yönelik taleplerini onaylamıştır. Ancak Milli Mücadele sırasında Türklerin Doğu'da Ermenilere, Batı'da ise Yunanlılara karşı elde etmek olduğu zaferler Sevr Antlaşmasını butlan bir belge haline getirmiş ve Müttefikleri Lozan'da (24 Temmuz 1923) Türklerle eşit konumda bir araya gelmeye zorlamıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, Sevr Antlaşmasından üç sene sonra Lozan Antlaşması imzalandığında, bırakın bir Ermeni devletini, antlaşmanın metni Ermenilerin milli topraklarından dahi hiçbir şekilde bahsetmemiştir. Kısacası Lozan Antlaşması, hem geçmişi yüzyıllara dayanan Doğu Sorununu, hem de bunun ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmiş olan Ermeni Meselesine bir son vermiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Doğu Sorunu, Sevr Antlaşması, Lozan Antlaşması, Ermeni Meselesi*

### *Historical Background*

The Ottoman Empire, which participated in World War I (1914-18) on the side of the Central Powers, was defeated by the Allies and compelled to sign the Mudros Armistice on October 30, 1918. This agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Britain (representing the Allied Powers) was signed aboard the British battleship *The Agamemnon*, which was docked at Mudros bay. Britain was represented by Admiral Calthorpe, whilst the Ottoman Empire was represented by its Minister for Naval Affairs Rauf Bey, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs Resad Hikmet Bey, and Staff Colonel Sadik Bey. The Armistice was confirmatory proof that the once mighty Ottoman Empire had come to an end.

Under the terms of the armistice, which in its final form was composed of twenty-five articles, the Ottomans surrendered their remaining garrisons in Mesopotamia, Tripolitania, Cyrenaica (Libya), Syria, Yemen, and the Hejaz. The Ottoman Army was demobilised and its ports, railways, and other strategic points were made available for use to the Allies. Moreover, the Allies were to occupy the Straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and also acquired the right to occupy 'in case of disorder' the six provinces in the eastern part of Anatolia, where the Armenian population lived. Finally, they were also granted the right to seize 'any strategic points' in case of a threat to Allied security.

Article 24 of the Armistice<sup>1</sup>, the one that empowered the Allies with the power to intervene in territories in which the Armenian population resided, proved to be the most controversial. The Ottoman delegation opposed the article on the grounds that it would encourage Armenian dissent and create a chaotic situation in the area by undermining the central authority of the government. The British delegate, Admiral Calthorpe, maintained that this would put an end to news about the Armenians, which had been circulating until then, while also mitigating negative British and American public opinion. Not only was the Ottoman insistence on the removal of the article in return for British control of the region turned down, but American participation in this control force was also imposed. The Ottoman proposal to at least keep the article a secret, - borne of a fear of a possible Armenian uprising - was also rejected by the British delegation. It was only after Admiral Calthorpe promised to consult his government and seek advice on the issue that the signing of the Armistice was assured. While Turkish historians consider the whole issue a significant step towards the disintegration of the Empire, Armenian scholars hold the view that it far from secured the rights of the Armenian population (Hovanissian,

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1 Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasî Tarih Metinleri: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Andlaşmaları*. (Ankara: 1953) Cilt I, s. 520, 524.

Toynbee). What was certain was that the British had managed to secure the routes to their dominions and prevent an Ottoman military attack on the Caucasus by utilising the Armenians and their situation.<sup>2</sup>

Within two months of the Armistice being signed, the British made a less than surprising move. On January 2, 1919, Admiral Calthorpe, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, suggested to London that he be authorised with the power “to demand immediate arrest and delivery” to the British military authorities of such Turks against whom there appeared to be “*prima facie* good case”. “No action” he said, “would be better calculated to impress upon the Turks in the interior of the country that they had been beaten and that the Armenians must be respected”.<sup>3</sup> Some 144 Ottoman dignitaries (the grand vizier, the Grand Mufti, ministers, speaker of the Ottoman Parliament, some deputies, intellectuals and officials) were transferred and imprisoned in Malta on allegations of genocide. The prime motives behind this act were to break any possible resistance to the Armistice, to prevent a reaction to the upcoming peace treaty at Sevres, and to hold the Unionists responsible for prolonging the war by allying with Germany. This move forced the British – for the first time in their history – to conscript soldiers from their dominions.<sup>4</sup>

Searches in the Ottoman archives by the British, with the help of Turkish-Armenian experts, did not result in any damning or incriminatory documents. The British had hoped to find documents in the US archives to bring charges against the Ottoman detainees. However, reports prepared in the light of foreign councils proved that the charges made against those Turks held as prisoners of war were invalid. In a telegram sent to Curzon from Washington in July 13, 1921 Craigie wrote the following:

I regret to inform your Lordship that there was nothing therein which could be used as evidence against the Turks who are at present being

2 Selçuk Ural, *Mondoros Mütarekesi ve Doğu Vilayetleri*. (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008). pp.52-55; Nurcan Toksoy, *Revanda Son Günler: Türk Yönetiminden Ermeni Yönetimine*. (Ankara: Orion Yayınevi, 2007). pp. 191-201; John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-1919*. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), pp. 238-243.

3 Bilal N.Şimşir “Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question” in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912-1926)*, (İstanbul: Bogazici University Publications, 1984), p.26; Ferudun Ata, “Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Mahkemesinde yapılan Tehcir Yargılamaları, Ermeni Soykırımı İddialarına bir Delil Olabilir mi?” in *Türk Ermeni İlişkilerinin Gelişimi ve 1915 Olayları Uluslar arası Sempozyumu*, (Ankara: Gurup Matbaacılık, 2006),(yay. Haz. Hale Şıvgın) p.277.

4 Bilal Şimşir, “Malta Sürgünleri ve Ermeni İddiaları” in *Türk Ermeni İlişkilerinin Gelişimi ve 1915 Olayları Uluslararası Sempozyumu*. (yay. haz. Hale Şıvgın), (Ankara: Gurup Matbaacılık, 2006), pp.267-268; Pulat Tacar and Maxime Gauin; “State Identity, Continuity, and Responsibility: The Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey and the Armenian Genocide: A Reply to Vahagn Avedian” *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 23 no. 3, (2012), pp. 828-829.

detained at Malta...no concrete facts being given which could constitute satisfactory incriminating evidence...the reports in question do not appear in any case to contain evidence against these Turks which would be useful even for the purpose of corroborating information already in the possession of His Majesty's Government.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the prisoners held in Malta were released in 1922 without any charges even having been made or trials being held.<sup>6</sup>

However this was not the only way in which the Allies took advantage of the weak and defenceless Ottoman position. While the Mudros Armistice was in the process of being signed, the political situation in the Caucasus was bleak. At Mudros, Admiral Calthorpe demanded the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from the Caucasus. The Ottoman officials in turn protested, claiming that the *Elviye-i Selase* (three *sanjaks*, namely Kars, Ardahan and Batum) were ceded to Turkey via the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.<sup>7</sup> Ottoman protests on the basis of this treaty, which was signed between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers on March 3, 1918, fell on deaf ears and the Ottomans were forced to withdraw their forces, thus totally changing the balance of power in the region to the detriment of the Soviets and placing the British and the British-backed Armenians in an advantageous position. Following the withdrawal of the Ottoman military forces from the Caucasus, General Thomsen of the British armed forces issued a memorandum stating that a Greater Armenia was to be founded in the area that spanned eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and the

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5 Bilal Şimşir "Malta Sürgünleri" p. 275; A. Christian Van Gorder "Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims: Atrocity, Denial and Identity." *Christianity and Human Rights Conference*, (November 12-13, 2004), Samford University, Birmingham AL. p.7

6 The only document provided about the Armenian allegations came from one source, namely Ambassador Henry Morgenthau who was asked by the president Wilson and State Secretary Lansing to provide "documentary evidence to convince the US Congress" to take a decision to join World War I for "ethical humane values". For a critique of Morgenthau, see: Şükrü Server Aya, *Preposterous Paradoxes of Ambassador Morgenthau: A Factual Story about Politics, Propaganda and Distortions*. (Belfast: Athol Books, 2013).

7 In March 1918 the Bolshevik government of Russia negotiated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in which they surrendered large territories within Georgia and Armenia to the Ottoman Empire. The Transcaucasian delegation refused to accept the Brest-Litovsk provisions and the Ottoman in response launched a successful offensive in the spring of 1918, forcing the Transcaucasian Federation which united three Caucasian states, to sever all relations with Russia. As the Transcaucasian Federation disintegrated into the independent states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, a conference was held at Batumi that ended in the signing of three agreements. The first made peace between the Ottoman Empire and Georgia and guaranteed the frontiers set by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The second was made with Armenia after its declaration of short-lived independence on May 28, acknowledging the pre-1878 Ottoman-Russia frontier (Kars, Ardahan, and Batum returned to the Ottomans) thus reducing Armenia to Ottoman vassalage as it granted the Turks a significant part of Armenian territory and compelled Armenia to disband its army and rely solely on Turkish forces to maintain peace domestically and to guarantee the religious and cultural freedom of Muslims.

Caucasus.<sup>8</sup> This would be the most rational way of dismembering the Empire: by finalising the Eastern Question and preventing a Russian advance into the south.

The Allied victory in the Great War and their support for the Armenian cause unquestionably encouraged the Armenians and strengthened their faith in Allied policies. Their hopes were not unfounded. At the peace Conference convened in Paris on January 18, 1919, to establish the terms of the post-war peace, the Allies conveyed the Armenian delegation's proposals to the Ottomans.<sup>9</sup> The Armenians were represented in the Conference by two delegations: Avetis Aharonyan (the leader of the Dashnaktsution Revolutionary Party and chairman of the Armenian National Assembly) on behalf of the Armenian Republic and Boghos Nubar Pasha (chairman of the Armenian National Delegation) on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians. Both parties put forward territorial claims against the Ottoman Empire. These territorial claims were unacceptably large and were viewed as trying to establish – as the newspaper *Le Temps* called it – an “Armenian Empire”. After having given details of Armenian support to the Allied cause, Aharonian and Bogos Nubar Pasha stated that:

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8 Nurcan Toksoy, *Revanda Son Günler*, p.209.

9 Ahmet Hulki Saral, *Ermeni Meselesi*, (Ankara: Genel Kurmay Basımevi, 1970) s. 258. Each of the Great Powers had a reason on its own to stand by the Armenian claims: The British foreign policy from Paris 1919 until the signature of the Treaty of Sevres was designed to draw a set between Russia and Turkey by establishing a mandate under the supervision of the United States. Britain's main concern was Kurds upon which it planned to set up a mandate thus extending its zone of influence up to Mesopotamia and Iran. By establishing an autonomous Kurdish state it would prevent Turks control the area between Armenia and Mesopotamia and be able to use the Kurds not only against the Turks and Iranians but also the Arabs. Suat Akgül, “Paris Konferansından Sevr'e Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması Meselesi”. (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi), Journal no.23;

Britain was in favour of the American mandate in Armenia since it was unwilling to take military and financial responsibilities. With Wilson principles USA entered into the world politics pursuing an ‘open door’ policy it would enter into the Middle East economically and trade wise and Armenia could provide a stepping stone in this respect. To quote Lepp “Wilson and the State Department believed that after the war, the Berlin-Baghdad axis must be broken to avoid German domination of Central Europe and the Middle East. Breaking the axis required not only defeat of Germany, but the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, in the view of American planners, the Turks would maintain control of part of Anatolia, but would lose the control of all territories of the Empire in Europe. This plan required that an independent Armenian Republic would be established in eastern Anatolia, while Arab lands would be placed under some form of European tutelage, creating regimes friendly to the West”. John W. Vander Lippe; The “Other” Treaty of Lausanne: The American Public and Official Debate on Turkish-American Relations” in *The Turkish Yearbook*, 1993 Vol.XXIII., p39.

As to the French, throughout the Paris Peace Conference they followed, to quote French general Gourad, an ‘Armenian policy’ in Cilicia. They were also in favour of American mandate in Armenia. But France was not satisfied with the limited concession allocated to it in Sevres and changed its attitude and tried to come to an understanding with the Kemalists.

“the voice of all Armenians dead and alive must be heard! It is true that the Armenians do not constitute the majority of the population in Armenia but they do constitute the plurality of the population. But number should not be the determining factor in the fixing of the boundaries of our future state.”

In their final statement, they jointly stressed the responsibility of the Allies in the matter by stating that:

“the Armenian Question was not essentially a local and national question; it concerned the peace of Europe, and upon its solution shall depend the pacification, the progress and prosperity of the Near East”.

However, there were also some Armenians in the Armenian Parliament (Vahan Minakhorian) who voiced their criticism against the preposterous demands of the extremists, declaring “Armenian chauvinism” a danger. Additionally “the partitioning of Turkey and the contribution of the Armenians in this partitioning, by playing the leading role in the scenario, could only mean serving the interests of imperialism.”<sup>10</sup> However, these protests, too, were unheeded. Upon the incessant endeavour of the joint delegation, the Armenians managed to secure the desired outcome from the Conference and were officially notified that the Peace Conference had recognised Armenia as a sovereign state. Moreover, the propaganda carried out for some time by the Armenians had produced the expected effect by winning over public opinion in Britain, America, and various European circles, and had gathered sympathy for their cause. The Porte would finally yield to this pressure. Damat Ferid Pasha, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman government, would promise an autonomous Armenian Republic upon his meeting with Admiral Calthorpe in March, less than a month after the conference in Paris.

The successful propaganda campaign carried out by the Armenians eventually led to American involvement in the issue. Acting under heavy pressure from Armenian institutions, such as the church, the media and missionary groups,

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10 Mim Kemal Öke, *The Armenian Question*. (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001), p.147.

President Wilson sent a memorandum to Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Pasha on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1919, shortly after the National Struggle had begun in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and had started to gain momentum with the Erzurum Congress of July 23, 1919. The memorandum stated that:

“Unless the massacres of the Armenians in Caucasus and other areas are prevented, the sovereignty recognized by the Wilsonian Principles of Article 12<sup>11</sup> will be retaken from the Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire and peace terms will be altered to the detriment of Turkey”.

With the authority vested in him as arbitrator, Wilson also decided on establishing an independent inquiry with General James G. Harbour at the helm. <sup>12</sup> The inquiry commission consisted of 46 members that toured Anatolia and the South Caucasus for 30 days before reaching the conclusion that

“the Turk and the Armenian when left without official instigation have hitherto been able to live together in peace. Their existence side by side on the same soil for five centuries unmistakably indicates their interdependence and mutual interest...

Even before the war the Armenians were far from being in the majority in the region claimed as Turkish Armenia, excepting in a few places...

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11 Article 12 runs as follows: “The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.” John W. Vander Lippe; The “Other” Treaty of Lausanne, .pp.31-63.

12 In the summer on 1919 -prior to General Harbour’s visit- Captain Emory Niles and Arthur Sutherland visited on horse the Eastern Anatolia (1450 km in one month) and prepared a report directly blaming Armenian volunteers for their massacres of Moslems and destruction of villages and cities. See: McCarthy, *The Report of Niles and Sutherland*, XI. Turk Tarih Kongresi (1990) 1809, at 1850; A month later a larger delegation under General James Harbour arrived and visited the area. For General Harbour’s detailed report see: Galip Baysan “Sevr’de Ermeni Meselesi Nasıl Sonuçlandı?” in *Antalya Bugün* (online newspaper, 8, August, 2014); Seçil Akgün, “Kurtuluş Savaşı Başlangıcında Türk Ermeni ilişkilerinde A.B.D.’nin Rolü.”, in *Tarih boyunca Türklerin Ermeni Toplumuna İle İlişkileri*, (Ankara: 1985), s.338. Seçil Akgün, “General Harbord’un Anadolu Gezisi ve (Ermeni Meselesi’ne Dair)Raporu.” in *Kurtuluş Savaşı Başlangıcında Türk- Ermeni İlişkilerinde ABD’nin Rolü*. İstanbul 1981, s. 133-158; Fahir Armaoğlu, “Amerika Sevr Antlaşması ve Ermenistan Sınırları”., *Belleten*, cilt:LXI, (Ankara: 1997), s.135.

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On the Turkish side of the border where Armenians have returned they are gradually recovering their property, and in some cases have received rent for it, but generally they find things in ruins, and face winter out of touch with the American relief, and with only such desultory assistance as the Turkish Government can afford. Things are little if any better with the peasant Turks in the same region. They are practically serfs equally destitute, and equally defenseless against the winter. No doctors or medicines are to be had. Villages are in ruins, some having been destroyed when the Armenians fled or were deported; some during the Russian advance; some on the retreat of the Armenian irregulars and Russians after the fall of the Empire. Not over 20 per cent of the Turkish peasants who went to war have returned. The absence of men between the ages of 20 and 35 is very noticeable. Six hundred thousand Turkish soldiers died of typhus alone, it is stated, and insufficient hospital service and absolute poverty of supply greatly swelled the death lists.”<sup>13</sup>

An independent Armenia was out of the question and the public was of the opinion that if a mandate was to be set up, it had to be under the governance of the United States. Despite the objections of the British and the French, who wanted the United States to be the mandatory power for the new Armenia, the United States Senate was against it.<sup>14</sup> “A power which should undertake a mandatory for Armenia and Transcaucasia without control of the contiguous territory of Asia Minor—Anatolia—and of Constantinople, with its hinterland of Roumelia,” wrote General Harbord in his report, “would undertake it under most unfavorable and trying conditions, so difficult as to make the cost almost prohibitive, the maintenance of law and order and the security of life and property uncertain, and ultimate success extremely doubtful.”<sup>15</sup>

When the League notified the Allied representatives at the San Remo Conference in April 1920 that it could not undertake the responsibility of a mandate but was prepared to give its moral support, British Prime Minister Lloyd George suggested appealing to the United States to undertake responsibility for Armenia and invited President Wilson to draw the boundaries of Armenia – something even the Allies had failed to do – even if the proposal of being a mandatory power was rejected. Thereby Wilson determined the

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13 Major General James G. Harbord, *Conditions in the Near East: Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 10.

14 In the original program of the State Department seven issues were listed, including the “maintenance of the capitulations; the protection of American philanthropic, educational and religious institutions; an “open door” for commercial enterprises; indemnity for losses suffered by Americans during the war; provisions for the protection of minorities; assurances of the freedom of the Straits, and opportunity for archeological research.”.John W. Vander Lippe, “The Other Treaty of Lausanne”, p.45

15 James Harbour, *Conditions in the Near East*,p.15.

borders of Armenia while the League of Nations undertook a number of resolutions concerning the Armenians threatened by the successful advance of the Turkish armies on the Eastern Anatolian front. In September of 1920, the League adopted the following proposal:

“The Assembly invites the Council to take into immediate consideration the situation in Armenia, and to submit to the examination of the Assembly proposals to meet the danger which actually threatens the life of the Armenian race, and to establish a stable and permanent state of things in that country”

In November of 1920 the Assembly passed the following resolution:

”The Assembly, desirous of collaborating with the Council to put an end, within the shortest possible time, to the horrible Armenian tragedy, invites the Council to effect an understanding with the Governments to the end that one Power be charged with the task of taking necessary measures to bring to a termination the hostilities between Armenia and the Kemalists, and, further, charge a commission of six members to examine the measures, if any, to be taken to put an end to the hostilities between Armenia and the Kemalists, and report to the present Assembly.”

The aforementioned resolutions by the League were enough to prove that the British Foreign Secretary’s earlier remarks at the first London Conference in February of 1920, to the effect that “Allies were pledged to constitute an independent Armenia”, had obviously produced the desired effect. At the Conference, Lord Curzon had précised the British view to the French and Italians, stating that the Allies had recognised Armenia in Paris and it was now the time to decide whether they would insist on a ‘Greater Armenia’, or whether they would merely add the six provinces to the Armenian Republic in Yerevan, or, alternatively, in the case of neither of the above being applicable, whether Armenia should be placed under the protection of League of Nations.

In accordance with these developments, the Allied representatives finalised the peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire and the “considerations of past pledges, moral responsibility, honour and public opinion, especially in the United States, induced the representatives of the Allied Powers to decide on the transfer of territory in the eastern villages to the Republic of Armenia.”<sup>16</sup> The conditions

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16 Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question 1915-1923*. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1984), p.181; Suat Akgül, “Paris Konferansı’ndan Sevr’e Türkiye’nin Paylaşılması Meselesi” ATAM Journal, 23.

of the peace treaty, which would be imposed upon the Empire, were finally agreed upon.

### *The Allied Solution: Sevres Peace Treaty*

The Allies were of the opinion that the time was ripe for an immediate peace – drafted in line with the Allies’ wartime secret agreements – that would be imposed upon the Ottoman delegation. Decisions taken earlier on in various meetings had to be officially put into practice. The treaty, or in other words, “the death warrant of the Empire”, was a clear indicator of the (proposed) Allied solution to the centuries-old Eastern Question. The Treaty of Sevres<sup>17</sup> territorially carved up the entity described by Russian Tsar Nicholas I in 1853 as the ‘sick man of Europe’. The consequent disappearance of the Empire from the political arena meant that the envisaged partition plan had come to a successful end. The decline of Ottoman power in Europe as manifested in the Balkan Wars (1912-13), and later in Anatolia and the Middle East with the Great War (1914-18), had, with this treaty, reached its final and terminal stage in 1920.

With the Treaty of Sevres, the Allies endorsed Armenian claims to Eastern Anatolia in return for the latter’s services to their cause during the First World War. As admitted by Bogos Nubar Pasha, the Armenians not only ‘spied upon, sabotaged, and rose up in arms against Turkish forces, but they also formed regular battalions within the Russian army in the Caucasus, within the British Army in Palestine, and within the French Army in Cilicia’.<sup>18</sup> The Armenians insisted that, in addition to the already existing Armenian Republic, an independent Armenian state had to be established in the six *vilayets* in the eastern part of the Empire. The treaty contained a number of articles related to the Armenians (88-93),<sup>19</sup> one of the most important being article 88, in Part III, under the section of Political Clauses:

17 The official title of the peace treaty signed at Sevres in August 10, 1920, was “The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey. Principal Allied Powers being Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Allied powers being Armenia, Belgium, Greece, the Hedjaz, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, and Czechoslovakia.

18 Sean Mc Meekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*. (Cambridge Massachussts: The Belknap Press and Harvard University Press, 2011), Süleyman Beyoğlu, “Sevr ve Lozan’da Ermeni Sorunu”. *Akademik Bakış*, cilt: II, sayı.3, 2008 p. 125. For the full text of the speech see: The Times, January 30, 1919; Stanford Show, “The Ottoman Holocaust” in *Türk Ermeni İlişkilerinin Gelişimi ve 1915 Olayları Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, pp389-391; Robert Farrer Zeidner, *Tricolor over the Taurus, The French in Cilicia and Vicinity, 1918-1922*. (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Utah: 1991)

19 For the articles see: Seha L. Meray-Osman Olcay, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Çöküş Belgeleri*, (Ankara: 1997), s.117; Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku*, s. 559-560; Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, “Lozan Konferansında Ermeni Meselesi: İtilaf Devletlerinin Diplomatik Manevraları ve Türkiye’nin Karşı Siyaseti”, s. 7

“Turkey in accordance with the action already taken by the Allied Powers, hereby recognises Armenia as a free and independent state.” Article 89 “Turkey and Armenia, as well as other high contracting parties agree to submit to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America the question of the frontier to be fixed between Turkey and Armenia in the vilayets of Erzurum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis, and to accept his decision thereupon, as well as any stipulations he may prescribe as to access for Armenia to the sea, and as to the demilitarisation of any portion of Turkish territory adjacent to the said frontier.”

Other clauses concerning the Armenians were articles 144 under part IV, related to abandoned properties:

“The Turkish Government recognises the injustice of the law of 1915 relating to Abandoned Properties (Emval-i-Metroukeh) and the supplementary provisions thereof, and declares them to be null and void, in the past as in the future...The Turkish Government solemnly undertakes to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the return to their homes and re-establishment in their businesses of the Turkish subjects of non-Turkish races who have been forcibly driven from their homes by fear of massacre or any other form of pressure since January 1, 1914. It recognises, that any immovable or movable property of the said Turkish subjects or of the communities to which they belong, which can be recovered, must be restored to them as soon as possible in whatever hands it may be found”.

Articles 226-230 under Part VII, in the Penalties Section, stated:

“The Turkish government recognises the right of the Allied Powers to bring before military tribunals persons accused of having committed acts in violation of the laws and customs of war. Such persons shall, if found guilty, be sentenced to punishments laid down by law. This provision will apply notwithstanding any proceedings or prosecution before a tribunal in Turkey or in the territory of her Allies.”<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the Treaty of Sevres, with its inflated frontiers for Armenia, proved to be “a document of provocation” and it did, to quote Nassibian, “nothing but infuriate the Turks.”<sup>21</sup> The ongoing military offensive by the Nationalists in

20 Temuçin F. Ertan, Ayastefanos'tan Lozan'a Siyasal Antlaşmalarda Ermeni Sorunu., *Yeni Türkiye, Ermeni Özel Sayısı*, (Ankara: 2001), Sayı:37, s.253;

21 Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, p.189; Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1970), (çev. Metin Kıratlı), s. 247, 252.

the Eastern front seemed to be producing satisfactory results, thus altering the previous plans. The Armenians' urgent appeals and Aharonian's inconclusive visits to the British Foreign Office asking for effective help were left unanswered, due to Curzon's view that "no reply need be returned."<sup>22</sup> The Armenians were seen 'as pawns in the struggle to contain Bolshevism' and the independence of the Caucasian Republics would 'prevent an alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Kemalists and would also serve as a barrier against the Bolshevik advance on Persia, a very key position in British imperial defence.'<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Britain would not have trouble in India and Egypt by pleasing the Muslim population there.

The French were no different from the British. As De Fleuriau, the French ambassador, stated, "no useful discussion was possible while the boundaries were still unsettled and Armenia was an unknown quantity." To quote Nassibian, "The Allies lacked the effective means – the will and the forces – to implement the Treaty of Sevres".<sup>24</sup>

*In fact, the Treaty of Sevres, with its inflated frontiers for Armenia, proved to be "a document of provocation" and it did, to quote Nassibian, "nothing but infuriate the Turks."*

Not to mention the fact that, from the Ankara government's point of view, the Sevres Treaty signed by the Istanbul government – but not ratified by the Ottoman Parliament – was legally void, as were the Armenian claims. As early as June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920, the Turkish Grand National Assembly adopted a resolution which held that any kind of agreement signed by the Istanbul government since March 16, 1920 – the date Istanbul came under Allied occupation – was null and void unless approved by parliament. In November 1, 1922 three weeks before the Lausanne Conference convened, this act would be reinforced by a declaration that the office of the Sultan had ceased to exist, that the fundamental law of the Caliph was vested in the house of Osman but that the Caliph must now be elected by the Assembly, and that the Turkish state was the support on which the caliphate rested. It also declared that the Turkish Grand National Assembly, formed on

22 Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, p. 213.

23 Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, p. 190.

24 Nassibian p.183. The break-up of the German, Austria Hungarian, Russian and Turkish (Ottoman) Empires, the defeat of the Central powers and the withdrawal of the United States from Europe in 1919 had created for the victorious Allies, and especially for Britain, a vast political vacuum. The Allied and especially the British leaders suddenly found themselves with unprecedented world-wide responsibilities shaping the destinies of millions of people and settling the frontiers of a host of countries. The insistence of Lloyd George on forcing the Armenian question onto the United States of America, despite common knowledge that there was not much hope, reflected political expediency which was irresponsible to no small extent. In June 1920 the American Senate decisively rejected the Armenian mandate. President Wilson however, consented to arbitrate on the boundaries. pp. 187-188.

April 23, 1920 was the sole sovereign body in Turkey, that the people recognised no other government, and that the Istanbul government had ceased to exist as of the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1920.

This of course meant that when the British forces withdrew from Transcaucasia during the spring and early summer of 1920, the Armenian Republic found itself isolated, facing the revolutionary expansionism of the Russian Bolsheviks on one side and the pressures of Mustafa Kemal's nationalists on the other. The Armenian government felt that it had no option but to negotiate the peace with the Nationalists, whose precondition was Armenian renunciation of the Treaty of Sevres. The Treaty of Alexandropol (Gümrü) was signed on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920, but soon after its signing, Armenia was annexed by Soviet Russia and new treaties had to be signed between Turkey and the Soviet Republics, namely the Treaty of Moscow March 16, 1921 (articles 1 and 2) and the Treaty of Kars on October 13, 1921 (articles 2 and 4), which established the new borders between the two states. Even if the Treaty of Sevres and Treaty of Alexandropol had been duly approved and ratified, they would have been invalid in accordance with Article 6 of the Treaty of Moscow and Article 1 of the Treaty of Alexandropol.<sup>25</sup>

As a matter of fact, neither the Italians nor the French wanted the terms of the Treaty of Sevres implemented.<sup>26</sup> After the collapse of the Caucasian Republics, a pro-Turkish orientation was considered more profitable as Turkey constituted the only possible barrier in the east against Soviet Russia. The Nationalist victories against the Armenians in the East and against the Greeks in the West made the Treaty of Sevres a dead letter and compelled the Allies to meet the victorious Turks on equal terms in order to conclude a new peace at Lausanne.

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25 Gündüz Aktan, "Lozan Barış Antlaşması ve Ermeni Sorunu" in *Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler* (derleyen. Ömer Engin Lütem) (Ankara: Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü)

Article I of the Treaty of Alexandropol runs as follows: "The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Governments of the Socialist Soviet Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia consider as null and void the treaties concluded between the governments which have previously exercised sovereign rights over territory actually forming part of the territory of the Contracting Parties and concerning the above-mentioned territories, as well as the treaties concluded with third states concerning the Transcaucasian Republics. It is understood that the Turkish-Russian Treaty signed in Moscow on March 16, 1921 (1337) will be exempted from the terms of this article."

Article 6 of the Treaty of Moscow runs as follows: "The Government of the Soviet Socialist Republics considers any capitulatory regime to be incompatible with the unhindered national development of any country, as well as with the full realisation of its sovereign rights. Thus the government of Soviet Socialist Republics considers null and void any acts or entitlements, bearing any relation to said regime."

26 With the Franklin-Bouillion Treaty (October 20, 192), the French handed over territory in Cilicia to the Nationalists (Kemalists). Italy also backed the Nationalists for prospective economic concessions in Anatolia.

It should not be forgotten that there was also one last conference convened in London where the Armenian Question was raised, prior to the negotiations at Lausanne. The London Conference, which took place between February 21<sup>st</sup> and March 12<sup>th</sup> 1921 and which met to deal with the problems resulting from the peace treaties that ended the Great War, once again witnessed a presentation of Armenian demands. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, the Armenian representatives Bogos Nubar Pasha and Aharonian were heard and both insisted that the Treaty of Sevres be observed in its entirety. Despite all the efforts of the Armenian representatives, Article 9 of the London Conference made the following change in the terms of the Sevres Treaty in regard to Armenian independence:

“The present terms of agreement guaranteed to the Armenians may be amended by recognising the right of the Armenians to a national home near the eastern borders of Asiatic Turkey in accordance with the resolution of the League of Nations for securing the resettlement of the Armenians in a suitable and acceptable place.”

As a result of the Turkish military victories in the west and east of Anatolia, it was not surprising to see that the terms of Article 88 of the Sevres Treaty that called for a ‘free and independent Armenia’ were replaced by a vague and indefinite commitment for a ‘national home’. Under the new circumstances, the need for an Allied front had been recognised by Britain. Believing that it was necessary to restore Allied unity to make the Turks accept the Allies’ terms, Curzon suggested a preliminary meeting between Poincare, Mussolini and himself prior to the Lausanne Peace Conference in order to formulate a concerted policy.<sup>27</sup> The Paris Ministerial Conference of 1922 also witnessed the discussion of the Armenian position, which was later published in an official report:

“The situation of the Armenians deserves special care on account of the terrible sufferings they have undergone and also because of their support for the Allied Powers during the War. Consequently we request the League of Nations that, in addition to the measures considered for the protection of minorities, every effort should be made to help the Armenians to establish a national home, thus putting an end to their sufferings.”

This was a clear indication that the Lausanne Peace Conference would bear witness to the Armenian Question being brought back to the fore to be used as a bargaining chip to further the Great Power’s interests.

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27 Sevtap Demirci, *Strategies and Struggles: British Rhetoric and Turkish Response: The Lausanne Conference 1922- 1923*. (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2005), p.51.

### *The Final Settlement: Lausanne*

The Lausanne Peace Conference convened on November 20, 1922, provided a platform whereby age-old accounts could be settled. Turkey went to Lausanne to secure its prime objective, namely the *National Pact*, which came to represent the Nationalists' demands and formed the basis of all negotiations with the Allies. On two of these national goals, the Nationalists were resolute, to the point of being ready to go to war. These two points were of course the capitulations and the possible establishment of an Armenian state within the national borders of Turkey. If the need arose, Ismet Pasha, Foreign Minister and head of the Turkish delegation, had full authorisation to break off the negotiations without consulting Ankara since the Nationalists on many occasions publicly proclaimed that they would only make peace on the basis of the *National Pact*, a pact that stood for the complete political, economic, financial and juridical independence of Turkey. The status of the minorities was also determined in the National Pact. Mustafa Kemal stated, "the rights of the minorities will be guaranteed by us within the framework of the principles contained in the treaties made by the victor states, some of their allies and their enemies...provided that the Muslims in the neighbouring countries will enjoy the same rights."<sup>28</sup>

The Armenian National Delegation and the delegation of the Armenian Republic jointly participated in the Conference to make their voice heard. The Armenian situation, however, was also discussed in the Paris meeting of the British, French and Italian foreign ministers in March of 1922. The Armenians' productive attempts to draw the attention of the foreign ministers and the secretary of the League of Nations to the role they played in the First World War and the stipulations in the Treaty of Sevres proved successful:

"The situation of the Armenians deserves special care on account of the terrible disasters they have undergone and also because of their support for the Allied Powers during the War. Consequently, we request the League of Nations that, in addition to the measures considered for the protection of minorities, every effort should be made to help the Armenians to establish a national homeland, thus putting an end to their suffering."

In November of 1922, the united Armenian Delegation submitted a

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28 İlhan Akın, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, İstanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1983), p.174; Erdal İltar, "Ermeni İstekleri Karşısında Millî Teşekküllerin Tutumu (1919-1922)." *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*. 27-28, (May-November, 2001), pp. 299-319.



memorandum<sup>29</sup> to the Conference which highlighted their support for the Allies in the Great War, the promises made them by the Great Powers, their sufferings and, finally, their demand for a wider Armenian Republic which encompassed territory from eastern Anatolia with an outlet to the sea along with the region of Cilicia. Moreover, the establishment of a national home for the Armenians would be subject to the arbitration of President Wilson, with its borders determined by his office. Shortly after the presentation of the memorandum, the members of the Delegation (Aharonian, Khatisian and Noradunghian) set up a bureau with the purpose of establishing contact with the Allies and enlisting their support for the Armenian case.

Before the official negotiations on the minority questions had begun, an exchange of telegrams took place between Ismet Pasha and Prime Minister Rauf Bey concerning the strategy that should be followed on the Armenian issue. The main issue in these telegrams was the idea of a national home and the exchange of Armenian and Turkish populations.<sup>30</sup> Ismet Pasha also expressed his concern about the work of American missionaries as well as various Armenian groups.

The official negotiations on the minority issues started on 12 December, 1922. Before the conference, Curzon brought up the question of an Armenian national home. In Curzon's view it was 'natural for Armenians to long to live in their own lands', implying eastern Anatolia. Therefore "a national home" for Armenians was imperative.<sup>31</sup> He concluded his speech by suggesting the formation of a sub-committee that would make a thorough study of the question. The French and Italian representatives, Barrere and Garroni respectively, spoke along the same lines, to which Ismet Pasha responded with a long speech placing his argument in a historical perspective. He emphasized that, like the other minority communities in the Empire, the Armenians had lived in peace, security and prosperity within the *millet* system together with their Turkish neighbours, but that these good relations were destroyed because of the interference of states that had imperialistic designs on the Middle East. He also stated that the Armenians had rebelled against the Sublime Porte

29 Gaffar Çakmaklı Mehdiyev, "Ermenice Basında Lozan Barış Antlaşmasının İptali Talepleri ve Yeni Ermeni İddiaları". (Ankara: 90. Yılında Lozan ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Uluslararası Sempozyumu, 13-15 Kasım, 2013), (Atatürk Kültür Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu and Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü)

30 Bilal Şimşir, *Lozan Telgrafları I*, (Ismet Pasha to Rauf Bey), November 25, 1922, no.27, pp128-129; (Ismet Pasha to Rauf Bey) November 26, 1922, no.31, pp. 130-131; Ismet Pasha to Rauf Bey) December 6, 1922, no. 86, p.172 ; (Hüseyin Rauf to İsmet Pasha) December 7, 1922, no.90, p.174; (Hüseyin Rauf to Ismet Pasha) December 7, 1922, no.93, p.17.

31 Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler, Birinci Takım, I/I, s.180-184; Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, *Lozan Konferansında Ermeni Meselesi*, p. 9.

because of the incitements of foreigners, subjected the Muslim people to massacres, and that this is why Istanbul was forced to defend itself against such actions. He went on to say that Armenians who wanted to stay in Turkey could live like brothers with the Turkish citizens who had favourable feelings for them and who were willing to forget the past.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Turkey had already concluded treaties and established good neighbourly relations in accordance with international law and had established international political practices with the existing independent Armenia (the Yerevan Soviet Republic). To hold that another Armenia existed was contrary to the treaties concluded. Curzon, after having sat through Ismet Pasha's three hour speech, soon became bored and sarcastically commented that Ismet Pasha in the past had been known as a general and a diplomat, whereas he was now acting like a history professor.<sup>33</sup> In order to alienate Ismet Pasha and to bring him into line with his argument, Curzon made every effort to include the Americans – who participated in the conference as observers – in the debate. On December 12, Lord Curzon threatened an early rupture of the gathering over the issue of the national home, but two days later seemed placated by Turkey's pledge to join the League of Nations. His later pleas for a national home were obviously mellowed by his enthusiasm for Ankara's blossoming friendship with the West. When the proposed minorities section of the treaty was drafted on December 21, neither the Armenians nor the national home were mentioned. Officially, the State Department included the national home among its seven primary interests at Lausanne, but on November 22, 1922, Grew and Child were already prepared to declare the plan hopeless.

In addition to the French, the Italians and the Americans, other Allies such as the Serbians (Spalaikovitch) and the Greeks (Venizelos) spoke in favour of Armenian claims. Ismet Pasha's reaction to Venizelos's remarks supportive of the Armenian case was noteworthy:

“Mr. Venizelos apparently lost sight of the fact that the Greek occupation of Asia Minor had been a new cause of suffering and misfortune for the poor Armenians. That unhappy people had been forcibly conscripted and incorporated into ranks of the Greek army... The Armenians were sent to the front and forced to fire on the Turks... After the rout, endless devastation was done and the Greek authorities started falsehood propaganda with a view putting the blame for these crimes on the Armenians. It was therefore clear that the last government in the world

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32 Mim Kemal Öke, *The Armenian Question*, p. 204.

33 M. Cemil Bilsel, *Lozan II*, (Istanbul: Ahmet İhsan Matbaası, 1933)p. 274; Durdu Mehmet Burak, “Lozan'da Ermeni Meselesi Tartışmaları” ATAM DERGİSİ SAYI 62.

which should dare to express publicly its pity for the fate of the Armenians was the very government which had been the direct cause of their misfortunes.”

The debate was to continue the next day, on December 13, 1922 at the meeting during which minority issues were discussed. The session turned out to be a war of words between Ismet Pasha and Curzon, who vigorously defended the Armenian case by citing statistics regarding the Armenian population in Turkey, asking the reason behind the reduction in these figures and also whether it was impossible to find a corner for the Armenians in a country as large as Turkey.<sup>34</sup> On December 14, after having contested the numbers given by Curzon, Ismet Pasha stated that there were other powers whose possession covered an area incomparably greater than that of Turkey. Moreover the regions quite recently detached from Turkey were enormous and the territory that was left to Turkey was inhabited by a Turkish majority. Each part of the leftover territory formed an indivisible whole.<sup>35</sup> It was a war of attrition between the two that made the atmosphere tense and the discussions more contentious than ever. Curzon attacked Ismet Pasha by saying that, “Great Britain did not fear the League of Nations because her hands were clean”, to which the Pasha replied that there had never been any question of Turkey fearing the League of Nations either and that hands of the Turks, now at work in their own country, which had been devastated by foreign invasion, were particularly clean. “Those hands never violated, invaded, or devastated any foreign country and could without fear sustain comparison with any other hands.”<sup>36</sup>

The pressure on Ismet Pasha increased with each passing day. The Americans and a committee led by a Swiss professor also placed their support behind the British arguments in favour of a national home for Armenians. In a private conversation with the professor, Ismet Pasha remarked:

“You propose to dismember my country. We, after fighting for four years throughout the First World War in order to prevent the dismemberment of Turkey, struggled for another four years to keep it intact. Your organisation’s efforts are nothing compared to the states we defeated and the difficulties we overcome.”<sup>37</sup>

34 For Ismet Pasha’s speech see: Bkz. *Lozan Baris Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi) (çev. Seha L. Meray) Takım, I/I, s.209-212;

35 *Lozan Baris Konferansı, Tutanaklar, Belgeler*, Birinci Takım, (1970) I/I, pp.221-222.

36 Command Papers (Cmd.) 1814, XXVI, p.219

37 İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, (Bilgi Yayınevi), p.82.

Curzon knew that it would be impossible to induce the Turks to accept any form of servitude or supervision in regard to the Armenians or any other Christian and Muslim minorities. He was well aware of Ismet Pasha's difficulties in regard to the rigidity of his instructions and would try to exploit it to the very end. The Turkish telegrams that they intercepted – the Eastern line used by the Turks was under British control – contributed a great deal to the British assessment of the Turkish position during the negotiations. The British were well aware that the Turks would not budge on two points: the capitulations and the possible establishment of an Armenian state. Curzon knew all too well that Ismet Pasha had full authorisation to break off negotiations without consulting Ankara. The Nationalists had, after all, announced on many occasions that they would only make peace on the basis of the earlier explained National Pact.

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British archival documents prove that the question of the minorities was not of prime interest to Britain but constituted a useful tool for Curzon in his attempts to bring the Turks into line when their attitude on the issue of Mosul proved too intransigent. Other than using it as a bargaining chip, he had no intention of carrying the demand for a territorial home through to its concrete conclusion. It was, to quote Ryan, 'a 'put up' merely for window dressing'.<sup>38</sup> Ismet Pasha was assured that the conference would not break up over the Armenian question, and the British delegate stressed the fact that Turkey's

worries were unfounded. "Over the years" he said, "we committed ourselves by making so many promises, therefore it was natural that we should protest vigorously"<sup>39</sup> The Americans were aware of the British approach on the Armenian national home. "I have known all along," wrote Child in his memoirs, "(that) he plainly intends to abandon the idea."<sup>40</sup>

Despite having been aware of the fact that any attempt to press on the Turks the question of assigning a tract of territory in Turkey for a national home for the Armenians was bound to fail, the Allies insisted that the issue should be taken up and debated in the subcommittee on the Minorities. The Turkish

38 Sevtap Demirci, *The Struggles and Strategies..* p.97.

39 İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, p.85.

40 Child R. Washburn, *A Diplomat Looks at Europe.* (NewYork: Duffield and Co. 1925), p. 117.

position was that the Armenians who desired to remain in Turkey would be able to live peacefully with their Turkish compatriots. Additionally, the claims made by the Armenians were rejected by the Turkish delegation and they exposed the invalidity of the arguments made for establishing a sovereign state on Turkish soil that had previously never existed. Heated discussions took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1922, and Turkey's determination to reject any compromise with regard to the Armenian national home was finally vindicated by Rıza Nur's behaviour during the course of the discussions held by the sub-commission.<sup>41</sup> On January 6, 1923, the Turkish plenipotentiary left the meeting room, refusing to listen to Armenian claims that were raised with the permission of the Allies. He also criticised the policies of the Allies in Egypt, Tunisia, India, Morocco and even Ireland and stated that if these countries were given back their freedom and land seized by the Great Powers, Turkey would immediately do the same for the Armenians.<sup>42</sup> The British were greatly disturbed and described it as "the most insolent scene"<sup>43</sup>

The very last meeting of the sub-commission on the Armenian Question took place on January 9, 1922, when a report related to amnesty, the protection of minorities and the exemption of minorities from military service were discussed. The stubbornly resolute attitude of the Turkish delegation as well as the fact that the question of the minorities was not the primary interest of the Allies determined the fate of the issue. The Allies chose to drop the whole issue.<sup>44</sup> Before leaving Lausanne just after the suspension of the Conference in February 1923, the Armenian delegation submitted a declaration to the Great Powers in which they openly admitted that the "the Armenian cause had been abandoned by the Entente Powers." As Kajaznuni rightly put it, "the Treaty of

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41 *Lozan Barış Konferansı, Tutanaklar, Belgeler*, Birinci Takım, I/II, s.156-157; Bilal Şimşir, *Lozan Telgrafları I*, (İsmet Pasha to Rauf Bey) December 17, 1922, no.165, s.236; İsmet Pasha to Rauf Bey) December 24, 1922, no.204, s.272.

42 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*. (İstanbul: Altındağ Yayınevi, 1968), Cilt III p. 1060-1064.

43 FO800/240 Ryan Papers, (Rumbold to Curzon) January 8, 1923; *Lozan Barış Konferansı, Tutanaklar, Belgeler, Birinci Takım, I/II*, s.278-279; Joseph C Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945*. (London: Hammond and Co. 1953), s.73; Bilal Simsir, *Lozan Telgrafları I*, (İsmet Pasha to Rauf Bey) January 7, 1923, no. 296, s.345-346;

44 *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler*, Birinci Takım, I/I, s.304, 307; Bkz. Simsir, *a.g.e.*, s.360; For M. Montagna's report to Curzon on 7 January 1923, see: *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler*, Birinci Takım, I/I, s.309-314.

The Allied front had already been broken by the Franklin-Bouillon agreement signed between the Kemalists and the French in 1921, well before the Lausanne Conference started as well as by the treaty of friendship signed with the Italians in the same year. As the negotiations progressed Britain, after the awareness of the diverging attitude of its allies, possible unrest in its own Empire (Indian Muslims), the sovietisation of the Caucasus, the determination of the Turkish delegation and last but not the least the strong possibility of securing the oil-rich Mosul vilayet of which was a vital part of the National Pact, dropped the Armenian claims for a national home.

Sevres had dazzled the eyes of all of us, restricted our power to think, and clouded our consciousness of reality.”<sup>45</sup>

In the second half of the conference, which lasted from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April to the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1923, the question was almost not even addressed since the Allies could not afford to break up the conference over an issue that was not a direct threat to their interests. The united Armenian delegation was quick to realise that the Allies had not kept their promise in providing a national home for the Armenians. Even the State Department began to explore avenues of rapprochement with Turkey. “Non-interference” was accepted as the best policy toward the Armenian problem and cleared the way for the signing of a Turco-American pact on August 6.

### ***Conclusion***

The First World War left the Ottoman Empire in ruins. Soon after the signature of the humiliating Mudros Armistice October 30, 1918 a peace treaty drafted by the Allies was imposed upon the defeated Empire. The Treaty of Sevres, August 10, 1920 envisaged an independent Armenian state within the eastern provinces of the Empire providing it with wide boundaries at the expense of Turkey. Inflated frontiers as well as an establishment of an independent Armenian state were contrary to the National Pact, which came to represent the Nationalists’ desiderata. The Pact clearly expressed that under no circumstances an independent Armenian state was acceptable. In other words, the Treaty of Sevres, promising so much, became, in Kajaznuni’s word, “a kind of blue bird”, “intangible and inaccessible”.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, from the Nationalists’ point of view, the Treaty of Sevres was a dead document as in March of 1920, they had already declared the Istanbul government invalid and illegitimate, a stand which consequently rendered any agreement signed by the Sultan’s government – thus including the Treaty of Sevres – as null and void from the Kemalists’ perspective. Additionally, a few months before the Treaty of Sevres was signed, the Assembly was shut down by the Sultan, which meant the Treaty was never formally approved and ratified by the Assembly. Furthermore, according to the 7th article of as per the changes made on the 8th of August 1909 to the *Kanuni-Esasi*, any peace treaties that were signed required the signaturate of the Assembly. Thus, in strictly legal terms, the treaty could not be considered valid.

Having determined the boundaries of the Armenian state with the Treaty of

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45 Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, p.181

46 Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, p. 223

Sevres in 1920, the Allies moved on to the London Conference of 1921. However, in the face of a sequence of Turkish military victories, as well as the collapse of the Caucasian Republics, meant the Allies were forced to revise the policies at the conference and they therefore decided to press for a “national home” for the Armenians in the eastern provinces of Turkey rather than a full-blown independent Armenian state. As Turkey was the only means of hindering the advance of Bolshevism in the east and south, the worst was yet to come for the Armenians. At their Paris meeting in 1922, the Allies stated that particular attention should be paid to the situation of the Armenians, for whose contribution to the war effort the Allies owed a debt of gratitude. The League of Nations would ensure this for the Armenians.

Lausanne was the final phase in the Allies’ policy shift. The success of the Turkish National Struggle had averted the fulfilment of the Mudros Armistice and was replaced by a new agreement in October of 1922. The Mudania Armistice which ended the war between the Turks and the Greeks paved the way for new peace negotiations at Lausanne. The Allied representatives and their so called “little ally”, the Armenians, aimed for a peace agreement on the basis of the Mudros accords and the succeeding Treaty of Sevres, whereas the Turkish delegation hoped to finalise a deal on the basis of the Mudania agreement and the articles and aspirations of the National Pact.

The handling of the Armenian Question in the years between Sevres and Lausanne took on a different course, in that it would now fall within the wider issue of the protection of minorities instead of being treated as an issue in isolation. The prior classification of minorities based on religious grounds would change in the period of transition from Empire to Republic, as national and ethnic classifications came under renewed consideration. The laws protecting citizens in Lausanne were to overrule prior arrangements, whereby citizens were protected by their respective states’ laws. One universal form of protection, regardless of these prior distinctions, was to be offered to Non-Muslim Turks. The extent of protection afforded to this social group, in addition to freedoms to practice their own cultural and religious customs and practices, would be equal to those of the Muslim Turkish population.

Although the Conference witnessed heated discussions, when the Lausanne Treaty was finally signed, the text did not contain any reference whatsoever to an Armenian National Home, let alone a state;<sup>47</sup> it merely included provisions that protected non-Muslim minorities, with a special focus on property rights, religious freedom and practices and communal education.

47 Mim Kemal Öke “The Responses of Turkish Armenians to the ‘Armenian Question’, 1919-1926”, in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* 1912-26. İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Publications, 1984), p.71.

In the Lausanne Treaty, non-Muslim minorities were regularly separated from the rest of the Muslim-majority population, whereas no such separation was found in the Sèvres Treaty, in which all minorities possessed the same rights, whether they be Christian or Muslim<sup>48</sup>. In the Lausanne Treaty, such rights were reserved only for non-Muslim minorities – the vast majority of whom had already been eliminated.<sup>49</sup>The rights for the non-Muslim minorities in the Lausanne Treaty were codified under a section headed ‘Protection of Minorities’, covering articles 37 to 44. Embedded within the latter – article 44 – was the caveat that declared the protection of minorities an international obligation. Therefore, the claims that the Armenian State in eastern Anatolia were still legally in force were misguided if not/or false and did not take into account the fact that the Treaty of Lausanne has superseded and replaced that of Sevres.

To sum up, politically the Armenian case was forsaken by the Allies, who used the issue merely as “window dressing”. Faced with both a lack of genuine support from the Allies and a determined Turkish delegation, the Armenians seemed doomed to leave Lausanne empty-handed. To quote Churchill, “in the Treaty of Lausanne, history will search in vain for the word ‘Armenia’.”<sup>50</sup> Kachaznuni, similarly, wrote, “Turkish Armenia does not exist anymore; neither as a government nor as a homeland, nor even as an international issue. The cause was killed and buried at Lausanne”.<sup>51</sup> In Aharonians words, the Treaty of Lausanne had turned into “a treaty of betrayal” for the Armenians, whilst in the words of Bogos Nubar Pasha, “It reduced the Armenian Question to a matter of minority rights”<sup>52</sup> Lloyd George’s comment on the issue, however, would seem to most succinctly express the final playing out of events: “Sevres to Mudania was a retreat. Mudania to Lausanne was a rout”. In short, the Lausanne Peace Conference provided a platform on which the Armenian Question, with no provisions being made in the Treaty, came to an end.

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48 As defined in article 145 and article 147 of Sèvres, “all minorities as Turkish nationals – irrespective of race, religion or language – possess the right to establish charitable, religious and social institutions, schools for primary, secondary and higher instruction, with the right to use their own languages”

49 In this respect, article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty states: “Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instructions and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religions freely therein”. Article 42 of Lausanne states: “As regards public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language.”

50 Winston S. Churchill, *The Aftermath 1918-1928*. (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929), vol. V, p.408

51 Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*. Istanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988), p. 1002.

52 *Bogos Nubar’s Papers and the Armenian Question 1915-1918: Documents*. (Watham: Mayreni Publishing, 1996) (edt. and translated by Vtche Ghazarian), p.xxxiii



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